APPENDIX

GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING STRATEGY
2009 – 2013

DRAFT

December 2008
Foreword

Together we will make Gravesham “The Place of Choice”

Housing is a basic necessity for achieving successful communities - but there is too little of it. Almost anywhere in the country, there are housing shortages, sub-standard housing, houses and flats that are too small or too large or in the wrong place. These have an adverse affect on general well being and economic activity and may give rise to poor health, an inability to work, difficulty in accessing education and health services for family members and place strains on many other public services.

Increasing the amount and quality of housing is not just a case of choosing sites and getting developers to build new accommodation. It is also about bringing empty homes back into use, converting commercial premises and upgrading poor stock. It is a big, difficult and rewarding task.

Get housing right and an area is on its way to sustainable prosperity. Get it wrong and the area could be on a downward spiral. And, to a large extent, the success of housing is down to local authorities.

This Housing Strategy shows how Gravesham Borough Council and its partners will work together to address the borough’s housing needs over the period 2009-13.

It seeks to:

- Assess and plan for the current and future housing needs of the local population across all tenures
- Make the best use of the existing housing stock
- Plan and facilitate new supply
- Plan and commission housing support services which link homes to the support and other services that people need to live in them
- Work in partnership to secure effective housing and neighbourhood management on an ongoing basis

The strategy takes a broad view of the full range of housing issues in Gravesham. It is based on a clear understanding of the needs of local communities through analysis, consultation and engagement. It builds on achievements over the last four years and sets out a challenging programme for the next four years. Through its implementation, our aim is to provide purposeful community leadership to shape Gravesham into The Place of Choice – a place where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life, a great place in which to bring up a family, a place of opportunity and a place that is open for business.

Cllr Anthony Pritchard
Lead Member, Housing Portfolio
Gravesham Borough Council
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1. **Introduction**

This section explains why a new Housing Strategy is needed for Gravesham. It briefly reports on the significant progress made since the last Housing Strategy and summarises the key elements of the new Strategy and how it will be delivered.

The Housing Strategy 2009-13 shows how the Council and its partners will work together to address Gravesham’s housing needs.

The previous Housing Strategy 2005-09 was published in 2006. However, given the completion of the Gravesham Housing Needs Survey, Gypsy and Traveller Needs Survey and Private Sector House Condition Survey in 2007, there was a need to ensure that the way forward took account of this more recent research and information and built upon the current strategy. Achievements from the current strategy also needed to be reviewed and the emerging priorities identified.

The Council’s strategic housing direction has been established through a rigorous development process. A Housing Strategy Review was undertaken in 2007 based on a robust analysis of the issues the Council faced and current performance and was the first phase in the production of the Housing Strategy 2009-13. The Review identified four overall priorities reflecting the borough’s housing needs:

- **Priority 1** – To deliver an excellent housing service for all residents of Gravesham (that is excellence in housing management, excellence in strategic planning, excellence in “place shaping”).

- **Priority 2** – To improve the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors.

- **Priority 3** – With partners, to maximise the supply of affordable housing.

- **Priority 4** – To tackle and prevent homelessness and address the needs of other vulnerable groups.

The Housing Strategy Review 2007 also formed the basis of consultation with partners, stakeholders and residents for the production of the Housing Strategy 2009-13.

Views were sought on:

- The four draft Housing Strategic Priorities listed above.
- The actions the Council should take to achieve these priorities.
- How consultation on the draft Housing Strategy should be undertaken.
• How partners, stakeholders and residents would wish to be involved in monitoring the progress of the final Housing Strategy.

This new Housing Strategy 2009-13 considers the range and levels of housing and support needs in the borough, outlines the Council’s approach to providing an accessible housing service to residents, and describes the plans for making sure that a range of housing options is available to meet the needs and aspirations of those in housing need. Consequently, the consultation provided an opportunity for partners, stakeholders and residents to inform the Council on what they wanted out of the Strategy.

Further views were sought on the draft Housing Strategy in Spring 2009. These provided feedback on the Council's understanding of the various issues raised.

The Housing Strategy 2009-13 sets out a full analysis and rationale for the priorities and provides a detailed Action Plan for their delivery. Key targets include:

• Improving the overall standard of all housing services in a way recognised by service users.
• Strengthening the greater involvement of local people in the housing services delivered by offering effective consultation and structures for tenant involvement.
• Assessing and planning the current and future housing needs of the local population across all tenures.
• Planning and commissioning housing support services which link homes to the support and other services that people need to live in them.
• Achieving wider social, economic and environmental aims by tackling homelessness, overcrowding, unemployment, etc and promoting social mix.
• Undertaking effective sub-regional working through constructive and productive partnerships with neighbouring authorities.
• Establishing and maintaining a range of internal and external partnerships to achieve welcoming, safe and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods based on a shared vision of sustainable communities.
• Meeting the Decent Homes target for Council-owned homes.
• Continuing to deliver Capital Programme and Responsive and Repairs services within strategic guidelines and budgetary resources.
• Ensuring the effective and timely delivery of the regeneration of the Christian Fields estate.
• Progressing the delivery of the Local Development Framework as the basis for securing sustainable development and affordable stock mix requirements.
• Achieving regional housing requirements as set out in the South East Plan.
• Exceeding the average supply of 92 affordable new homes each year (assumed in the Housing Needs Survey 2006) ensuring that the Council’s policy of seeking 30% of the units on sites of 15 units or more are affordable is maintained.
• Within the overall target, ensuring a broad balance of 50% for social rent and 50% as intermediate market housing.
• Within the overall target, ensuring a mix of house types to meet the needs for smaller units in line with the Housing Needs Survey 2006 findings and the Housing Register requirements.
• Promoting the growth of the private rented sector to provide a more balanced housing market.
• Addressing the need for “extra care” accommodation.
• Continuing to promote disabled adaptations, developing a register of adapted property and the needs of disabled people and considering the adoption of Lifetime Homes standards for new housing.
• Ensuring the allocation of land for gypsy and traveller pitches in accordance with the requirements of the Regional Spatial Strategy (ie the South East Plan) as informed by the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2007 (15 pitches up to 2011).
• Monitoring and where appropriate, maximising affordable housing development opportunities provided by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (eg Local Housing Companies, Special Delivery Vehicles).
• Providing an adaptations service for people with physical or mental health needs through the Disabled Facilities Grant for people in private sector accommodation or a Housing Revenue Account funded scheme for people in Council homes.
• Reviewing joint working and partnerships for all vulnerable groups to improve referral routes and services.
• Preparing an Affordable Housing Development Strategy, a Minority Communities Housing Strategy and a Young People’s Housing Strategy.
• Ensuring value for money and accessible services.

Building on recent achievements

The previous Housing Strategy 2005-09 contained a series of detailed actions which enabled the Council’s housing priorities to be turned into actions that were delivered. Significant progress has been made on:

• Undertaking a ballot on the transfer of the Council’s housing stock to a new registered social landlord, resulting in the Council resolving to continue to own and manage its homes.
• Undertaking Housing Needs, Gypsy and Traveller Needs and Private Sector Stock Condition Surveys.
• Producing the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2006-09.
• Undertaking the 3 yearly STATUS survey, which showed 78% satisfaction with the overall services provided.
• Assisting more households from the Common Housing Register through the delivery of new homes including “affordable” homes and new homes built on previously developed land.
• Completing the first rural affordable housing schemes.
• Bringing empty private sector homes back into use.
• Placing increased emphasis on the prevention of homelessness.
• Ceasing to use bed and breakfast and hostel accommodation for homelessness cases and on target to halve the use of temporary accommodation by 31st March 2010.
• Reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
• Undertaking annual reviews of the Decent Homes programme to ensure that delivery matches the Transfer Offer document.
• Delivering Capital Programme and Responsive and Repairs services within strategic guidelines and budgetary resources.
• Enhancing performance through modern methods of procurement for the supply of materials and services.

These are by no means exhaustive and partners and stakeholders have had a key role in delivering these and other achievements. The previous Housing Strategy delivered real improvements in local housing services. This new Housing Strategy builds on this success and continues to focus on the actions and outcomes that are important to residents.

Delivering the Strategy

The Housing Strategy 2009-13 is not a stand-alone document. It needs to be co-ordinated with other important strategies and processes and be expressed through a number of local documents. These include other core strategies, such as the Local Development Framework and the Supporting People Strategy, as well as sub-strategies, such as strategies for preventing homelessness, improving the private rented sector and bringing empty properties back into use. Consequently, the Housing Strategy sits within a suite of strategic documents.

A summary of the Housing Strategy 2009-13 can be obtained from the Council’s website at: http://www.local.gravesham.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4305 (To be drafted)

The Council is using existing information better and has invested in further research where more detailed evidence of local needs and conditions is required (eg Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Older Persons’ Housing Review, STATUS tenants’ satisfaction survey, Parish Surveys, etc). This improved statistical base has been used to set out the priorities in this new Housing Strategy, consulting widely to ensure that it reflects the right issues and priorities and building partnerships to help deliver the Strategy.
2. **Strategic Housing Context**

This section examines the strategic context for the delivery of the Housing Strategy. The local, sub-regional, regional and national contexts are outlined together with how the Strategy has developed in consultation with partners, stakeholders and residents.

The Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” (DCLG, 2006) placed an expectation on local authorities to take a much stronger strategic lead for their areas. Linked with this is a requirement for local authorities to develop a clear strategic housing vision that supports the wider community strategy for their area.

There are various strategic priorities which need to be addressed. These range from the local community, through the sub-regional and regional level to the national scale, and they all help to inform and guide the Council’s strategic housing priorities. It is within this framework that activities for delivering housing and other service priorities are shaped.

### 2.1 Local Strategic Priorities

The Council’s Vision, Values and Goals are defined in the Corporate Plan 2008-11. The Housing Strategy seeks to achieve these, with a strong focus on creating sustainable communities, promoting social and physical regeneration, delivering sustainable homes incorporating high quality design, increasing the supply of housing of all types and tenures and improving access to high quality housing for all.

**Strategic Vision – “The Place of Choice”**

A great place:

- To live, work and relax in and to visit.
- To be proud of, with a strong sense of identity.
- That is safe, clean and green.
- That is good to do business in and to invest in.
- With good quality and affordable housing.
- With vibrant, inclusive communities celebrating cultural diversity.
- Where the Council strives for excellence and value-for-money.
- With strong community leadership and engagement.

**Strategic Values – “Excellence in all that we do”**

Work to achieve:

- Excellent customer care.
- Excellent services.
- Excellent value-for-money.
- Excellent engagement with communities.
- Excellent partnership working.
• Excellent place to work.

**Strategic Goals**

*Priority – Existing communities*

- **Goal 1: Environment** – To achieve a safe, clean and green Place of Choice.
- **Goal 2: Communities** – To foster vibrant and cohesive communities that promote engagement, diversity, social inclusion, health and well-being, leisure and culture.
- **Goal 3: Housing** – To secure the housing needs of the borough.

*Priority – Future communities*

- **Goal 4: Business** – To secure a sustainable and buoyant economy, particularly in the town centre and Ebbsfleet, with attractive investment opportunities and a developing tourism market.
- **Goal 5: Regeneration** – To maximise regeneration opportunities for the benefit of existing and new communities.

*Priority – Service provision*

- **Goal 6: Transformation** – To transform the Council into an economically sound organisation delivering excellent accessible services that provide value-for-money.

This Housing Strategy sits alongside a range of Council-wide strategies and plans which link together to ensure that Housing Services delivered by the Council and its partners support other services to ensure the delivery of the Council’s strategic vision, values and goals (eg Community Safety Plan, Community Engagement Strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy, Comprehensive Equalities Policy, Cultural Strategy, Active Gravesend Strategy, Service Plans, Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy, Risk Management Strategy, etc).

2.2 Sub-regional Strategic Priorities

**Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership**
([http://www.communities.gov.uk/thamesgateway/about/partners](http://www.communities.gov.uk/thamesgateway/about/partners))

The Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership was established in October 2000 to provide a Thames Gateway wide focus on key development and delivery issues. The Thames Gateway Delivery Plan provides a spending programme from 2008–2011 to accelerate regeneration in the Thames Gateway, while showing where resources are needed longer term. Housing programmes are prioritised in the ten locations where extra homes are most urgently needed and are expected to deliver nearly 110,000 homes by 2016. The Plan also includes the Housing Corporation’s intention to invest over £800 million in around 15,000 affordable homes.
Thames Gateway Kent Partnership
(http://www.tgkp.org)

The Thames Gateway Kent Partnership champions the economic, social and environmental regeneration of Kent Thameside, Medway and Swale. Formed in 2001, the Partnership is a partnership of private, public and community sectors in North Kent and Medway. It works to:

- Draw together a framework for investment in Thames Gateway Kent in a “light touch” way to provide a clear and up to date picture of key investment priorities.
- Co-ordinate presentation of North Kent’s investment needs and help maximise synergies.
- Promote Thames Gateway Kent to Government, regional agencies and other bodies to help shape policies, plans and investment decisions affecting the area.
- Work with Government and other partners to address issues where a coordinated approach is essential for realising North Kent’s potential to create genuinely sustainable communities.

The Partnership covers Kent Thameside (Gravesham and Dartford), Medway and Swale. It is one of three similar partnerships in the Gateway – the other two covering the London Gateway area and South Essex – with overall co-ordination coming through a ministerially-led Strategic Partnership for the whole of the Gateway.

Kent Thameside
(http://www.kent-thameside.co.uk)

Kent Thameside – the urban areas of Gravesham and Dartford in the Thames Gateway – is the scene for one of the most ambitious attempts to establish sustainable new communities. Delivering up to 25,000 new homes and 50,000 new jobs over the next twenty years as part of the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan, Kent Thameside will exemplify best practice in building new settlements in old areas.

The Kent Thameside Delivery Board brings together Gravesham and Dartford Borough Councils and Kent County Council with key private sector partners including Land Securities, London and Continental Railways, Countryside Properties and other public sector agencies such as SEEDA, English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation. The Board is committed to encouraging exemplary mixed-use developments with high design and quality standards, high levels of environmental sustainability and a particular emphasis on public transport. The partners are also committed to innovative approaches to the delivery of services.

A number of key drivers underpin the regeneration agenda, such as the development of the Ebbsfleet Valley as one of the primary business locations in the Gateway; the rejuvenation of Dartford and Gravesend town centres; the promotion of a strategic transport programme to meet the transport infrastructure needs of the new developments and the area as a whole; the creation of sustainable communities and developments, with low carbon footprints, integration between new and existing communities and improved health and well being. Also, educational standards and
skills will be raised so that residents can benefit from new job opportunities and new employers attracted into the area.

**Dartford and Gravesham Local Strategic Partnership**
(http://www.local.gravesham.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4562)

Gravesham and Dartford Borough Councils, along with key public, private and voluntary organisations in the area, have formed the Dartford and Gravesham Local Strategic Partnership. The objective is to make a positive difference to the quality of life in the area through the following aims:

- Building strong and sustainable communities.
- Helping local people achieve their potential and ensure that they can compete in the local economy as it develops.
- Making Gravesham and Dartford a cleaner and greener place to live.
- Ensuring a supply of high quality, affordable housing.
- Ensuring that the people of Gravesham and Dartford can lead healthy and active lives.
- Making Gravesham and Dartford a safer place in which to live and work.
- Preserving the heritage of Gravesham and Dartford, while developing a thriving leisure and cultural centre.
- Involving the people of Gravesham and Dartford in the decisions which affect their lives and ensure all communities benefit from regeneration in the area.

**The Kent Agreement**
(http://www.local.gravesham.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4561)

The Council has a statutory duty to participate in the Kent Agreement. This is a legal agreement between the Government and Kent County Council whose purpose is to secure better outcomes for everyone in the county. The vision for the county for the next three years is set out against eight key themes:

- Economic success
- Improved health, care and well-being
- Stronger and safer communities
- Keeping Kent moving
- Learning for everyone
- Environmental excellence
- Enjoying life
- High quality homes

The agreement comprises thirty-five National Indicators (NIs) to which the Council and its partners are expected to commit and sixteen statutory NIs for education which will be the responsibility of the County Council. The targets attached to the NIs will be “stretching targets” which means that all parties will work to exceed current performance expectations and that the improvements achieved would be sustainable.

The Council’s formal commitment to the thirty-five NIs will be through the Sustainable Community Strategy for Dartford and Gravesham (2008). The Strategy’s overall vision is to see Dartford and Gravesham as: “**The place of choice to live, work and enjoy**”. The Strategy is set out under five themes:
Economic Development
• Health and Wellbeing
• Safer Communities
• Environment and Transport
• Housing and Stronger Communities

These themes link to the Kent Agreement, the South East Regional Economic Strategy, the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan and the South East Plan. The Housing and Stronger Communities theme seeks to:

• Meet the housing needs of the area.
• Help create strong, integrated communities in Dartford and Gravesham.

A Multi Area Agreement (MAA) involving Dartford, Gravesham and Swale Borough Councils, the Medway Unitary Authority and Kent County Council focuses on issues such as the economy and skills, transport and housing (2008). The MAA will concentrate on how joint action can add value, to ensure the delivery of agreed objectives, with support from Government.

The current situation in Kent

Kent provides an attractive option for new housing development. The county contains two of the government’s “growth” areas, and housing targets are high. Two-thirds of the target number is needed to meet the growth in Kent’s own population, including first-time buyers and the increasing number of people living alone, and the remaining third is to meet predicted migration into Kent (mostly from elsewhere in the UK).

Kent has a 10-year supply of housing land available, mostly on brownfield sites. There is a risk, however, that some of this land will not be brought forward because of a dramatic shortage in funding for community infrastructure needed to make growth sustainable. Additional challenges are the shortage of public funding to deliver affordable housing and the need to develop a range of housing options across the county.

There is also a need for all homes to meet (or exceed) the national Decent Homes Standard and a need for housing solutions which support older people and other adults with additional needs to live independently at home. The homeless or those at risk of homelessness also need to be supported.

Long term goals for Kent include:

• Developing whole communities, not just building new houses, creating attractive, safe and friendly neighbourhoods.
• Improving the quality of homes, both new and old.
• Integrating new and existing communities.
• Providing choice and access and meeting the needs of the individual and family.
• Reducing the whole life-cycle environmental impact of the housing development process by raising standards of sustainable construction over time.
2.3 Regional Strategic Priorities

*The South East Plan*
(http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/index.html)

Prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), the South East Plan will set out a long-term strategy for future development and show how growing demands for homes, jobs and transport should be met while protecting the environment, ensuring the region continues to be an attractive place to live, visit and work.

Although attention tends to focus on future levels of new development, the South East Plan is about a lot more than just housing numbers. It will also create a basis for:

- The development of the economy, transport and communications.
- Conserving natural resources.
- Managing changes in the countryside.

As a new Regional Spatial Strategy, the South East Plan should also link with other key areas like health and education and be well integrated with other important regional plans (such as the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy).

The Draft South East Plan, submitted to Government on 31st March 2006, provided a framework for the region for the next 20 years to 2026. In order to meet overall housing needs, SEERA decided that provision should be made for an average of 28,900 dwellings per annum across the region. This compared with a past target of 28,000 per annum.

The Secretary of State published Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy on 17th July 2008. The average number of dwellings across the region was increased to 33,125 per annum. Consultation on the changes ended on 24th October 2008. The Secretary of State will now be considering all responses and hopes to publish the final version of the South East Plan in 2009. *(To be updated following the publication of the final version of the South East Plan)*

For housing, the Draft South East Plan proposed:

- Delivering the Plan’s target for housing provision.
- At least 60% of new housing on previously developed (brownfield) land.
- Delivering a substantial increase in the supply of affordable housing, with an overall target of 35% of new homes as affordable.
- Increasing housing density to an average of 40 dwellings per hectare, but with a strong emphasis on high design standards.
- Making more efficient use of the existing housing stock, through appropriate conversions and refurbishment.
- Creating more small-scale affordable housing sites in rural areas.

*The South East England Regional Housing Strategy*
(http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/housing_strategy.html)

The South East England Regional Housing Strategy 2008-11 is the first strategy produced by the Regional Housing Board since its transfer to the Regional Assembly.
and allows the bringing together of regional housing and planning policies. The Board’s investment priorities target the funding available in ways that will enable the right type and size of affordable housing to be delivered, reflecting the needs of local communities and delivering improvements in the quality and energy efficiency of both new and existing stock. Particular encouragement is given to the construction of a greater number of larger, family-sized homes where required to meet identified local need and create mixed communities.

Priorities identified for 2008-11 include:

- Maintaining a strong focus on delivering new affordable housing.
- Maintaining a commitment to provide funding for improvements to ensure decent homes.
- Maintaining a focus on investment in urban areas.
- Increased emphasis on providing the right size and type of housing.
- Maintaining support for programmes that assist key workers.
- Investing in pump-priming, innovative delivery mechanisms, such as Brownfield Land Assembly Company and the Regional Infrastructure Fund that will unlock housing potential.
- Maintaining a commitment to invest in accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.

The South East England Regional Housing Strategy 2008-11 provides a spatial distribution for the targeting of financial resources. 3,615 affordable homes are proposed for development within the Kent Thames Gateway Growth Area over 2006-11. This Housing Strategy for Gravesham will seek to contribute to the delivery of these regional and sub-regional priorities.

2.4 National Strategic Priorities
(http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing)

The Council is working to ensure that local, sub-regional and regional housing priorities are aligned with national priorities to make the most effective use of local and national resources. This Housing Strategy reflects the Government’s key strategic housing priority that everyone should have the opportunity to live in a decent home, at a price they can afford, in a place where they want to live and work.

Through its policies, the Government aims to ensure:

- A wide choice of housing, both affordable and market, to meet the needs of all sectors of the community.
- Improvements in the affordability of market housing (both owner occupied and rented) by means of a better balance between the supply of and demand for housing.
- An increase in the condition of housing in all sectors to the decent homes standard, coupled with regeneration of the most deprived areas.
- The creation and maintenance of sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities in all areas – both urban and rural.

The delivery of the Government’s strategic housing policy objectives is underpinned by Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) (November 2006). PPS3 puts in place a new national policy framework for planning for housing at the local and regional levels. It provides an enabling framework for local planning authorities, working with their stakeholders, including developers, to deliver both the right
quantity of housing to address need and demand in their areas, and the right quality and mix of housing for their communities. PPS3, along with other Government housing policy and planning policy statements provides the context for plan preparation in relation to housing development (www.communities.gov.uk/planning).

The Housing Green Paper, “Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable”, (DCLG, 2007c) sets out the Government’s proposals to increase the supply of housing with 3 million more homes by 2020, and to provide well-designed and greener homes that are supported by infrastructure and more affordable homes to buy or rent. The Government also made a commitment to build at least 70,000 affordable homes a year by 2010/11. This includes 45,000 new social homes a year and a goal of 50,000 social homes a year in the next spending review.

The Green Paper is built around three key principles:

- Increasing housing supply.
- More affordable homes.
- Greener, better designed homes.

The Government's plans will be supported by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 which established the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) on 1st December 2008. The HCA will focus on delivering more new and affordable homes across all tenures, in mixed and sustainable communities, and will drive and invest in regeneration and the revitalisation of existing communities. The TSA will be the new regulator of social housing, responsible for ensuring that registered housing providers meet the needs of tenants. It is anticipated that local authorities will be brought within the scope of the regulator.

The Government intends to build on this work and publish a Housing Reform Green Paper shortly. This will set out proposals to provide housing services and options which help and encourage people towards greater economic independence and social mobility, and deliver greater fairness and make the best use of resources (DCLG, 2008b). (To be updated following the publication of the Green Paper)

There will be new opportunities for local authorities, as well as housing associations and the private sector, to build and manage new houses. Local councils will be able to establish new Local Housing Companies (in partnership with the new Homes and Communities Agency) to deliver shared ownership homes and homes for first time buyers on local authority land. The private sector will be expected to develop more competitive products in shared equity mortgages or shared ownership homes.

The Council’s response to the Housing Green Paper 2007 welcomed the opportunities provided for new Local Housing Companies or special venture vehicles to act as additional delivery and management mechanisms for social-rented housing. The diversification of models will be able to target vacant and under-used local authority land which otherwise might never be considered for development or where it makes sense for ownership or management of new stock to be by the authority (ie through a high performing Arm’s Length Management Organisation (ALMO) or a Local Housing Company where an ALMO is not in place) (Gravesham BC, 2007).

2.5 Engaging with partners, stakeholders and residents
Many of the challenges that face Gravesham cannot be solved by the Council alone. The Council believes that working with partner agencies is essential to ensuring the delivery of the best services possible to meet local needs in the most effective way. Consequently, the Housing Strategy has been developed within the strategic context outlined above whilst taking into account the local views of partners, stakeholders and residents. This will continue throughout the life of the strategy and reported regularly through a variety of means, including information exchange and consultation events, newsletters, joint forums and strategy groups, formal protocols, benchmarking and peer reviews, etc.

The key issues arising out of the consultation process that have shaped the Strategy are summarised in Appendix 1. They include the following:

- Support for the four Housing Strategic Priorities.
- Better communication with residents.
- Dealing promptly with problem residents.
- More partnership working on existing estates.
- Reviewing the investment in the improvement and maintenance of the Council’s properties.
- Demanding more from private developers.
- More “move-on” accommodation required.
- Ensuring more mixed communities.
- Adopting “Lifetime Homes” building principles.
- Concentrating on affordable rented property.
- “Affordable” housing meaning what it says.
- Promoting the renovation and re-use of empty properties in the borough.
- Maintaining a register of private landlords wishing to work with the Council.
- E-mails and newsletters were both felt to be the preferred methods of consultation and monitoring.
- Other issues to be included from the 2009 consultation process

2.6 Summary of Main Action Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Priority – To deliver an excellent housing service for all residents of Gravesham</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Excellence in housing management</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improve the overall standard of all housing services in a way recognised by service users.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Make maximum efficient use of existing affordable rented housing stock.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use excellence to promote peer review and challenge and engage users in service design and preferences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Promote and support a local “customer perspective”, increasing the understanding of the diversity and vulnerability of customers, identifying local problems, communicating these to service providers and pursuing “joined up solutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strengthen the greater involvement of local people in the housing services delivered by offering effective consultation and structures for tenant involvement.</td>
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- Improved efficiency in responding to customers.
- Implement a programme for achieving Management Excellence and providing a staff development programme to provide staff with opportunities to develop their potential, consistent with the needs and priorities of the Council.

**Excellence in strategic planning**
- Assess and plan the current and future housing needs of the local population across all tenures.
- Improve the understanding of the housing market place and the commercial risks faced by housing associations and developers.
- Encourage all stakeholders to become more involved in the production of local housing strategies.
- Speed up delivery by sharing good practice and resources, working with partners, reducing the time taken to negotiate s106 agreements, etc.
- Plan and commission housing support services which link homes to the support and other services that people need to live in them.
- Develop formal protocols with other agencies to clarify responsibilities and ensure effective co-ordination.
- Achieve wider social, economic and environmental aims by tackling homelessness, overcrowding, unemployment, etc and promoting social mix.
- Maintain robust mechanisms for collecting, analysing and presenting information about trends and requirements relating to housing markets, residents’ concerns and aspirations and related matters.
- Effective action-planning with clear responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.
- Realise efficiencies through joint procurement with neighbouring local authorities of housing surveys, co-ordinating their timing, quality and frequency, removing duplication and ensuring that the most urgent needs are met.

**Excellence in “place shaping”**
- Undertake effective sub-regional working through constructive and productive partnerships with neighbouring authorities.
- Establish and maintain a range of internal and external partnerships to achieve welcoming, safe and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods based on a shared vision of sustainable communities.
- Develop housing’s role in the Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership.
- Involve service users more in shaping the services they use and affect their lives.
- Introduce effective mechanisms for understanding and acting on residents’ concerns and aspirations for their neighbourhoods.
- Contribute towards the development of a Countywide Choice Based Lettings as part of the Kent wide partnership of social housing providers.
- Ensure value for money and accessible services.
3. **The Current Situation**

This section examines the current housing situation in Gravesham together with future trends. This includes factors affecting housing supply and demand with a focus on how the housing market will need to change over the years ahead.

3.1 **Borough Profile**

*Economic Context*

The economic climate and changes in national and regional economic policy alongside labour market trends and local income trends set the context in which households make decisions about their housing needs and preferences.

Gravesham lies to the east of London and covers 9,202 hectares. As part of Kent Thameside, the borough is centrally located within the Thames Gateway regeneration area as identified in the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan. It lies astride strategic road and rail corridors to Europe, London and the regions. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link station at Ebbsfleet opened for international trains in November 2007 and will open for domestic trains in 2009.

The main industrial area of the borough runs along the southern bank of the River Thames. This area is seen as a central point for industry with products such as food, manufacturing and metals. Although the manufacturing industry is still the main industry in the area, the service sector has increased proving to be a main employment provider.

There is an extensive rural area which lies to the south of the A2 and east of Gravesend. Much of this rural area is of high agricultural, landscape and/or nature conservation value. 78% of the borough is within the Green Belt and 24% is within the Kent Downs area of outstanding natural beauty. A number of villages are located within the rural area, some of which are of considerable historic and conservation interest.

A high proportion of residents travel outside the borough to work and local earnings are significantly above the national and regional averages. Unemployment at 2.74% is higher than it is in the South East generally, but about the national average.

*Population Change*

An important feature in measuring housing needs is to forecast what is likely to happen over the next decade or so in order that provision for new housing can be planned.

The borough’s population is growing. The South East Plan Strategy Forecasts (September 2007) project the population of 97,400 in 2006 to reach 98,600 in 2016 (1.2% increase) and 110,500 in 2026 (13.4% increase) (table 1). The borough has a young population with 31% aged under 25 years and just 16% aged over 65 years (table 2).
The key features of population change impacting on the housing market are:

- Out migration of younger and economically active households.
- An ageing population with increasing care and support needs.

At the time of the 2001 Census, 10.9% of the population came from ethnic minority communities and 6.7% of the population were Sikh, one of the highest proportions of any borough in England.

Gravesham is ranked as the 158th most deprived of the 354 English local authorities in the indices of multiple deprivation but there are wide variations across the borough. Some of the most expensive housing in Kent lies within the borough to the south of the A2, while some wards are amongst the most deprived in the country.

Table 1: Gravesham’s Population 2001-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>95,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>97,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>98,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>98,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>104,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>110,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: South East Plan Strategy Forecasts (September 2007)

Table 2: Gravesham’s Population 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Population (000s)</th>
<th>Per cent of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 15 years</td>
<td>19,800</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 24 years</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 44 years</td>
<td>26,800</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 64 years</td>
<td>24,500</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 – 84 years</td>
<td>14,100</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85+ years</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>97,400</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: South East Plan Strategy Forecasts (September 2007)

Household Change

The number of households in the borough is increasing. The 40,000 households in 2006 is projected to reach 43,000 in 2016 (7.5% increase) and 49,300 in 2026 (23.2% increase) placing increasing pressures on the borough’s housing (table 3). The projected population growth does not match the growth in household formation as a result of more young people, more very elderly people and higher rates of separation and divorce. These trends are apparent in the reduction in the average household sizes from 2001 to 2026 (table 4).

The number of single person households in the borough is projected to increase from 11,700 in 2006 to 14,700 in 2016 (25.6% increase) and 18,900 in 2026 (61.5% increase) (table 5). These are above the average increases for Kent and will mean that pressure for housing in the borough will continue to be a serious issue. Smaller and single person households do not necessarily want or demand smaller homes and this is particularly challenging when planning for future growth.
### Table 3: Gravesham’s Households 2001-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total households</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38,300</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>41,600</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>46,100</td>
<td>49,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: South East Plan Strategy Forecasts (September 2007)

### Table 4: Gravesham’s Average Household Sizes 2001-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average household size</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: South East Plan Strategy Forecasts (September 2007)

### Table 5: Gravesham’s Single Person Households 2001-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single person households</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10,400</td>
<td>11,700</td>
<td>13,200</td>
<td>14,700</td>
<td>16,800</td>
<td>18,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: South East Plan Strategy Forecasts (September 2007)

#### 3.2 Housing Stock Profile

**Dwellings**

The number of dwellings in the borough is increasing. The 40,700 dwellings in 2006 is projected to increase to 43,700 in 2016 (7.4% increase) and 50,100 in 2026 (23.1% increase) *(table 6).*

### Table 6: Gravesham’s Dwellings 2001-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total dwellings</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38,900</td>
<td>40,700</td>
<td>42,300</td>
<td>43,700</td>
<td>46,900</td>
<td>50,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: South East Plan Strategy Forecasts (September 2007)

**Dwelling Types**

The dwelling type profile in the borough is skewed towards semi-detached houses and terraced houses and bungalows with detached houses and flats / maisonettes all at a similar level *(table 7).* Although flats / maisonettes seem to be well represented in the current housing stock at around 16%, 53.1% concealed households moving and seeking affordable housing require flats / maisonettes. In the case of concealed households moving and seeking market housing the proportion is 35.7%.
In view of the changing demographic and household formation patterns and the increasing need for small units, there will be a longer term need to address this stock imbalance to meet the requirements of the future population.

Table 7: Gravesham’s Dwelling Types 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>2006 Survey (Per cent)</th>
<th>No’s implied</th>
<th>Local Area Census 2001 (Per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole house or bungalow (semi-detached)</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>12,571</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole house or bungalow (detached)</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>6,255</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole house or bungalow (terraced)</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>13,330</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat / maisonette / bed-sit</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>6,018</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houseboat / caravan / mobile home</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>38,243</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006

Tenure Split

Owner occupation is clearly the tenure of choice for the majority of both existing moving and concealed households. The majority of the owner occupied sector relates to houses and bungalows. The majority of flats / maisonettes are in the rented sector (table 8).

Table 8: Gravesham’s Dwelling Types by Tenure 2006 (Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Detached</th>
<th>Semi-detached</th>
<th>Terraced</th>
<th>Bungalow</th>
<th>Bedsit / Flat / Mais</th>
<th>Caravan / Mobile home</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupied with mortgage</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupied no mortgage</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private rented</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council rented</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA rented</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared ownership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied to employment / rent free*</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low volume of data

Source: Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006
**Under / Over Occupation**

The overall over-occupation level of 4.5% (1,722 implied households) is above the average UK level of 3% indicated by the Survey of English Housing 2001/02. There is no comparable data against which to measure the overall under-occupation figure of 38.1% but it is slightly lower than the “around 40%” average found in recent DCA surveys (DCA, 2006).

Over occupation is significantly higher in the rented sector than the owner occupied sector, with 9.1% of private rented homes and 14.0% of HA rented homes in the household survey over occupied. Under occupation within the owner occupied no mortgage sector (62.9%), which will include a higher proportion of elderly households, is the same as the level of around 61% found in recent DCA surveys. Under-occupation in the social housing sector is low in comparison to the all tenure average and the owner occupied forms of tenure *(table 9)*.

**Table 9: Gravesham Under / Over Occupation by Tenure 2006 (Per cent)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Per cent under occupied</th>
<th>Per cent over occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupied with mortgage</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupied no mortgage</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private rented</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council rented</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA rented</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared ownership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied to employment / rent free*</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low volume of data  
Source: Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006

**Vacancy Rates**

Vacancy rates are a widely used indicator of housing demand. The Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA) for 2008 states that at 1st April 2008, there were an estimated 1023 (3.03%) private sector properties empty in the borough. For 2006, the respective figures were an estimated 935 (2.8%) private sector properties empty in the borough. This increase suggests a move away from a balanced housing market.

The Council's plans for encouraging the adoption of a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to bringing empty properties in the private sector back into use are covered in detail in the Empty Property Strategy 2008 (Gravesham BC, 2008b).

**3.3 The Gravesham Housing Market** *(To be updated following the North Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment)*

The housing market is the context against which all the housing needs of an area are set. House price information is the basis on which the “affordability” of housing is measured for low-income households. Analysis of the data seeks to establish who cannot afford to enter into the market. This data is then related to the problems
faced by the “concealed households” in the area (ie households living with friends and relatives seeking to gain access to the housing market).

Key findings from the Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006 (DCA, 2006a) include the following:

- Average house prices in the borough are 14.4% lower than the sub-regional average, but rose by 61.2% between 2001 and 2006. Access to owner occupation is restricted by rising prices, especially flats and terraces, with house price increases out-stripping local income inflation (table 10).

- Concealed households consist predominantly of younger people, with 21.7% in the 16-19 age group, 40.8% in the 20-24 age group and a further 30.6% in the 25-44 age group.

- The ability of concealed households to access the owner occupied market is very limited. 30.4% of concealed households have incomes above £27,500 and only 17.6% have incomes above £40,000. The cheapest 1 bed flats in the borough require an income threshold of £28,500. 71% of concealed households are denied access to the market, based on the incomes of recently formed households (table 11).

- Owner occupation is clearly the tenure of choice for the majority of both existing moving and concealed households forming. Although house prices in the borough are lower than in some neighbouring areas, rising house prices locally and sub-regionally create significant problems for lower income and new forming households trying to access the market. This problem is escalating as house prices continue to rise faster than local incomes.

- Access to the private rented housing market is restricted by price. 64.9% of all new forming households can afford to pay no more than £300 pcm rent. Access rents are £367 pcm. 43.8% of new forming households can afford to pay no more than £500 per month mortgage (tables 12 and 13).

- A greater strategic focus is required on the need for intermediate market housing for concealed households of whom 43.8% could afford to pay no more than £500 in mortgage costs.

Table 10: Gravesham Average House Prices (£) and Sales – All Buyers 2001 and 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terraced</td>
<td>160,341</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>93,397</td>
<td>+71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-detached</td>
<td>207,723</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>125,331</td>
<td>+65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached</td>
<td>320,890</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>221,583</td>
<td>+44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flats &amp; maisonsettes</td>
<td>129,983</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>61,799</td>
<td>+110.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All properties</td>
<td>185,665</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>115,166</td>
<td>+61.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11: Gravesham Purchase Income Thresholds, September 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area*</th>
<th>1 bed flat</th>
<th>2 bed flat</th>
<th>2 bed terraced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gravesend Central</td>
<td>29,800</td>
<td>41,200</td>
<td>45,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravesend Outer East</td>
<td>28,500</td>
<td>36,400</td>
<td>38,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravesend Outer West</td>
<td>32,300</td>
<td>39,600</td>
<td>42,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northfleet South</td>
<td>32,700</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>41,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northfleet North</td>
<td>29,800</td>
<td>32,600</td>
<td>42,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural**</td>
<td>50,700</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>52,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* See Appendix 3 for definitions of areas  
** Low volume of data

Source: Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006

Table 12: Gravesham Maximum Weekly / Monthly Rent of Concealed Household, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly / Monthly rent</th>
<th>All concealed households moving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below £50 pw / £215 pm</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50 - £60 pw / £215 - £260 pm</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£61 - £70 pw / £261 - £300 pm</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£71 - £80 pw / £301 - £350 pm</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£81 - £100 pw / £351 - £430 pm</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£101 - £150 pw / £431 - £650 pm</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£151 - £200 pw / £651 - £865 pm</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above £200 pw / £865 pm</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006

Table 13: Gravesham Maximum Monthly Mortgage of Concealed Households, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly mortgage</th>
<th>All concealed households moving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below £250</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£250 - £300</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£301 - £400</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£401 - £500</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£501 - £600</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£601 - £750</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£751 - £1,000</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above £1,000</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006
3.4 Delivery of Additional Affordable Housing

The widening gap between housing prices, particularly for owner occupation, and household incomes has resulted in fewer households being able to afford housing in the borough. This means that a wide range of households need special help to live in a home that meets their needs.

The Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006 showed a total affordable housing need of 1,019 units within the borough. The major means of addressing this need are the net relets of the existing social stock, which, after Right-to-Buy sales, average 350 units. After allowing for the existing stock net relets, there will still be a total annual affordable housing shortfall of 669 units (ie 577 shortfall plus 92 assumed new units) representing a total of 6,690 units over the ten years to 2016.

Based on the average new unit supply of around 92 units over the previous three years, this level of annual need is nearly eight times the number of units able to be provided from new delivery and conversions resulting in growing levels of unmet need each year.

Additionally, 78 existing and 63 concealed households intend to leave the borough over the following three years because of a lack of affordable rented housing. These are not included in the needs assessment calculation.

The previous Housing Needs Survey was undertaken in 2001. The following trends are apparent over the period 2001-2006 (see Appendix 2):

- Households in unsuitable housing increased from 3548 to 4722.
- Households in unsuitable housing and needing to move increased from 888 to 2535.
- Households unable to afford to buy or rent increased from 597 to 1273.
- New household formation increased from 388 to 426.
- Proportion unable to access the private market increased from 49.9% to 76.2%.
- Supply of social relets decreased from 454 to 354 though the committed units of new affordable supply increased from 0 to 92.
- Overall annual shortfall increased from 409 to 577 (though note the differences between the two models, eg absence of in-migrant households in the 2001 model).

The Housing Needs Survey 2006 provided a very large database on both supply and demand by location within the borough and on the planned movement of households over the next five years. The Balancing Housing Markets Analysis 2006 (DCA, 2006b) provided further detailed information on:

- Size, type and tenure of the existing dwelling stock in each of six sub-areas (see Appendix 3).
- Supply / demand impact on stock flow of all moving households to 2009 in each of six sub-areas analysed by house type and size.

The key conclusions arising from the analysis are as follows:

**Private Sector**
- Demand for 1-bed stock (particularly 1-bed flats) exceeds supply in the Rural, Northfleet North and Gravesend Outer East sub-areas. Surpluses
of 1-bed stock are evident in Gravesend Central and Northfleet South, with oversupply wholly relating to flats in these areas.

- All areas have a shortfall of 2-bed stock, except Gravesend Central and Northfleet South, where surpluses exist. In areas of 2-bed deficit, generally shortfalls exist for 2-bed flats, while for other areas, deficits more generally relate to both 2-bed flats and 2-bed houses.
- 3-bed units are generally in net surplus, particularly in areas such as Gravesend Outer West and Northfleet North. Shortfalls do exist, however, in Gravesend Outer East, mainly relating to 3-bed houses.
- Shortfalls of 4+ bed stock (predominantly houses) exist in all areas of Gravesham, apart from Gravesend Central where small surpluses of 4+ bed houses exist. The largest deficits of 4+ bed stock exist in Gravesend Outer West and Rural areas.

**Affordable Sector**

- There is a stock shortfall of 1-bed properties; mostly prominent in Gravesend Central, Northfleet South and Gravesend Outer West. The overall net deficit relates mainly to houses (78%) followed by bungalows and flats.
- Around 44% of the overall net shortfall of affordable housing across the borough arises in the Gravesend Central and Rural areas. The majority of the net total shortfall in this area relates to 1 and 2-bed accommodation.
- 3-bed deficit is significant in Gravesend Central, Northfleet South, Rural and Gravesend Outer East. Surpluses of 3-bed flats, however, exist in Northfleet North.
- Demand exceeds supply for 4+ bed affordable accommodation (predominantly houses) in all areas across the borough.

The implications of this stock imbalance are that further difficulties are being created for new forming households attempting to access the housing market in the borough. For example, around 81% of new forming households are looking to occupy 1 or 2-bed units which represent only 33% of the housing stock. Clearly, the rate of turnover required is excessive.

**Planning Context**

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to prepare and keep under review a Local Development Scheme (LDS) for their area. The primary objective of the LDS is to set out the programme of work for the preparation of the Council’s Local Development Framework (LDF) for three years ahead. It is therefore both a key management tool and an important vehicle for explaining the Council’s plan-making intentions to key stakeholders and the general public.

In June 2008, changes designed to streamline the LDF system were introduced by way of new regulations and a new Planning Policy Statement 12 (Local Spatial Planning) (PPS12). Core Strategies will allocate strategic sites for development rather than waiting for a separate allocations document. In addition, adequate and proper provision will need to be made for appropriate infrastructure. Joint working between different planning authorities is also supported.

In the new development planning system, structure plans will cease to exist and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) will form strategic planning policy. The South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA) is responsible for preparing the RSS (the
South East Plan. It is anticipated that the South East Plan will be adopted in early 2009. The draft South East Plan includes a Sub-Regional Policy Framework for Kent Thames Gateway.

The draft South East Plan sets out the number of new dwellings which are required to be built over the period 2006–26. In the case of Gravesham, the figure is 9,300 dwellings of which 9,200 dwellings are expected to be delivered within the part of Gravesham within the Kent Thames Gateway. A 30% indicative target for affordable housing is given for Kent Thames Gateway in Policy KTG4.

**The ‘Credit Crunch’**

In the second half of 2007, it became apparent that the national economy and the housing market in particular were beginning to feel the effects of the global credit crunch. In the short term, the Government has agreed to support the banks. The mid and longer term effects are unclear. However, unemployment is beginning to rise and the effects on the housing market are starting to emerge, including:

- Open market house sales / transactions slowing down.
- Lengthening time to sell properties.
- Property repossessions on the increase.
- House prices falling or at best stagnating.
- Less investor interest in housing and land.
- Developers putting future plans on hold.
- Builders laying off workers.
- Builders not starting new speculative work, only completing under construction or already sold properties.
- Affordable thresholds (agreed through section 106) taking longer to reach so that affordable targets not being met.
- Unemployment figures beginning to rise.
- Difficult for new households to obtain a mortgage.
- Developers attempting to offload unsold dwellings on to RSLs / LAs.
- Tendency for social housing to be developed or brought forward.
- Buyers required to save more to find larger deposits.
- Will “buy to let” investors see this as an unattractive investment market?
- Should local authorities “finance” housing and sell off at later date?
- Does the “economic downturn” create opportunities to bring forward development that already has finance in place, social housing schemes or land assembly?

More recently, the Centre for Economics and Business Research has forecast that house prices will not return to the levels they peaked at in 2007 until 2013. The group also forecast that prices would fall in value by 25% from their peak to a trough at the end of 2009 (CEBR, October 2008).

### 3.5 Housing Conditions

The condition of a home has a significant impact on health and well-being. By improving the condition and quality of homes, the Council is helping prevent people’s lives being blighted by ill-health and reduce the risk of future homelessness. The Council is also committed to helping residents live in energy efficient homes which will reduce their fuel cost, help alleviate poverty and lower the impact of home energy use on the climate.
Private Sector

Key findings from the Gravesham Housing Stock Condition Survey 2006 (MHA, 2006) include the following:

- The Decent Homes Standard was introduced in order to deliver a government commitment to encourage the improvement of housing standards. Overall, 29.0% of occupied private sector (all tenures including Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) but excluding Local Authority) dwellings in Gravesham fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

- 27.5% of owner-occupied households in Gravesham are Non-Decent Homes under the Decent Homes Standard; the privately rented sector is consistently worse by a significant degree where 44.8% of privately rented households in Gravesham fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

- 13.7% of households in the RSL sector in Gravesham are Non-Decent Homes under the Decent Homes Standard; all of these must be made Decent by 2010 to meet the Public Service Agreement 7 (PSA 7) target.

- The most common reason for failure to satisfy the Decent Homes Standard was for “unacceptable” category 1 hazards, at 19.8% of all private sector (all tenures including RSLs but excluding Local Authority) households, followed by those not providing a reasonable degree of thermal comfort, at 15.1%, those not in a reasonable state of repair, at 14.7%, and those lacking modern facilities and services, at 1.2%.

- 17.0% of (non-social) private sector (owner-occupied and privately rented only) households in the borough are vulnerable households.

- 39.1% of all (non-social) private sector vulnerable households in the borough are living in Non-Decent Homes; thus 60.9% of all (non-social) private sector vulnerable households are living in Decent Homes, meaning that the figures in Gravesham fall short of the PSA 7 target for 2006 by 4.1%.

- The Council needs to increase the proportion of vulnerable households in the (non-social) private sector living in Decent Homes by 9.1% (some 442 households) to meet the PSA 7 target of 70% for 2010 (ie an average of 111 properties per annum from 2006/07–2009/10).

The report also summarised the costs involved in repairing and improving the borough’s private sector (owner-occupied, RSLs and privately rented) housing stock, as follows:

- In the borough, £13.19m is needed to remedy backlog or immediate disrepair.
- £28.97m is needed to deal with remedying unfitness and urgent repairs in the borough.
- The average cost to deal with immediate, urgent and non-urgent disrepair alone equates to £1,654 per dwelling.
• To tackle immediate, urgent repairs and non-urgent disrepair would cost £55.14m across the borough.
• £30.25m is required to remedy all recordable hazards in the borough, which equates to an average cost of £907 per dwelling, or £2,056 per dwelling with one or more recordable hazards.
• To tackle category 1 hazards only, £9.94m is needed across the borough, which equates to an average cost of £298 per dwelling, or £1,550 per dwelling with one or more category 1 hazards.
• £23.78m is required to make all Non-Decent Homes in the borough meet the Decent Homes Standard, which equates to an average cost of £733 per household, or £2,528 per Non-Decent Home.
• £7.23m is needed to remedy all Non-Decent Homes occupied by vulnerable households in the borough, at an average cost of £1,484 per vulnerable household, or £3,798 per Non-Decent Home occupied by a vulnerable household.
• £0.76m is needed to meet the PSA 7 target for vulnerable households living in Decent Homes for 2006, and £1.68m may be needed to meet the PSA 7 target for 2010.

The Council's plans for ensuring that the borough’s existing housing will continue to provide decent quality, warm and safe homes into the future are covered in detail in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2006-09 (Gravesham BC, 2005). The strategy aims to increase the proportion of vulnerable households living in decent homes within the private sector, take action to bring empty homes in the private sector back into use, ensure that unfit Houses in Multiple Occupation are made safe and where appropriate are licensed, and tackle fuel poverty (Gravesham BC, 2005). As such, the following property types are targeted:

• Homes which are unsafe and / or do not reach the Decent Homes standard.
• Least energy efficient homes.
• Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
• Empty homes (ie a wasted resource, a deterrent to neighbourhood renewal, the highest incidence of unfit housing).

In addition, homes occupied by those eligible for Disabled Facilities Grants are a priority for the service in terms of resource allocation.

The Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006 recommended promoting the growth of the private rented sector in order to provide a more balanced housing market.

The Council’s private sector priorities will be updated following the finalisation of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2009-12.

Local Authority Sector

The Housing Strategy 2005-09 reported that at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005, 262 of the Council’s 6132 homes failed the Decent Homes Standard with a further 1,143 expected to fail the standard during 2005/06. The Business Plan Annual Monitoring Returns 2006 and 2007 reported a worsening situation with 486 homes failing the standard at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 and 572 homes failing the standard at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. However, the 2008 return reported a slight improvement with 554 homes failing the standard at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. Further improvements are expected to be achieved with the number of Non-Decent Homes targeted to reduce to 469 at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and 268 at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.
The Housing Strategy 2005-09 reported that the stock condition information revealed that £26.2m of investment would be needed to meet the Decent Homes Standard (not all kitchens and bathrooms would be replaced) and a further £2.9m required to meet the locally defined Decent Homes Plus Standard by 2010. With resources of £26.6m, it was estimated that the Government’s Decent Homes Standard could be achieved by 2010 though the local Decent Homes Plus Standard would be unable to be achieved.

The Council’s plans for managing, funding and maintaining its housing stock in future years are covered in detail in the HRA Business Plan 2005-08 (Gravesham BC, 2006a). In October 2006, a ballot was undertaken on the transfer of the Council’s housing stock to a new registered social landlord. 70.4% of tenants voted, with 86% of those participating voting against a transfer resulting in the Council resolving in December 2006 to continue to own and manage its homes. The offer document made it clear that the Council would focus its resources on meeting the basic Decent Homes Standard (rather than the Decent Homes Plus Standard) and would not be able to provide new kitchens or bathrooms.

3.6 Summary of Main Action Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Priority – To improve the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Meet the Decent Homes target for Council-owned homes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Deliver Capital Programme and Responsive and Repairs services within strategic guidelines and budgetary resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensure the effective and timely delivery of the regeneration of the Christian Fields estate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review partnering arrangements with Apollo for capital works.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Achieve the Decent Homes target for all RSL properties with stock in the borough.</td>
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<td>• Ensure value for money and accessible services.</td>
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Also refer to:
• the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2009-12 for the full Action Plan for ensuring that the borough’s existing private sector housing will continue to provide decent quality, warm and safe homes
• the Empty Property Strategy 2008 for the full Action Plan for encouraging the adoption of a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to bringing empty properties in the private sector back into use

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategic Priority – With partners, to maximise the supply of affordable housing</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Progress the delivery of the Local Development Framework as the basis for securing sustainable development and affordable stock mix requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Utilise the North Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment to develop</td>
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site development briefs and planning policies that reflect the need to maximise affordable housing whilst taking account of market conditions.

- Ensure the robust monitoring of affordable housing delivery whilst analysing trends in planning policy, housing needs and nomination agreements.
- Develop an Affordable Housing Development Strategy to identify medium and long term plans for delivering the challenging affordable housing targets required to meet the known demand.
- Encourage the development of Parish Plans that include Design Statements to guide development in the rural areas.
- Undertake Rural Housing Needs Surveys.
- Achieve regional housing requirements as set out in the South East Plan.
- Exceed the average supply of 92 affordable new homes each year (assumed in the Housing Needs Survey 2006) ensuring that the Council's policy of seeking 30% of the units on sites of 15 units or more are affordable is maintained.
- Within the overall target, ensure a broad balance of 50% for social rent and 50% as intermediate market housing.
- Within the overall target, ensure a mix of house types to meet the needs for smaller units in line with the Housing Needs Survey 2006 findings and the Housing Register requirements.
- Undertake feasibility studies on the regeneration of Council-owned estates.
- Promote the growth of the private rented sector to provide a more balanced housing market.
- Address the need for “extra care” accommodation.
- Continue to promote disabled adaptations, developing a register of adapted property and the needs of disabled people and considering the adoption of Lifetime Homes standards for new housing.
- Ensure the allocation of land for gypsy and traveller pitches in accordance with the requirements of the RSS (the South East Plan) as informed by the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2007 (15 pitches up to 2011).
- Monitor the actual affordable housing delivery levels in future annual updates as recommended in the Housing Needs Survey 2006.
- Review existing partnership working with RSLs for gaps and duplication in delivering affordable housing, clear nomination agreements and the effective monitoring of performance (eg s106 performance, developments without public subsidy, commuted sums, etc).
- Monitor and where appropriate, maximise affordable housing development opportunities provided by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (eg Local Housing Companies, Special Delivery Vehicles).
- Review the Asset Management Plan to assess affordable housing development opportunities.
- Ensure value for money and accessible services.
4. **Housing Support Needs**

This section examines specific housing needs in Gravesham where support and strategic partnerships are required in order to respond to the needs of vulnerable people.

4.1 **Introduction**

In addition to enabling the scale of affordable housing to meet general household requirements, one of the Council’s most important roles is to support its more vulnerable residents. Good housing is the bedrock of this support because it provides a critical platform for health, education, work opportunities and life chances.

Housing can no longer be viewed as a stand-alone service. This is especially true when dealing with vulnerable people because they are likely to need some form of social care as well as a place to live. The Council seeks to provide the right housing support by working in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies.

The term “vulnerable people” applies to a wide section of the population. Examples include people who are:

- Elderly
- Physically disabled
- Learning disabled
- Homeless families and rough sleepers
- Recently released offenders
- Suffering from drug and alcohol problems
- Afflicted with mental health problems
- Women at risk of domestic violence
- People with HIV or Aids
- Refugees
- Young people at risk or leaving care
- Teenage parents

In practice, a significant number of people will have multiple needs and may fall under a number of categories. Their needs might be met in a variety of settings, including shared supported housing, hostels, women’s refuges, residential care homes, sheltered housing or by providing care and support in their own homes.

4.2 **Housing Support Needs Priorities**

The Government launched the Supporting People grant programme in 2003 as a way of shaping better co-ordinated service provision for vulnerable people. The programme has enabled housing support to fit in with health, social care and education. It has highlighted the importance of having local preventative and early intervention agendas. It also emphasises that services need to be more responsive to what users want and allow greater choice.

The Kent Supporting People Programme aims to improve the quality of life for vulnerable people by enabling them to live more independent lives in their
communities, or maintaining their capacity to do so (KCC, 2005). The Five Year Strategy identifies the following client groups with the highest priority for developing new housing-related support services:

- People with multiple / complex needs (including single people who are homeless / at risk of homelessness with mental health, alcohol and drugs needs, a history of offending).
- Young people at risk (including homeless 16 and 17 year olds).
- People who misuse alcohol and drugs.
- Frail older people.

An updated needs analysis conducted in 2007 reviewed the priority groups identified for service development in the Five Year Strategy (KCC, 2007c). The reconfiguration of Floating Support, following the strategic review of all such services, goes some way towards meeting the needs of particular priority client groups, such as Ex-Offenders, People Misusing Substances, and People with Mental Health problems. Similarly, the commissioning of a countywide Outreach and Resettlement services for Rough Sleepers, following the strategic review of short–term supported accommodation, will meet, to some extent, the needs of some homeless people with highly complex needs.

The analysis concluded that there remains the need for accommodation–based supported housing in particular for Young People at Risk across Kent and in some areas for People with Mental Health Problems, People Misusing Substances and People with Dual Diagnosis. In the short to medium–term and to meet Kent’s current strategic priorities, should funding become available, the following service developments should be considered in addition to the already agreed commissioning of new short–term, accommodation–based services:

- Specialist Floating Support services for particularly hard to reach groups, such as Gypsies and Travellers and People from other Minority Ethnic Asian communities in North Kent (where such groups make up relatively high percentages of the population and are not proportionately represented in services).
- Increase in the Floating Support for People with Mental Health Problems in East Kent.

The Strategy Refresh 2008 retains the same overall strategic aims and priority client groups as the Strategy 2005 – 2010 (KCC, 2008a).

The following sections outline these support needs.

4.3 Homelessness

The Council’s plans for helping homeless people are covered in detail in the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 (Gravesham BC, 2008a). Since the previous strategy was published in July 2003, there has been an overall decline in both the number of homeless applications and homeless acceptances. 664 applications were made in 2003/04 of which 356 resulted in acceptances by the Council. In 2007/08, there were 242 applications and 163 acceptances representing reductions of 64% and 54% respectively (figure 1).

Whilst these figure demonstrate the Council’s emphasis on homelessness prevention, the borough had the highest number of acceptances per 1000
households in the South East in 2006/07 (ie 6.6 households). The 2007/08 figures showed a reduction to 3.3 households.

*Figure 1: Gravesham Homeless Applications and Acceptances, 2002/03 – 2007/08*

The main reason for homelessness in 2007/08 was friends or family asking a household to leave (ie 53% of applications). This reflects the national picture, though the national average is lower at 35%. The second largest cause was the loss of rented or tied accommodation (ie 13% of applications). This compares with a national figure of 16%. The third main cause was the violent breakdown of a relationship (ie 10% of applications). The nationally reported figure was 12%. The Council’s Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 outlines specific actions for addressing the reasons for becoming homeless.

*Temporary Accommodation*

The Government has introduced a target for all local authorities to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. The reduction in temporary accommodation is calculated from 31st December 2004 when 48 households were accommodated in temporary accommodation. Consequently, the Council must reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation to 24 by 1st April 2010.

In September 2006, the number of households in temporary accommodation peaked at 160. The reduction to 27 households in June 2008 demonstrates the huge efforts already made by the Council. The Council is well focused in achieving the 2010 target and sustaining this level for the longer term.

In April 2004, the Government introduced legislation that prevents local authorities from accommodating households with children in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks. Recognising that this type of accommodation is unsuitable for families, in addition to complying with this statutory requirement, the Council has not used bed and breakfast accommodation for any period since October 2006. The Council, except in an emergency, will aim to continue the avoidance of bed and breakfast accommodation.
**Single Homelessness**

A survey of single homelessness in the Kent boroughs and districts undertaken by the Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing) in 2007 revealed the following:

- 13 respondents in Gravesham compared with 731 respondents overall.
- 10 were male, 0 were aged under 18, 5 were aged 18-25 and 12 were English.
- 7 had slept in a hostel the previous night and 7 would be sleeping in a hostel that night.
- 5 had slept rough in the past year.
- 6 had a drug problem and 5 had an alcohol problem.
- 12 had a local authority care or prison background.
- 5 had not had a settled home for 1-5 years.
- 11 were planning to stay in Gravesham Borough Council.
- 10 had first become homeless because of a family dispute.
- 11 had been prevented from finding another home because of a lack of a deposit or the payment of rent in advance.
- 9 needed help in finding a home, 7 in finding a job, 7 in receiving training and 6 in receiving support in life skills.
- 13 were registered with a GP.

**4.4 Older People**

In February 2008, the Government published “*Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*” – the first of its kind in the world (DCLG, 2008a). It heralds a series of measures that place older people at the heart of policy-making and will fundamentally change the way homes are designed and built. By 2011, all social housing must follow new Lifetime Homes standards, including wider doors, bathroom supports and stairwells big enough to take stair lifts. By 2013, these standards will be rolled out to the private sector. There will be a new rapid repair and adaptation agency, a new housing advice service for older people and new disabled facilities funding.

Kent’s Strategy for Later Life, “*Living Later Life to the Full*” (KCC, 2008b) seeks to ensure that communities are “age proof, stronger, safer and sustainable” by;

- Working with developers to make sure that new developments are designed to be sustainable and age-proof.
- Actively tackling housing disrepair and supporting older people in caring for their own homes.
- Developing existing communities to be more “age friendly”.
- Helping older people feel safe and secure within their own homes and community.
- Preparing for changes in the environment and climate-proofing communities to make them sustainable for the future.

The Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006 identified a combined requirement for sheltered accommodation from older people currently living in the borough (284 households) and those who may in-migrate to be beside their family (664 households) of 948 units, 558 in the affordable sector and 390 in the private sector.
Some of this requirement will be addressed by flow of the existing sheltered stock, but acceptability of existing stock to meet today’s standards will need to be assessed in calculating the scale of new delivery.

The significantly higher level of elderly accommodation for people moving into the borough is a new factor in the housing market. Generally, the forecast is being made by their children who assist in the moving process. Conversely the indigenous older population prefer to continue in the area / surroundings they know and within their own home as long as possible and actual migration should be monitored annually.

**Extra Care Housing**

The significant levels of growth in the older population in future will have a direct impact on the nature of specialist accommodation requirements for older people. The Housing Needs Survey identified a need for 199 units of extra care accommodation over the next three years. The need is likely to be greater than this level and an audit of existing sheltered housing schemes will be undertaken as part of the development of an Older Persons Housing Strategy.

**Supported Housing and Support Issues**

The Housing Needs Survey identified a need over the next three years for:

- 171 units of independent accommodation with external support.
- 46 residential / nursing home units.
- 250 units of Council / RSL sheltered housing and 34 private sheltered units.
- 20.3% of households in the borough contain somebody with a disability (7,550 households implied), of which 14.4% had two members affected. 61.7% of all household members with a disability were over 60, including 32.0% over 75.
- The largest group (4,288 implied) affected by a named disability were those with a walking difficulty, representing 46.3% of those with a support need.
- 11.5% of these households contained someone who was a wheelchair user, suggesting around 1,067 in Gravesham as a whole.
- Some 42.5% (3,802 implied of household members with support needs) felt they needed care or support which is not currently provided.
- 7.8% of all dwellings have been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person. 52.3% of adaptations have handrails / grabrails, 56.4% have bathroom adaptations and 27.5% have ground floor toilet adaptations.

**4.5 Young People Leaving Care**

Research by the Rainer Foundation (2007) - a national charity for under-supported young people – reported that 16% of young people leaving care were placed in unsuitable, and sometimes unsafe, accommodation. Vulnerable young people tended to be channeled into accommodation for general homeless acceptances and, in the worst cases, were being placed in housing that was physically unsecured and where they were subjected to harassment and discrimination by other tenants and staff.

The report recognised that problems with housing could undermine progress made in education, employment or other aspects of an individual’s life. Almost one-third of
rough sleepers have experienced local authority care as a child and 61% of young people have moved more than three times since leaving care.

According to the report, a lack of coordination between leaving care and housing teams could lead to a breakdown in the provision of “suitable accommodation”. 32% of young people surveyed felt that their accommodation did not meet their needs.

Key action points for Housing include:

- Housing for care leavers should be included within housing and homelessness strategies and should cover a range of accommodation from high-support to independent living.
- There should be a presumption against declaring any care leaver intentionally homeless. This should only be done in cases of serious anti-social behaviour or other extreme circumstances.
- Young people should be able to veto housing that does not address their needs as set out in their Pathway Plan.
- Local authorities should maintain a list of approved properties for use in housing care leavers up to the age of 21 (including temporary and emergency accommodation).

4.6 People with physical or mental health needs

In June 2005, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) launched a consultation on putting disability issues at the heart of public policy, and on priorities for creating a society where disabled people participate fully. Following detailed discussions with a range of stakeholders, the DRC identified 10 priority areas for action focused on resolving the deepest and most persistent social and economic exclusion faced by disabled people and their families (DRC, 2007).

Housing should:

- Undertake comprehensive surveys of housing need across different tenure and impairment groups and use this to inform the development of housing strategies.
- Develop a register of accessible housing (including private rented sector) and integrating these into choice based lettings.
- Ensure information contained on the planned “National Register of Social Housing” is accurate, sufficiently detailed, up to date and locally available.
- Set targets to narrow the gap in home ownership between households with disabled adults and other households.
- Address homelessness as a cross-cutting issue with multiple causes and effects, including joint planning and resourcing across Social Services, Housing, the NHS and the voluntary sector.

4.7 Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

The Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006 separately analysed the 256 returns from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups to give an insight into the specific housing needs of BME households within the borough. The survey concluded that the BME population, in general, had similar incomes and housing requirements to the borough as a whole and therefore, their housing needs should be met through those
initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of the whole population. However, there were particular needs for larger units of accommodation for BME households and independent accommodation for BME elders (though the latter should be considered alongside the needs of all older people in the borough).

Kent County Council examined the numbers of BME groups accessing the mainstream housing-related support services in order to identify the gaps in service provision (KCC, 2007a). In general, BME groups were represented proportionally in seeking access to and accessing housing-related support services. However, when comparing the background of particular groups against Census data, some Asian groups were under-represented in accessing services delivered in North Kent. There were clear cultural barriers to vulnerable members of the South Asian communities in North Kent in accessing the currently funded mainstream services and there was a need for a specialist Floating Support service covering North Kent (Gravesham and Dartford). Such services need to clearly meet the distinct cultural and linguistic needs of the communities.

The Council’s Tenants’ Satisfaction Survey 2006 revealed that whereas 78% of the Council’s tenants were satisfied with the overall housing service, the level of satisfaction for BME groups was only 64% (QCL Market Research, 2007). Similarly, there were differences between BME respondents and all respondents in those services considered to be most problematic and in need of improvement. Although the sample sizes are small, significantly higher percentages of BME respondents than “all respondents” considered racial harassment and people causing damage to homes to be “serious problems” and racial harassment, noise from people and traffic and dogs to be “slight problems”. Also, significantly higher percentages of BME respondents than all respondents considered overall quality of homes, repairs and maintenance, involving tenants in the management of housing and value for money to be the services most in need of improvement (Appendix 4).

4.8 Gypsies and Travellers

The Housing Act 2004 requires local authorities to include Gypsies and Travellers in their accommodation assessments and to take a strategic approach, including drawing up a strategy demonstrating how their accommodation needs will be met as part of the wider Housing Strategy.

In May 2006, Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale Councils commissioned a sub-regional study of the accommodation needs and aspirations of gypsies and travellers housed or living on authorised or unauthorised sites within the study area (DCA, 2006c). Some of the key action points for Housing included:

- Accommodation for 114 households on permanent site pitches across the study area between 2006 and 2011, with 15 of these pitches being provided in Gravesham (up to 2011).
- Smaller sites (15 or fewer pitches) are preferred for both permanent and transit sites, with most gypsy and traveller families preferring to live in the countryside on sites owned by the gypsy and traveller community.
- In line with the preferences expressed through the survey, 88% of new approvals should be on private sites. New private sites should have the capacity to accommodate both visitors and future family growth.
- New sites should be developed with larger plots to accommodate an average of two living units per household, visitors and additional vehicles, and larger pitches to accommodate modern mobile homes.
- Financial options should be developed to enable gypsy and traveller households to access finance for site development, either independently or in partnership with a housing association.
- Systems should be put in place to monitor the number of gypsy and traveller households living in social housing locally.
- Good practice in site management should be supported and further developed.
- A local code of guidance should be developed and promoted to enable gypsy and traveller households to access adaptations to their home.

Kent County Council’s examination of the numbers of BME groups accessing mainstream housing-related support services identified a need for specialist Floating Support services for gypsies and travellers required not only for meeting the housing-related support needs of vulnerable people in permanent housing but also to build up links with communities living on all sites to meet identified unmet needs (KCC, 2007a).

4.9 Migrant Workers

The lack of reliable and complete immigration data makes it difficult to assess the scale, characteristics, and impact of immigration. As a result, public debate on the issue tends to be based on perceptions and misinformation rather than facts. In addition, the lack of data creates significant difficulties for the planning and provision of public services, including social housing (Shelter, 2008).

Gravesham’s East European migrant workers tend to be employed in the cleaning and domestic staff sectors (38%). Many are male (67%) and young (42% aged 18-24 and 30% aged 25-34). They are likely to have few dependents with them and so, a low need for public services. Their main housing impact is in the private sector (Appendix 5).

Locally, it is becoming especially difficult to cope with the increased numbers of HMOs that are accommodating migrant workers and where conditions may be particularly poor (ie complaints, health and fire risks, etc).

More generally, the Chartered Institute of Housing and Housing Associations Charitable Trust (CIH / HACT, 2006) identified the following key housing points for new migrant workers:

- Rapid expansion in the numbers of new migrant workers needing affordable private rented accommodation and an increase in tenant turnover.
- Material impact on local housing markets and local neighbourhoods.
- Widespread concerns about housing conditions for some migrant workers but local authorities often lack a strategic approach to conditions in the private rented sector.
- Migrants who lose their jobs can become homeless and destitute.

In addition, research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation revealed that Eastern and Central European migrants are opting to stay in Britain longer than they intended. Just under a quarter of the 307 respondents who provided information about their long-term plans as of April 2004 said that they intended to settle permanently in the UK (JRF, 2007).
4.10 Summary of Main Action Points

Strategic Priority – To tackle and prevent homelessness and address the needs of other vulnerable groups

- Develop a clearer understanding of the needs of young people and develop appropriate services through the production of a Young People’s Housing Strategy.
- Develop a clearer understanding of the needs of minority groups and develop appropriate services through the production of a Minority Communities Housing Strategy.
- Ensure that adapted affordable rented homes that become available for letting are prioritised for people with physical or mental health needs appropriate to the adaptations or design or have adaptation works undertaken.
- Provide an adaptations service for people with physical or mental health needs through the Disabled Facilities Grant for people in private sector accommodation or a Housing Revenue Account funded scheme for people in Council homes.
- Review joint working and partnerships for all vulnerable groups to improve referral routes and services.
- Support people to access and maintain accommodation.
- Ensure Supporting People standards are complied with and financial returns are submitted by deadlines.
- Contribute towards the review and update of the Five year Supporting People Strategy as a commissioning partner in the Kent Countywide Supporting People partnership.
- Ensure the Home Improvement Agency service is reviewed and available from April 2009 in conjunction with other local authority partners and Kent CC Supporting People Team.
- Undertake equality impact assessments for all housing services.
- Ensure value for money and accessible services.

Also refer to:

- the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 for the full Action Plan for working in partnership with key partners to prevent homelessness and, wherever possible, to assist people in finding suitable accommodation which meets their needs before homelessness arises
- the Review of Social Housing Provision for Older People in Gravesham 2008 for the full Action Plan for developing the Council’s sheltered housing services
5. **The Housing Strategy**

This section examines the housing strategic priorities identified as contributing to achieving the Council’s housing vision and how they will be delivered.

5.1 **Housing Strategy Challenges**

The challenges for housing strategy vary across the country. The major issue that most areas face is a shortage of affordable housing which in many urban and rural areas now threaten the sustainability of communities. In recent years, the housing market has made it increasingly difficult to obtain a home to own or to rent. As affordability worsens, more people are pushed either into the private rented sector, driving up rents, or into the already hard-pressed social rented sector. These shortages have a number of economic and social consequences, creating difficulties and hardship for many people who may find themselves living in inappropriate accommodation. There is also a problem for key workers who are priced out of the market in the area where they work.

The Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006 identified a total annual affordable housing shortfall of 669 units (i.e. 577 shortfall plus 92 assumed new units) representing a total shortfall of 6,690 units over the ten years to 2016. In 2007/08, the Council undertook 242 decisions on households presenting themselves as homeless and accepted 163 households as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Consequently, strategic priorities concerned with maximising the supply of affordable housing and tackling and preventing homelessness and addressing the needs of other vulnerable groups continue to be major challenges.

Improving the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors recognises that by making best use of the existing housing stock, the need for new housing, including new affordable housing, will be reduced. The repair, improvement or adaptation of existing housing to ensure it is useable, or preventative work to enable people to continue to occupy their homes also reduce the need for more housing. Consequently, this form of intervention makes property improvement a major priority.

How well the Council assesses housing needs, tackles homelessness, works towards the Decent Homes Standard, helps residents to access a home suitable for their needs and makes critical links with support services all influence its excellence in recognising diversity across the borough’s residents and offering opportunities and choices over where they live. Consequently, delivering an excellent housing service for all of the borough’s residents underpins all the Council’s other housing priorities and likewise, is a major priority.

The Council’s achievements to date through earlier Housing Strategies and Service Plans reveal an evolutionary trend from seeking excellence in the management of the Council’s existing housing stock to seeking excellence in the strategic balancing of the local housing market to seeking excellence in “place shaping”.

“Place shaping” is anticipated to be the big Housing Strategy challenge over the next few years. It starts with creating a vision for how a place should look and feel, including creating attractive places and good quality affordable housing in all tenures.
that attracts investment and workers for a vibrant economy. It is also about offering people opportunities and choices over where they live, creating high quality well-connected homes, enhancing people's life chances, making positive impacts on health and wellbeing, connections to skills and employment and an improved environment. Consequently, housing organisations will need to work alongside other service providers in their areas, taking account of user preferences and user engagement, taking an active role in Local Strategic Partnerships and influencing local area agreements. Local partnerships will need to work together to ensure that new and existing housing has both the physical and social infrastructures to create welcoming and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods.

The Housing Strategy challenges facing the Council are:

- To deliver an excellent housing service for all residents of Gravesham (that is excellence in housing management, excellence in strategic planning, excellence in "place shaping").
- To improve the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors.
- With partners, to maximise the supply of affordable housing.
- To tackle and prevent homelessness and address the needs of other vulnerable groups.

These challenges are considered as follows.

5.2 Priority 1 – To deliver an excellent housing service for all residents of Gravesham (that is excellence in housing management, excellence in strategic planning, excellence in "place shaping")

Why this priority?

Housing’s fundamental principles are that everyone should have the opportunity to live in a decent home, at a price they can afford, within a sustainable community. Promoting choice, independence, decency and equality for all sectors of the community whilst recognising particular needs and aspirations, all need to underpin the Council’s Housing Strategy and other core strategies and sub-strategies.

Alongside the Cave Report, the independent Hills Review commissioned by the Government and published in 2007, called for major reforms to ensure that social housing needs are met. Four areas where more could be done were identified:

- Support more of an income mix within neighbourhoods.
- Support the livelihoods of tenants and others in housing need.
- Offer a more varied menu for tenants.
- Increase the attention given to existing stock and tenant population.

Their recommendations formed the basis of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and re-emphasised the need for excellent housing services. The new housing regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), will place tenants and their needs at the heart of regulation. It will need to ensure that tenants’ priority concerns are met on the quality of the basic housing management service, such as maintenance or dealing with anti social behaviour, and that they have more choice and achieve better outcomes. In turn, greater tenant involvement in the management of their homes has
the potential to improve the experience of tenants, and to contribute to the wider aim of community empowerment.

The TSA also has the power to set outcome-based standards for social housing providers on issues connected to social housing, which might include appropriate standards on tackling worklessness. Social housing providers should be mindful of the negative consequences of polarising worklessness and deprivation within their housing, and should take whatever steps they can to address or avoid them.

The Lyons’ Inquiry (2007) identified the following housing issues that local and central government would need to pursue in the future:

- A clear challenge to local government to take a strategic view of housing provision in their area, including market as well as social and affordable housing.
- A question mark over whether local government will have to take a more active role in supply, given the difficulties of provision for older people, and continuing problems in supply, especially of affordable housing and in some rural communities.
- The importance of ensuring that investment in social housing delivers the best value for money, both with regard to local action and to the impact of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy arrangements.
- A danger that current arrangements are too fragmented both locally and nationally and a need to engage housing associations, particularly the larger organisations, more fully in place shaping.

Consequently, the Housing Strategy has a critical role to play in building integrated, cohesive and sustainable communities. Housing organisations need to work alongside other service providers in the borough to ensure that new and existing housing has both the physical and social infrastructures to create welcoming and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods. Problems with housing can cause community breakdown and tension and undermine progress made in education, employment and other aspects of an individual’s life.

**Local context**

Some clear patterns emerged from the consultation process, particularly from the responses to the Housing Strategy Review 2007 (Appendix 1). The issues that partners, stakeholders and residents feel are important showed very clear patterns and priorities. In relation to the delivery of an excellent housing service, these included (in no particular order):

- Excellent housing and vibrant sustainable communities require good locations, accessible transport and health, social care and voluntary sector facilities, which in turn encourage integrated communities.
- Better communication with residents ensuring that their needs are at the forefront of plans, they are involved in the shaping of communities and they are kept informed of progress.
- More partnership working on existing estates, particularly where there is more than one landlord.
- Interagency Joint Forums, joint working and strategic planning all help deliver excellence in strategic planning.
- Work with CABE and utilise best practice on urban design for place-shaping (eg English Partnership’s Urban Design Compendium).
• Meet more often as a RSL Strategy Group to receive progress reports on the delivery of the Housing Strategy and to share individual achievements so that outcomes can be monitored and changes incorporated (eg avoiding the oversupply of particular types of housing).
• Minimise waiting times for high priority cases. Be aware of the needs of vulnerable groups, which may require additional supported housing schemes.
• Careful and thorough vetting of all applicants (especially when “place shaping” is involved).
• Deal promptly with problem residents.
• Review the investment in the improvement and maintenance of the Council’s properties.
• Invest in staff development and retention.
• Share good practice with other service providers.
• Others to be added from the 2009 consultation process on the draft Housing Strategy

Future plans

Delivering an excellent housing service that provides vision, choice, affordability, independence, decency and equality to the borough’s residents requires:

• Excellence in the management of the existing housing stock.
• Excellence in the strategic balancing of the local housing market through partnership working and planning powers.
• Excellence in “place shaping” in helping to create welcoming and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods taking account of user preferences and user engagement.

The Council will seek excellence in housing management by:

• Promoting and supporting a local “customer perspective”, increasing the understanding of the diversity and vulnerability of customers, identifying local problems, communicating these to service providers and pursuing “joined up solutions”.
• Strengthening the greater involvement of local people in the housing services delivered by offering effective consultation and structures for tenant involvement.
• Supporting networking, relationship building and joint working between service providers at a neighbourhood level.
• Bringing residents, community groups and service providers together at a neighbourhood level in a way that improves service providers’ understanding of local problems and ability to target services on local needs.
• Promoting and supporting innovation in working practices by service providers.
• Facilitating a more active community and voluntary sector, and contributing to the development of social capital in the community.
• Optimising and managing resources effectively to plan and meet the needs and aspirations of customers.
• Pursuing a best practice approach to improving performance and value for money and achieving Best Value through effective monitoring, evaluation, feedback and involvement.
• Implementing a programme for achieving Management Excellence and providing a staff development programme to provide all employees with opportunities to develop their potential, consistent with the needs and priorities of the Council.

The Council will seek excellence in the strategic balancing of the local housing market by:

• Maintaining robust mechanisms for collecting, analysing and presenting information about trends and requirements relating to housing markets, residents’ concerns and aspirations and related matters.
• Making the best use of the existing housing stock.
• Assessing and planning the current and future housing needs of the local population across all tenures.
• Planning and commission housing support services which link homes to the support and other services that people need to live in them.
• Better understanding the housing market place and the commercial risks faced by housing associations and developers.
• Working in partnership to secure effective housing and neighbourhood management on an ongoing basis.
• Developing housing solutions that facilitate independent living in the community and meet the needs of vulnerable groups.
• Speeding up delivery by sharing good practice and resources, working with partners, reducing the time taken to negotiate s106 agreements, etc.
• Encouraging all stakeholders to become more involved in the production of local housing strategies (eg information exchange and listening events).
• Increasing the understanding of diversity and the vulnerability of customers.
• Achieving wider social, economic and environmental aims, in particular by tackling homelessness, overcrowding, unemployment, etc and promoting social mix.
• Developing formal protocols with other agencies to clarify responsibilities and ensure effective co-ordination.
• Better tracking of performance to help demonstrate value for money.

The Council will seek excellence in “place shaping” by:

• Effective sub-regional working through constructive and productive partnerships with neighbouring authorities.
• Establishing and maintaining a range of internal and external partnerships to achieve welcoming, safe and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods based on a shared vision of sustainable communities (eg externally with local developers, housing associations, private landlords, health and educational authorities, voluntary organisations, residents’ groups, etc and internally with planning, finance, environmental, legal, property, corporate policy, etc).
• Being mindful of the negative consequences of polarising worklessness and deprivation within the housing stock and taking steps to address or avoid them (eg monitoring the Kent Choice Based Lettings scheme in increasing housing choice and mobility in employment).
• Realising efficiencies through the joint procurement with neighbouring local authorities of housing surveys, co-ordinating their timing, quality and frequency, removing duplication and ensuring that the most urgent needs are met.
• Effective mechanisms for understanding and acting on residents’ concerns and aspirations for their neighbourhoods.
• Developing housing’s role in the Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership.
• Effective action-planning with clear responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.
• Using excellence to promote peer review and challenge and engaging users in service design and preferences.

Excellence in place shaping will reinforce the Council’s strategic housing role in influencing the nature of the housing outcomes within the borough. For example, are the housing products the right ones for the borough’s residents? Is the best use being made of the existing housing stock across all tenures? Are all possible appropriate affordable housing options being provided? What is the quality of the local service providers and landlords? Is housing contributing to community wellbeing through linkages with support services?

**Recent achievements**

The previous Housing Strategy 2005-09 and subsequent Housing Service Plans contained a series of detailed actions that enabled the Council’s housing priorities to be turned into actions that were delivered. Significant progress has been made on:

• Undertaking a ballot on the transfer of the Council’s housing stock to a new registered social landlord. 70.4% of tenants voted, with 86% of those participating voting against a transfer resulting in the Council resolving in December 2006 to continue to own and manage its homes.
• Improving performance on rent collection following the development of new procedures in partnership with tenants which focused on preventing tenants getting into arrears.
• Revising the former tenant arrears procedure in September 2006 in partnership with tenants. Target for recovering £550,000 of former tenants’ arrears achieved.
• Improving the housing void turnaround rates following the establishment of a Voids Performance Review Group, helping tenants to be housed more quickly.
• Increasing the appointments made for housing repair work to 90% of all jobs.
• Enhancing performance through modern methods of procurement for the supply of materials and services (ie repairs and maintenance partnering contracts and cash collection contract).
• Improving Estate Inspection procedures in conjunction with residents. Improvements made to the layout of forms, including feedback to tenants present during the estate inspections.
• Establishing a Joint Public Safety Unit between the Council and the Police. Two Housing officers joined the Community Safety Team to deliver more joined-up working between Community Safety and the Housing Service. Standard anti-social behaviour (ASB) reporting procedures drafted and corporate database launched.
• Providing capital finance to provide CCTV to blocks of flats where incidences of ASB experienced.
• Undertaking the 3 yearly STATUS survey, which provided more in-depth information on customer profiles. The headline figures were 78% satisfaction with overall services, 64% satisfaction by BME tenants and 79% satisfaction amongst non-ethnic minority tenants.
• Increasing participation by BME community members. Targets of 3% involvement for BME communities were achieved with 4.76% participation for both minority ethnic and Irish or non-UK white.
• ODPM (now DCLG) award received in recognition of the Council’s Beacon award for promoting racial equality.
• In partnership with Moat Housing, providing a multi-game area at King’s Farm to encourage younger members of the community to become more active.
• Providing monthly updates of Service Plan actions and outcomes. Performance information used to benchmark with other local authorities through CIPFA and HouseMark.
• Completing annual performance appraisals with all staff, including a review of training needs. Continuing Professional Development facilitated.
• Holding regular 1 to 1 and team meetings with Section Heads and staff.
• Training 55 staff in Customer Care in September 2006 to help ensure an effective customer focus.
• Achieving ISO 9001 Quality Assurance for repairs and maintenance services.
• Reviewing and revising Complaints Policy in July 2006 in consultation with tenants. Target time to visit complainants of anti-social behaviour reduced to 3 days to provide a more challenging target.
• Delivering “Accommodating Excellence” with a new Civic Centre reception being opened to the public following refurbishment and the moving back of the Housing staff into the Civic Centre.

The above have been taken from the Housing Business Plans 2008/09. The achievements from the Housing Business Plans 2009/10 will be added.

These are by no means exhaustive and partners and stakeholders have had a key role in delivering these achievements. The previous Housing Strategy delivered real improvements in local housing services. This new Housing Strategy builds on this success and continues to focus on the actions and outcomes that are important to residents.
5.2 **Priority 2 – To improve the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors**

*Why this priority?*

The overall supply of housing cannot be detached from the quality of the stock. If no one wants to live in a home because of its poor physical or environmental quality, then it is not contributing to the overall supply. An ongoing programme of maintenance and improvement of the stock is still required if the good work of the Decent Homes programme is not to be undone.

National policy has moved away from the provision of grant assistance to encouraging individual responsibility and using the equity balance available in the owner occupied stock. The targeted approach means that the focus remains on vulnerable residents needing assistance to remain in their own homes. This context has clear linkages to health and well-being indicators and can have a knock-on impact on other service providers’ budgets in the longer term.

*Local context*

Some clear patterns emerged from the consultation process, particularly from the responses to the Housing Strategy Review 2007 ([Appendix 1](#)). The issues that partners, stakeholders and residents feel are important showed very clear patterns and priorities. In relation to improving the quality of housing, these included (in no particular order):

- Review the investment in maintenance and improvement of property. Energy efficient homes meeting environmental standards would ensure that vulnerable people are not at risk of fuel poverty.
- Overall housing quality would be improved by providing effective and efficient security both within the home and within the wider environment / community.
- Promote grants and other schemes.
- Ensure that all Houses in Multiple Occupation are inspected and licensed and brought up to the Decent Homes Standard.
- Be more efficient in both the speed and quality of work to repairs and empty properties, particularly in the choice of contractors or staff.
- Monitor the private sector more effectively in terms of the quality of housing provided.
- Maintain a register of private landlords wishing to work with the Council.
- Demand more of developers (ie better design, more space and more houses).
- Promote the renovation and reuse of empty properties in the borough that are a waste of resources and a blight on the landscape.
- Improving the quality of private sector properties should remain the responsibility of owners and landlords.
- New kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems should be installed in Council properties where they are old and costly to maintain.
- Council tenants should be given a choice of either a bath or shower cubicle and a choice of kitchen units and colour schemes when they are refurbished.
- **Others to be added from the 2009 consultation process on the draft Housing Strategy**
Future plans

Private Sector

The Council’s plans for ensuring that the borough’s existing housing will continue to provide decent quality, warm and safe homes into the future will be covered in detail in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2009-12 (Gravesham BC, 2009).

Based upon the Council’s consideration of the key recommendations emerging from the boroughwide Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2006, the Council will:

- Continue to target the property types identified in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2006 – 2009; that is: Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), empty homes, homes which are unsafe and / or do not reach the Decent Homes Standard, and the least energy efficient homes.
- Achieve sizeable reductions in the total numbers of dwellings exhibiting one or more category 1 hazard and Non-Decent Homes by addressing the issue of energy efficiency. The Council will prioritise energy efficiency and continue to encourage uptake of energy efficiency improvement measures.
- Share information on energy efficiency with homeowners and landlords to encourage uptake, as it is in their own long-term financial interests to reduce fuel bills.
- In partnership with the Kent Energy Centre and the Citizens Advice Bureaux, encourage residents to explore a number of potential power providers before deciding upon a particular power supplier and to advise residents to review their current tariffs to seek beneficial tariffs.
- Be proactive in the privately rented sector regarding housing conditions and energy efficiency issues. The privately rented sector will also be targeted most when dealing with HMO licensing and other legislation applying to flat-type accommodation.
- Consider a policy of encouraging private landlords to convert their converted flats back into houses to increase the level of rental accommodation available to families with children.
- Continue to use preventative action to tackle empty properties, to try to avoid the need for potentially expensive and time-consuming Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) by addressing the problem earlier. Research model EDMO procedures so that action can be taken as a last resort should the need arise.
- Consider the development of a private sector register of existing adapted properties and disabled residents needing adapted accommodation in order to facilitate better matching and value for money.
- Consider expanding the Accessible Homes Template (Gravesham) to include the private sector.
- Given the comparatively large proportion of households in Gravesham with a head of household aged 60 years old or over, develop a strategy focusing on the needs of these residents.

The Council’s private sector priorities will be finalised following the publication of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2009-12.

The Council’s plans for encouraging the adoption of a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to bringing empty properties in the private sector back into

Local Authority Sector

Meeting the 2010 target of 100% Decent Homes for the Council’s housing stock will be very challenging because of the financial pressures on the Housing Revenue Account. The Council is committed to achieving the target and has found a way of carrying out the necessary works by disposing of a maximum of 12 properties per annum from its existing housing stock. The 2009/10 Decent Homes programme will be the first to benefit from such funding.

It is a matter of real concern that the basic Decent Homes Standard provision could lead to an increasing deterioration of the housing stock. Action to seek to mitigate this unacceptable situation is being taken and the Council will be working with tenants over the forthcoming years to agree the appropriate options to pursue.

Recent achievements

The previous Housing Strategy 2005-09 and subsequent Housing Service Plans contained a series of detailed actions that enabled the Council’s housing priorities to be turned into actions that were delivered. Significant progress has been made on:

Private Sector

- Finalising the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2006.
- Processing Private Sector Housing Renewal grant enquiries (100) and applications received (50) within strategy guidelines and budgetary resources.
- Processing Disabled Facilities Grant enquiries (27) and applications received (6), within strategic guidelines and budgetary resources.
- Reviewing the National Enforcement Protocol for joint working between Local Housing Authorities and the Fire and Rescue Service on HMOs and signing up to the Kent-wide agreement.
- Organising Private Sector Landlords' Forums in conjunction with Dartford Borough Council.
- Preparing a joint North and West Kent regional housing bid with seven other councils totalling £11.9 million with £520,000 coming to Gravesham for funding for private sector housing renewal work (grants and loans) for the 3 year period 2008-2011.

Local Authority Sector

- Undertaking a ballot on the transfer of the Council’s housing stock to a new registered social landlord, resulting in the Council resolving to continue to own and manage its homes.
- Undertaking annual reviews of the Decent Homes programme to ensure that delivery matches the Transfer Offer document.
- Delivering Capital Programme and Responsive and Repairs services within strategy guidelines and budgetary resources.
- Rationalising the Repairs and Maintenance Team.
- Completing various agreements for the delivery of the Christian Fields regeneration project in partnership with Moat Housing and Countryside Properties.
• Monitoring tenant satisfaction with the Council’s repairs and maintenance services and reporting quarterly to SIAG 2 & the super SIAG.
• Reviewing partnering arrangements for capital works.
• Partly funding the purchase of 4 “street properties” by Registered Social Landlords from the Council’s capital funds.
• Bringing 79 private sector homes brought back into use during 2006/07 exceeding the annual target of 39 homes.
• Licensing 18 HMOs under statutory requirements.
• In Touch Home Improvement Agency agreement in place.

The above have been taken from the Housing Business Plans 2008/09. The achievements from the Housing Business Plans 2009/10 will be added.

These are by no means exhaustive and partners and stakeholders have had a key role in delivering these achievements. The previous Housing Strategy delivered real improvements in local housing services. This new Housing Strategy builds on this success and continues to focus on the actions and outcomes that are important to residents.
5.4 Priority 3 – With partners, to maximise the supply of affordable housing

Why this priority?

The provision of a high quality supply of new housing over the medium and long terms is central to ensuring a good choice of home, responding to the demand from a growing population and the aspirations of residents to move to better quality housing. There are challenges to overcome in the housing market in the short-term but the fundamental need remains to respond to the long-term increasing demand for homes. Primarily there is a need to build viable, sustainable developments.

The housing market has become more expensive to enter in the last decade. The National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU) highlighted the frustrations of the increasing numbers excluded from the housing market. As affordability in the market sector worsens, more people are pushed either into the private rented sector, driving up rents, or into the already hard-pressed social rented sector. Deprivation will increase and the situation will worsen in already deprived areas. The economy suffers from the consequent impediments to labour mobility and an increasing quantity of taxpayers’ money is required to deal with the social problems generated both by increasing deprivation and the inability of numerous key workers to find somewhere to live in the area where they work.

The NHPAU concluded that between 2000 and 2007, the affordability position has deteriorated significantly. The demand for housing will continue to increase while the number of new dwellings completed remains too low. Initial analysis shows that “all other things being equal, current plans will lead to a further deterioration in the lower quartile house price to earnings ratio from seven to around ten by 2026” (NHPAU, 2007a).

Local context

Some clear patterns emerged from the consultation process, particularly from the responses to the Housing Strategy Review 2007 (Appendix 1). The issues that partners, stakeholders and residents feel are important showed very clear patterns and priorities. In relation to maximising the supply of affordable housing, these included (in no particular order):

- More affordable housing needs to be made available. Seek a higher percentage on new developments whilst ensuring nomination rights are for the most vulnerable within society.
- “Affordable” housing should mean what it says. Some so-called Key Worker rents and costs are too high, especially for some single people.
- Concentrate on affordable rented property rather than part-rent, part-buy.
- Provide more family homes in both the affordable and social rented sectors.
- Do more to help those people who are ineligible for social housing but cannot afford to purchase a property.
- Adopt “Lifetime Homes” building principles. All housing should achieve the standards of “Lifetime Homes”, not just those that are defined as affordable homes.
- Demand more from private developers. Ensure that partners take account of the needs of their customers and put them at the forefront of their plans, ensuring ongoing opportunities for feedback and change.
• Ensure that developers work towards mixed communities by not placing all the affordable housing, including socially affordable rented housing, in one area of the development.
• Enter a partnership with a developer on the understanding that the Council would have the responsibility for letting the properties to suitable tenants.
• Ensure that partner RSLs prioritise estate improvements alongside new developments to address known issues.
• Allow a housing association to take over the Council’s housing stock in order to access greater financial resources. Apply the approach being adopted at Christianfields more widely.
• Adopt a partnership approach to procure housing opportunities on Council-owned land by releasing the land through the local plans rather than housing associations having to compete on the open market.
• Maximise the opportunities for affordable housing offered by the major sites in the growth areas with an excellence on design and place making.
• Maximise any financial incentives available to the Council from the government.
• Continue to work hard to secure properties through s.106 agreements whilst maintaining quality standards.
• Provide regular updates on brownfield sites which could be use to develop social affordable housing.
• Streamline the planning process and fully resource the Planning Department.
• Others to be added from the 2009 consultation process on the draft Housing Strategy

Future plans

Affordable housing tenures are generally viewed as social rent, intermediate rent and low cost home ownership. In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3): Housing (November 2006), low cost market housing is not regarded as affordable housing, but may meet housing need as part of the overall provision.

Consequently, the Council understands “affordable housing” to include housing for people who are unable to resolve their housing needs in the local private market because of the relationship between housing costs and income. This includes housing for social rent and intermediate housing (ie shared ownership, low cost home ownership and sub-market rent).

Maximising the supply of affordable housing requires:

• Excellence in the strategic balancing of the local housing market through partnership working and planning powers.
• Delivery of the Local Development Framework as the basis for securing sustainable development. Promoting sustainable development in determining the size and type of stock mix requirements.
• Encouraging the development of Parish Plans that include Design Statements to guide development in rural areas.
• Providing affordable homes on sites suitable for development that reflect local housing needs and aspirations. Responding to local trends in terms of increasing levels of new household formation and unsuitable housing and declining levels of affordability and social housing relets, etc.
• Promoting the growth of the private rented sector to provide a more balanced housing market.
• Participation in the planning and delivery of strategic developments, including applications for funding and the establishment of Special Delivery Vehicles.

Based upon the key recommendations emerging from the Housing Needs Survey 2006, the Council will:

• Provide a mix of house types in both the market and social sectors to meet the needs for smaller units.
• Promote the growth of the private rented sector to provide a more balanced housing market.
• Negotiate with prospective developers towards achieving subsidised affordable homes from all the suitable sites coming forward for planning consent over the period of the Local Plan.
• Consider within the Local Development Framework to affordable housing targets of up to 40% within the borough.
• Within the overall target, consider a broad balance of 50% for social rent and 50% as intermediate market housing.
• In anticipation of a new lower site threshold of 15 units or 0.5 hectares in the new Planning Guidance, promote the lowest threshold considered viable and which will deliver additional affordable units.
• Develop an Older Persons Housing Strategy to assess needs, the suitability of existing sheltered stock and the need for “extra care” accommodation.
• Continue to promote disabled adaptations, developing a register of adapted property and the needs of disabled people and considering the adoption of Lifetime Homes standards for new housing.

The Council considered an alternative approach for increasing the supply of affordable housing, which will be pursued through the Local Development Framework process, is to reduce the thresholds in the urban and rural areas. The threshold has been reduced from 25 units or 1 hectare to 15 units or 0.5 hectare in the urban area, whilst in the rural area, where 2 or more residential units are proposed, the Council will seek to achieve 50% affordable housing (Gravesham BC, 2007a).

The Balancing Housing Markets Analysis 2006 recommended that despite the scale of future demand, it would not be sustainable or deliverable in market terms to build all new stock in one or two sectors of the market. There is a need, however, for new low-cost market housing and planning policies and site development briefs will continue to address the shortage of 1 and 2-bed affordable houses and modern flats in the current stock.

The Council’s Housing Register provides up to date information on immediate housing need across the Borough. This information will also be taken into consideration on a site-by-site basis to inform negotiations.

The Council believes that sustainable development is the key issue in determining the type and size of stock mix requirements. Account will be taken of existing surrounding or local stock, existing service provision, school utilisation, access to shops and medical facilities, etc so that the local area will become more balanced and sustainable after the completion of the development. Balanced communities also bring questions about the mix of people within social or market housing, social
interaction, the viability of development, employment opportunities, income, choice and services. The borough’s regeneration initiatives will provide major opportunities for achieving balanced communities.

The Council expects the needs of key and essential workers to be met through the Government’s Key Worker Living Programme and through the provision of intermediate housing in the borough. Eligible essential and key worker applicants will apply to the Homebuy Agent for Kent (operated by Moat Housing Group) and be prioritised by the Council for available intermediate housing schemes.

The Council welcomes the opportunities provided by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 to remove financial disincentives to council house building. These changes will help local authorities to deliver their strategic housing role by giving them another option for delivering the right mix of affordable housing to meet the needs of local people, alongside provision through Registered Social Landlords and other developers (Gravesham BC, 2007b).

The Council will develop an Affordable Housing Development Strategy to identify medium and long term plans for delivering the challenging affordable housing targets. This approach will be informed by existing and planned research (eg North Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment) and initially will be developed as part of the Local Development Framework with input from partners, stakeholders and residents.

**Recent achievements**

The previous Housing Strategy 2005-09 and subsequent Housing Service Plans contained a series of detailed actions that enabled the Council’s housing priorities to be turned into actions that were delivered. Significant progress has been made on:

- Reviewing existing partnership working with RSLs for gaps and duplication in delivering affordable housing, clear nomination agreements and the effective monitoring of performance (eg s106 performance, developments without public subsidy, commuted sums. etc).
- Reviewing (in conjunction with Dartford, Medway and Swale Councils) the role of the North Kent Housing Partnership in achieving best practice in the provision of affordable housing.
- Undertaking the Housing Needs Survey 2006.
- Undertaking the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Survey 2006 in partnership with Dartford, Medway and Swale Councils.
- Maintaining the policy of achieving 30% affordable housing on urban sites of more than 25 units taking into account that on occasions, the Council receives commuted sum monies instead of delivering affordable units on site.
- Negotiating affordable housing contributions on new developments to secure both on-site units and commuted sums.
- Utilising Council-owned sites for new affordable housing.
- Securing Housing Corporation allocations for the development of 328 units of affordable housing over 2006-08 to assist more households from the Common Housing Register.
- Delivering 305 new homes during 2006/07 exceeding the annual target of 300 new homes.
- Delivering 36% “affordable homes” during 2006/07 exceeding the annual target of 30%.
• Delivering 82% of new homes built on previously developed land during 2006/07 exceeding the annual target of 75%.
• Providing social rented housing on the southern part of the Lord Street / Eden Place / Parrock Street development.
• Completing the first rural affordable housing schemes at Isis Cottages, Higham, Evenden Road, Meopham and School Lane, Higham.
• Undertaking further consultation events on the Local Development Framework Statement of Community Involvement.
• Assisting Meopham Parish Council in bringing forward a Parish Design Statement.
• Developing a uniform Section 106 agreement for use county-wide by other Kent local housing authorities.
• Promoting “sustainability” within new and existing communities (eg Heritage Quarter, Parrock Street, etc).

The above have been taken from the Housing Business Plans 2008/09. The achievements from the Housing Business Plans 2009/10 will be added.

These are by no means exhaustive and partners and stakeholders have had a key role in delivering these achievements. The previous Housing Strategy delivered real improvements in local housing services. This new Housing Strategy builds on this success and continues to focus on the actions and outcomes that are important to residents.
5.5 **Priority 4 – To tackle and prevent homelessness and address the needs of other vulnerable groups.**

**Why this priority?**

The Government’s vision is that everyone has the opportunity to live a fulfilled, active and independent life. One of the keys to achieving this is having a stable home.

Specific targets have been set for local authorities, which include:

- Reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation to zero.
- Reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010.
- Keeping levels of rough sleeping as close to zero as possible.
- A year on year increase in the number of households whose homelessness has been prevented.

Other non-specific targets include:

- All local authorities to offer a wide range of options at an early stage before homelessness actually occurs.
- Introduction of Sanctuary Schemes for victims of domestic violence.

The Supporting People programme seeks to ensure that vulnerable people have the skills they need to live independently, support in finding and maintaining a suitable home and help in identifying jobs and training opportunities, accessing utility services, claiming the right benefits and ensuring that their accommodation is accessible and safe.

In particular, an increasing older population is an issue which is being discussed at length at a national level. “Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society” is about ensuring that all policies for housing and planning positively reflect the aspirations, changing lifestyles and needs of an ageing population, both now and in the future. Building homes to last a lifetime is only a start; places must be shaped that frame a lifetime’s change too. Neighbourhoods, like homes, should be not only safe, but inclusive. The park, the shops, the cinema and the health centre have got to be within reach and a pleasure for all (DCLG, 2008a).

The existing social housing stock has an important role in implementing these aims. Priority can be given to existing social tenants who wish to downsize so that large family homes can be re-allocated to overcrowded households or families owed the main homelessness duty. Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings schemes can also take this into account.

**Local context**

Some clear patterns emerged from the consultation process, particularly from the responses to the Homelessness Stakeholder Event held in May 2008 and the Housing Strategy Review 2007 (**Appendix 1**). The issues that partners, stakeholders and residents feel are important showed very clear patterns and priorities. In relation to tackling and preventing homelessness and addressing the needs of other vulnerable groups, these included (in no particular order):
• The Council should adopt a leadership role by working with other agencies (particularly those already experienced in tackling homelessness) rather than adopting a sole provider role.
• Work with partners more effectively to help those who are homeless / vulnerable to become independent or secure the support they need.
• Work more with charities (eg Shelter and the churches).
• Ensure that the existing referral protocols are used.
• Review the existing homeless forums by sub-dividing them into specialist areas and giving service providers the responsibility to deliver the agreed strategic priorities (eg Homeless Young Persons' forum).
• Provide an up to date list of landlords willing to take tenants in receipt of housing benefit.
• Carry out preventative work in schools to address youth homelessness.
• Provide specialist training for Housing Needs Officers in specific housing advice areas (eg relationship breakdown, mental health).
• Introduce rent deposit schemes that can assist single person households.
• Provide emergency placements for 1–3 nights for young people in volunteer homes who can offer support and guidance.

Address the needs of vulnerable groups through more independent living skills and training opportunities in order to acquire the essential skills.
• Provide "move on" accommodation for up to 6-12 months for young people with both physical and learning disabilities to enable some of the needs of vulnerable groups to be addressed.
• Consider “group living” for vulnerable groups initially before they move into independent accommodation with the provision of adequate support.
• Provide more supported accommodation for 16-21 year olds needed in the Gravesend area (ie young people will always remain a hidden statistic sleeping on a friend’s sofa rather than approaching the Council). “Crash pad” facilities are required.
• Properties should be more “elderly friendly”. Open more sheltered accommodation, supply more aids and adaptations and provide more advice to enable people to improve their situations.
• Provide smaller homes (ie 1 or 2 bedrooms) encompassing different tenure types to enable older people to downsize.
• Provide Extra Care housing (1 and 2 bedrooms) for older people and people with dementia to improve housing quality.
• Ensure that Mental Health remains a priority, especially in the provision of “move-on” accommodation from supported accommodation.
• Adopt “Lifetime Homes” building principles to ensure that all new housing caters for the disabled, etc and incorporates improved technology such as Telehealth and Telecare. Consider the width of doors, space for aids and adaptations in bathrooms, steps and high thresholds, local banks and shops, car-parking, street lighting and security.
• Strong support for meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The needs in Kent are acute and sites need to be identified quickly, rather than waiting for the regional targets which could take some time.
• **Others to be added from the 2009 consultation process on the draft Housing Strategy**
Future plans

The Council will seek to secure the provision of suitable homes for vulnerable people as part of its responsibility to secure affordable housing in new residential developments. Proposed developments should be located to enable the best possible social inclusion and integration and should be easily accessible to public transport and a range of shops and services.

The range of supported housing provision is generally limited in the borough and the following groups in particular have been identified as a priority for new provision.

Homelessness

The Council’s Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 seeks to work in partnership with key partners to prevent homelessness and, wherever possible, to assist people in finding suitable accommodation which meets their needs before homelessness arises. Based on a review of the previous Homelessness Strategy 2003-08 and the levels of homelessness in the borough, the revised strategy identifies the following key objectives:

- Improve access to the private rented sector.
- Prevent homelessness and address the main causes.
- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation.
- Support people to access and maintain accommodation by providing housing advice and assistance.
- Address the problem of youth homelessness.
- Ensure effective partnership working.
- Improve the range and choice of affordable accommodation available.

The Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 Action Plan sets out the actions that the Council will undertake in order to meet these strategic objectives. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually to monitor outcomes and identify issues that should be awarded greater priority in the context of homelessness prevention and advice.

Older People

The Gravesham Housing Needs Survey 2006 recommended the development of an Older Persons Housing Strategy to address the current and future growth in older people and frail older households across all tenures and their related care and support needs. The strategy would:

- Assess and prioritise the need for support services and adaptations required to keep people in their own home.
- Re-assess existing sheltered stock in meeting today’s housing standards and preferences.
- Assess the need for ‘extra care’ accommodation for the growing frail elderly population.

The Council commissioned The Consultancy Company to review its social housing provision for older people. The review took place during the period April – July 2008. A number of options were considered for the Council to develop its sheltered housing services and recommendations framed to align with the three main purposes of the review (The Consultancy Company, 2008). The recommendations are designed to enable the Council, together with its partner organisations, to work towards the
“Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods” model outlined earlier. These will be reviewed annually to monitor outcomes and identify issues that should be awarded greater priority in the context of social housing provision for older people in the borough.

**Young People**

The majority of people accepted as homeless by the Council are aged 24 and under (56% of acceptances during 2007/08). The main reason for single households approaching the Council as homeless is friends or family asking them to leave.

The Council will seek to tackle youth homelessness through early engagement with young people and their families. Mediation either provided by the Council or specialist providers can assist young people to remain at or return to the family home. The De Paul Trust has developed the Reconnect mediation service in the borough after much success in the London boroughs.

The Council will develop a clearer understanding of the needs of young people and develop appropriate services through the production of a Young People’s Housing Strategy.

The Council will also develop a joint assessment protocol with Social Services whereby the young person and their parents will meet with a Social Worker and Housing Needs Officer to agree a planned move away from the family home to avoid homelessness. The feasibility of developing a respite scheme which offers short (1-3 nights) emergency stays in the homes of trained and supported volunteers will be examined. This time away, with support, can help young people return home and mediation can help in resolving the longer term issues.

**People with physical or mental health needs**

The Council will continue to work with partners to ensure that the housing needs of people with physical or mental health needs are addressed and the right housing support provided. The reconfiguration of the floating support service, following the strategic review of the Kent Supporting People Programme, goes some way towards enabling vulnerable people to live more independent lives in their communities, or maintaining their capacity to do so.

The Council will ensure that adapted affordable rented homes that become available for letting are prioritised for people with physical or mental health needs appropriate to the adaptations or design. Through the Kent Choice Based Lettings scheme, such properties are clearly identified to prospective tenants. When new homes are developed, the Council will aim to ensure that where appropriate these meet “Lifetime Homes” standards, which reduce the need for people who have, or develop, physical or mental health needs to move out or have adaptation works undertaken.

The Council will also provide an adaptations service for people with physical or mental health needs. This assistance is provided by the Disabled Facilities Grant operated by the Council for people in private sector accommodation or a Housing Revenue Account funded scheme for people in Council homes.
Minority Communities

The Council will develop a Minority Communities Housing Strategy to ensure that the future development and delivery of housing and housing-related services meets the needs of the borough’s diverse communities, offers inclusiveness of choice and removes any barriers to equality in housing across all tenures. It will be one of a number of sub-strategies of the Council’s Housing Strategy. Particular attention will be given to the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic groups, Gypsies and Travellers and Migrant Workers.

The Council will develop this strategy in consultation with local partners and stakeholders, including minority communities.

Recent achievements

The previous Housing Strategy 2005-09 and subsequent Housing Service Plans contained a series of detailed actions that enabled the Council’s housing priorities to be turned into actions that were delivered. Significant progress has been made on:

- Restructuring the Housing Needs Team to ensure that a full range of advice and options is available to homeless clients. Making referrals to Supporting People Floating Support, where support needs are identified.
- Placing increased emphasis on the prevention of homelessness.
- Signing up to a number of protocols to respond to specific aspects of homelessness; including a Joint Protocol with Kent County Council to address the needs of homeless families with children, a Joint Protocol to address the needs of young people aged 16-21 years old, and a Joint Multi-agency Protocol for the housing and resettlement of offenders.
- Utilising Basildon Mediation on a case by case referral basis and working in partnership with Reconnect Family Mediation Service.
- Launching the Gravesham Family Lettings Rent Deposit Scheme.
- Setting up the Gravesham Partnership Lettings for families and households with dependent households.
- Setting up a referrals process with Madison House and De Paul Trust to provide supported accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Setting up the Jubilee Court supported lodgings scheme for under 21 single mothers.
- Operating a fast track Housing Benefits assessment system to process applications for those households threatened with homelessness or staying in temporary accommodation.
- Ceasing to use bed and breakfast and hostel accommodation for homelessness cases.
- On target to halve the use of temporary accommodation by 31st March 2010.

The above have been taken from the Housing Business Plans 2008/09 and the Homelessness Strategy 2008. The achievements from the Housing Business Plans 2009/10 will be added together with any other achievements concerned with meeting the needs of vulnerable groups.

These are by no means exhaustive and partners and stakeholders have had a key role in delivering these achievements. The previous Housing Strategy delivered real improvements in local housing services. This new Housing Strategy builds on this
success and continues to focus on the actions and outcomes that are important to residents.
6. **Delivering the Housing Strategy**

This section outlines the mechanisms in place to deliver the priorities identified in the Housing Strategy, including the development of strategies and services, the capital programmes and revenue budgets available to deliver the priorities and the monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan.

6.1 **Research and intelligence**

The Council has developed a wide range of information on the borough’s housing stock, the needs of residents and the dynamics of the housing market. This information is used to inform and develop strategies and services to ensure that real needs are being met. The key studies undertaken to date include:

- Gravesham Housing Needs Survey, 2006
- Gravesham Balancing Housing Markets / Housing Stock Analysis, 2006
- North Kent Gypsy and Traveller Study, 2006
- Gravesham House Condition Survey, 2006
- Gravesham Tenants’ Satisfaction Surveys, 2007 and 2009
- Review of Social Housing Provision for Older People in Gravesham, 2008
- Rural Housing Needs Surveys
- Parish Surveys

The Council is committed to undertaking continuing research to inform its knowledge and understanding of housing needs and markets across the borough. A North Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) will be undertaken in 2009. The SHMA will help set the strategic context for shaping the housing market within the area and will inform the development of local housing strategies and local development frameworks. In particular, clear evidence will be provided about the level and nature of housing need and demand (in terms of type, size, tenure and affordability) and recommendations on how this could be met. The outcomes will provide a good understanding of the housing markets, including their characteristics and drivers for change.

The SHMA will also inform the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments to be carried out by the Council.

The Housing Strategy 2009-13 is not a stand-alone document. It is co-ordinated with other important strategies and processes and expressed through a number of local documents. These include other core strategies, such as the Local Development Framework and the Supporting People Strategy, as well as sub-strategies, such as strategies for preventing homelessness, improving the private rented sector and bringing empty properties back into use. Consequently, the Housing Strategy sits within a suite of strategic documents:


These are available on the Council’s website at http://www.local.gravesham.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4305

The Council will continue in its development of other sub-strategies, including:

• An Affordable Housing Development Strategy, which will identify medium and long term plans for delivering the challenging affordable housing targets required to meet the known demand.
• A Minority Communities Housing Strategy, which will ensure that the future development and delivery of housing and housing-related services meets the needs of the borough’s diverse communities, offers inclusiveness of choice and removes any barriers to equality in housing across all tenures.
• A Young People’s Housing Strategy, which will provide a clearer understanding of the needs of young people and develop appropriate services.

The Council’s housing strategic priorities will inform the production of the annual Housing Business Plans (ie Housing Services, Housing Strategy and Development, Repairs and Maintenance, Regulatory Services and Planning and Regeneration) by taking account of emerging plans, "gaps" and recent achievements.

These strategic documents provide a framework for service delivery, help ensure that appropriate support is available and reduce the risk of challenge.

6.2 Value for money

The Council spends considerable sums on delivering housing services and improving the housing stock. Details of the capital investment and revenue expenditure are contained in Appendix 6.

The Housing Strategy will be successful only if the total resources necessary to achieve the plans and actions have been identified. Resources are not just about finance; people with appropriate skills, capacity and knowledge are important resources. It is essential that all resources are used efficiently and effective to ensure that the maximum results are achieved.

The Housing Strategy highlights the importance of value for money issues as a core element to ensure that all of the housing challenges facing the borough are approached in an efficient and effective way. The Council is committed to achieving value for money by ensuring that housing services are run efficiently, income is maximised, services are delivered in partnership and continuing savings are made to reduce expenditure.

The Council will also continue to develop its performance monitoring framework to provide clear evidence of service improvements (including a range of service user
satisfaction measures) and improve its use of benchmarking tools to increase its understanding of the relative costs of services provided in relation to other similar councils (see Appendix 7). Operational practices will be reviewed to meet efficiency targets arising from the Gershon Review.

For example, improved performance in homelessness has resulted in a reduction in spending and a focus on more efficient preventative working. Use of temporary accommodation has reduced and the use of bed and breakfast has been eliminated. Substantial savings of nearly £224,000 over the period September 2006 – November 2008 have been made as a result.

Other examples include:

- A joint North and West Kent regional housing bid with seven other councils totalling £11.9 million with £520,000 coming to Gravesham for funding for private sector housing renewal work (grants and loans) for the 3 year period 2008-2011.
- The joint procurement of the Gypsy and Traveller survey resulting in savings of £4,500.
- Jointly commissioning the Review of Social Housing Provision for Older People with Dartford Borough Council saving £1,300 per council.
- A three-way partnership involving the Council, Dartford Borough Council and the Home Improvement Agency enabling access to significant resources (eg shared training with two other councils produced savings in the region of £2,500).

Effective joint working has increased the capacity of the Council’s service teams.

6.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The Council will undertake ongoing reviews of its Housing Strategy and sub-strategies in order to monitor and evaluate achievements, identify additional resources to ensure delivery and include new activities where ongoing research and intelligence identifies a need. The results of these reviews will be reported to Elected Members through quarterly performance reports to the Cabinet. The Council will continue to keep its partners, stakeholders and residents informed of developments through its quarterly publication, Strategic Housing Matters.

An Action Plan for this Housing Strategy has been developed (see section 7) to focus effort on delivering the housing strategic priorities. The Action Plan is directly linked to the action plans for the Council’s Corporate Plan, the housing sub-strategies, the annual Housing Business Plans and one-to-one or Team Plans. These explicit links are identified in the Action Plan and ensure that the Housing Strategy is a “living” document committed to informing investment decisions for the Housing Service.

Central to this process will be the Council’s Corporate Housing Group currently comprising representatives from Housing Strategy, Housing Policy and Projects, Housing Development, Housing Needs and Homelessness, Private Sector Housing and Planning Policy. Other representatives will be invited as the group considers necessary.

The Corporate Housing Group seeks to develop the Council’s Strategic Housing role by:
• Adopting a holistic approach to developing the Council’s strategic housing role by identifying and making links with wider national, regional and local objectives and agencies.
• Providing updates on relevant strategic housing developments.
• Providing links with, and representation on, the Kent-wide Housing Strategy and Enabling Sub-Group and other relevant groups internal and external to the Council.
• Sharing and promoting good practice within the group and with partner agencies to improve performance in strategic housing.
• Providing a consultative forum for the Council’s strategic housing services as a link between the strategic and policy frameworks.
• Considering and commenting upon major plans, strategies and consultation documents, including government guidelines, directives and initiatives in respect of strategic housing issues.
• Participating in formal research exercises in respect of best practice, benchmarking exercises and other statutory requirements.
• Participate in training events to enhance the knowledge base across the group.

The Council will consult widely to ensure that its housing strategic priorities reflect the right issues and priorities and build partnerships to help deliver the Housing Strategy and sub-strategies. The results of the main consultation activities in producing this housing Strategy are summarised in Appendix 1.

The Council will work with its strategic partners to ensure that existing partnerships are working effectively and are delivering clear outcomes for residents and providing value for money. Delivery will be supported by the following mechanisms:

• A culture of performance management.
• A commitment to ensuring excellent service delivery.
• Management information.
• Ongoing staff development.

The Council will actively lobby for local, regional and national support for its plans to ensure that the current and future housing needs of its residents and workers are met.
7. **Action Plan 2009-13**

The Housing Strategic Priorities relate to the Council’s corporate goals and housing priorities as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Strategic Priorities</th>
<th>Corporate Plan Goals</th>
<th>Corporate Plan Housing Priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Housing Strategic Priority 1:** To deliver an excellent housing service for all residents of Gravesham (that is excellence in housing management, excellence in strategic planning, excellence in “place shaping”) | **Goal 1: Environment**  
To achieve a safe, clean and green Place of Choice  
**Goal 2: Communities**  
To foster vibrant and cohesive communities that promote engagement, diversity, social inclusion, health and well-being, leisure and culture  
**Goal 3: Housing**  
To secure the housing needs of the borough  
**Goal 4: Business**  
To secure a sustainable and buoyant economy, particularly in the town centre and Ebbsfleet, with attractive investment opportunities and a developing tourism market  
**Goal 5: Regeneration**  
To maximise regeneration opportunities for the benefit of existing and new communities  
**Goal 6: Transformation**  
To transform the Council into an economically sound organisation delivering excellent accessible services that provide value-for-money | **Priority 3.1:**  
To develop and deliver an overarching Housing Strategy which meets the needs of the borough  
**Priority 3.2:**  
To undertake regeneration of the Christian Fields estate and to further investigate other potential areas for renewal  
**Priority 3.3:**  
To provide Council housing stock that meets the government-set Decent Homes Standard by 2010 and to work towards improving the condition of the private sector housing stock  
**Priority 3.4:**  
To ensure the provision of sufficient affordable housing to meet the needs of the borough  
**Priority 3.5:**  
To achieve excellence in tenant engagement |
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<tr>
<th>Housing Strategic Priorities</th>
<th>Corporate Plan Goals</th>
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</table>
| **Housing Strategic Priority 2:** To improve the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors | Goal 1: Environment  
Goal 2: Communities  
Goal 3: Housing  
Goal 5: Regeneration | Priority 3.2  
Priority 3.3 |
| **Housing Strategic Priority 3:** With partners, to maximise the supply of affordable housing | Goal 1: Environment  
Goal 2: Communities  
Goal 3: Housing  
Goal 4: Business  
Goal 5: Regeneration | Priority 3.4 |
| **Housing Strategic Priority 4:** To tackle and prevent homelessness and address the needs of other vulnerable groups | Goal 2: Communities  
Goal 3: Housing  
Goal 5: Regeneration | Priority 3.1  
Priority 3.4 |

Source: Gravesham Borough Council Corporate Plan 2008-12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Success Measures</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing Strategic Priority 1: To deliver an excellent housing service for all residents of Gravesham (that is excellence in housing management, excellence in strategic planning, excellence in “place shaping”)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Excellence in housing management</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> Improve the overall standard of all housing services in a way recognised by service users</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Minimum of 2 star standard achieved for all services (measured against Audit Commission KLOEs)</td>
<td>All service managers</td>
<td>Existing budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2</strong> Make maximum efficient use of existing affordable rented housing stock (eg minimise relet times, maximise rental collection, encourage take up of under-occupation incentive schemes, etc)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Upper quartile performance for all National Performance Indicators and reportable indicators where benchmarking can take place</td>
<td>All service managers</td>
<td>Existing budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> Use excellence to promote peer review and challenge and engage users in service design and preferences</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Peer reviews undertaken • More effective optimisation and management of resources (eg allocations and introductory tenancies reviews) • Improved services</td>
<td>All service managers</td>
<td>Existing budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> Promote and support a local “customer perspective”, increasing the understanding of the diversity and vulnerability of customers, identifying local problems, communicating these to service providers and pursuing</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• More service users involved • Increased understanding of local problems and targeting of resources • Improved services • Increased service satisfaction • STATUS survey commissioned and</td>
<td>Tenant Participation Manager</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Strategic Priority</td>
<td>Target Date</td>
<td>Success Measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>“joined up solutions”</td>
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<td>action plan developed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **1.5** Strongen the greater involvement of local people in the housing services delivered by offering effective consultation and structures for tenant involvement | Ongoing | • More service users involved  
• Improved services  
• Increased service satisfaction  
• Beacon Status for Resident Involvement achieved | Tenant Participation Manager | Existing staff resources |
| **1.6** Improved efficiency in responding to customers:  
• Answer 85% of telephone calls in 5 rings  
• 85% of letters within 5 working days  
• 85% of customers’ complaints within 15 days (and learn from complaints) | Annual | Targets met | All service managers | Existing staff resources |
| **1.7** Implement a programme for achieving Management Excellence and providing a staff development programme to provide staff with opportunities to develop their potential, consistent with the needs and priorities of the Council | Annual | • Staff appraisals completed  
• Increased staff development  
• Innovation in working practices | All service managers | Existing budgets |
| **1.8** See items 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.13 and 4.4 for related actions | | | | |

**Excellence in strategic planning**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.9 | Assess and plan the current and future housing needs of the local population across all tenures | 2011 with review of 2006 survey in 2009 | • Needs assessment completed as part of the SHMA (see 3.2)  
• Action plans developed and being implemented | Principal Planner (Policy) / Housing Strategy Manager | Existing budgets |
| 1.10 | Improve the understanding of the housing market place and the commercial risks faced by housing associations and developers (see 3.2) | Ongoing | • Research completed  
• Action plans developed and being implemented | Housing Development Manager / Principal Planner (Policy) | Existing budgets |
| 1.11 | Encourage all stakeholders to become more involved in the production of local housing strategies (eg information exchange and listening events) | Ongoing | • Consultation events held and ongoing  
• Increased stakeholder involvement  
• Results incorporated in housing strategies | Housing Strategy Manager / Tenant Participation Manager | Existing staff resources |
| 1.12 | Speed up delivery by sharing good practice and resources, working with partners, reducing the time taken to negotiate s106 agreements, etc | Ongoing | • Increased partner involvement  
• Improvements in s106 negotiations and outputs | Housing Development Manager |  
• Existing staff resources  
• Housing Corporation / HCA grant  
• S106 benefits  
• Commuted sums |
| 1.13 | Plan and commission housing support services which link homes to the support and other services that people need to live in them | Ongoing | • Increased partner involvement  
• Improved services  
• Increased service satisfaction | All service managers |  
• Existing budgets  
• Supporting People budgets |
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<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1.14 Develop formal protocols with other agencies to clarify responsibilities and ensure effective co-ordination | Ongoing | • Increased partner involvement  
• Improved services  
• Increased service satisfaction | All service managers | Existing staff resources |
| 1.15 Achieve wider social, economic and environmental aims by tackling homelessness, overcrowding, unemployment, etc and promoting social mix | Ongoing | • Increased partner involvement  
• Improved services  
• Increased service satisfaction | All service managers | Existing budgets |
| 1.16 Maintain robust mechanisms for collecting, analysing and presenting information about trends and requirements relating to housing markets, residents’ concerns and aspirations and related matters | Ongoing | • Research completed  
• Action plans developed and being implemented | All service managers | Existing budgets |
| 1.17 Effective action-planning with clear responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes | Ongoing | • Involvement of staff, residents and other key stakeholders in Service Plans  
• Quarterly reviews of Action Plans | All service managers | Existing staff resources |
| 1.18 Realise efficiencies through joint procurement with neighbouring local authorities of housing surveys, co-ordinating their timing, quality and frequency, removing duplication and ensuring that the most urgent needs are met | Ongoing | • Improved services through networking, relationship building and joint working  
• Increased service satisfaction | Principal Planner (Policy) / Housing Strategy Manager | Existing budgets |
<p>| 1.19 <strong>See items 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.11, 3.15, 3.19, 4.10 and 4.12 for related actions</strong> | | | | |</p>
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</table>
| 1.20 Undertake effective sub-regional working through constructive and productive partnerships with neighbouring authorities | Ongoing | • Research completed  
• Action plans developed and being implemented | All service managers | Existing staff resources |
| 1.21 Establish and maintain a range of internal and external partnerships to achieve welcoming, safe and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods based on a shared vision of sustainable communities | Ongoing | • Research completed  
• Action plans developed and being implemented  
• Increased service satisfaction | All service managers | Existing staff resources |
| 1.22 Develop housing’s role in the Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership | Ongoing | • Research completed  
• Housing’s role evident  
• Action plans developed and being implemented | All service managers | Existing staff resources |
| 1.23 Involve service users more in shaping the services they use and affect their lives | Ongoing | • More service users involved  
• Improved services  
• Increased service satisfaction | Tenant Participation Manager | Existing staff resources |
| 1.24 Introduce effective mechanisms for understanding and acting on residents’ concerns and aspirations for their neighbourhoods | Ongoing | • More residents involved  
• Improved services  
• Increased service satisfaction | Tenant Participation Manager | Existing staff resources |
| 1.25 Contribute towards the development of a Countywide Choice Based Lettings | 2009 | • CBL scheme in place  
• Increased housing choice and mobility | Housing Operations | Existing budgets |
### Housing Strategic Priority

**as part of the Kent wide partnership of social housing providers**

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<tr>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Success Measures</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in employment</td>
<td>Manager</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• No adverse impact on vulnerable groups in obtaining affordable housing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.26</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ensure value for money and accessible services</strong></td>
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<td>Annually</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Improved performance management arrangements through effective monitoring, evaluation, feedback and involvement to drive value for money</td>
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<td>• Ongoing benchmarking of housing services to identify and remedy areas of high cost and poor services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Effective management of General Fund and HRA finances and assets so that both capital and revenue budgets are effectively funded year on year to enable delivery of strategic objectives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Improved collection of rents, service charges and arrears</td>
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<td>• Improved IT systems</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.27</strong></td>
<td><strong>See items 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.12, 3.14, 3.17, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.9 for related actions</strong></td>
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</table>

### Housing Strategic Priority 2: To improve the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors

#### 2.1

*Please refer to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2009-12 for the full Action Plan for ensuring that the borough’s existing private sector housing will continue to provide decent quality, warm and safe homes*

*The strategic objectives are:*

*To be completed following the finalisation of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2009-12*
### Housing Strategic Priority

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Success Measures</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key components of the Action Plan include:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• To be completed following the finalisation of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2009-12</td>
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</table>

2.2 **Please refer to the Empty Property Strategy 2008 for the full Action Plan for encouraging the adoption of a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to bringing empty properties in the private sector back into use**

**The strategic objectives are:**
- Develop a proactive approach towards the early identification and prevention of empty properties
- Bring long-term empty properties back into use
- Work with partners to raise awareness of the issues around empty properties

**Key components of the Action Plan include:**
- Reviewing procedures for identifying owners of empty properties and recording, monitoring and reporting performance
- Developing a means of prioritising empty properties by their physical condition and security together with the follow-up action required
- Develop a means of surveying neighbourhoods following the actions taken in bringing empty properties back into use
- Setting empty property reduction targets following the establishment of baseline data
- Developing a corporate policy / procedure for enforcement action for bringing empty properties back into use through a range of powers (eg CPO, enforced sale, s215, EDMO, etc)
- Developing information packs for owners of empty properties on empty property management, legislation / tax, available grants and loans, financial packages, incentives, etc
- Promoting effective partnerships with landlords and owners to reduce vacancy levels in the private housing stock
- Maximising the external funding opportunities for tackling empty properties (Government, Regional Housing Board, etc)

2.3 **Meet the Decent Homes target for Council-owned homes**

<p>| 2010 | • Decent Homes target met (annual and final targets) | Asst Director (Housing) / Building Services Manager / Housing Accountant |
| 2010 | • Annual reviews undertaken of the HRA Business Plan and the Decent Homes programme to ensure that delivery matches the Transfer Offer document | Existing budgets |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Success Measures</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Deliver Capital Programme and Responsive and Repairs services within strategic guidelines and budgetary resources</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Targets met</td>
<td>Building Services Manager</td>
<td>Existing budgets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2.5 Ensure the effective and timely delivery of the regeneration of the Christian Fields estate | 2009 | Relevant phases completed | Asst Director (Housing) / Housing Policy & Projects Manager | • Existing budgets  
• RSL resources |
| 2.6 Review partnering arrangements with Apollo for capital works | 2009 | • Review completed  
• Action plans developed and being implemented  
• Increased service satisfaction | Building Services Manager | Existing staff resources |
| 2.7 Achieve Decent Homes target for all RSL properties with stock in the borough | 2010 | Monitor progress through RSL Forum | Housing Development Manager | • Existing staff resources  
• RSL resources |
| 2.8 Ensure value for money and accessible services | Ongoing | • 100% of satisfied residents with Council's repairs and maintenance services  
• Quarterly reports to SIAG | Building Services Manager | Existing staff resources |
| 2.9 See items 3.11, 3.13, 3.14, 3.18 and 3.19 for related actions | | | | |

**Housing Strategic Priority 3: With partners, to maximise the supply of affordable housing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Success Measures</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Progress the delivery of the Local</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>• Regulation 25 consultation on Core</td>
<td>Principal Planner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Strategic Priority</td>
<td>Target Date</td>
<td>Success Measures</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Utilise the North Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Council’s Strategic Land Availability Assessment to develop draft site development briefs and planning policies in the LDF that reflect the need to maximise affordable housing whilst taking account of market conditions</td>
<td>Summer 2009</td>
<td>• Ongoing understanding of affordability across tenures and market constituents • Actions developed to tackle key affordability issues</td>
<td>Housing Development Manager / Principal Planner (Policy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Ensure the robust monitoring of affordable housing delivery whilst analysing trends in planning policy, housing needs and nomination agreements</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>• Ongoing understanding of affordability across tenures and market constituents • Actions developed to tackle key affordability issues</td>
<td>Housing Development Manager / Principal Planner (Policy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Develop an Affordable Housing Development Strategy to identify medium and long term plans for delivering the challenging affordable housing targets required to meet the 2010 (following SHMA in 2009)</td>
<td>2010 (following SHMA in 2009)</td>
<td>• Research completed • Strategy and action plans developed and being implemented</td>
<td>Housing Development Manager / Corporate Housing Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Strategic Priority</td>
<td>Target Date</td>
<td>Success Measures</td>
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<td>known demand</td>
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<td>3.5 Encourage the development of Parish / Community Plans that include Design Statements to guide development in the rural areas</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Parish / Community Plans completed</td>
<td>Principal Planner (Policy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3.6 Undertake Rural Housing Needs Surveys | One survey per year | • Rural Housing Needs Surveys completed  
• Repeat every 3-4 years in agreement with the Parish Council. | Housing Development Manager / Principal Planner (Policy) | Existing budgets |
| 3.7 Achieve regional housing requirements as set out in the South East Plan | Following adoption of SE Plan in 2009 | Regional housing targets met | Principal Planner (Policy) | Existing budgets |
| 3.8 Exceed the average supply of 92 affordable new homes each year (assumed in the Housing Needs Survey 2006) ensuring that the Council's policy of seeking 30% of the units on sites of 15 units or more are affordable is maintained | Ongoing | • Target on new affordable homes met  
• Meet LAA target contributions  
(Target may be revised following the SHMA) | Housing Development Manager / Principal Planner (Policy) / RSLs | • Housing Corporation / HCA grant  
• S106 benefits  
• Commuted sums |
| 3.9 Within the overall target, ensure a broad balance of 50% for social rent and 50% as intermediate market housing | Ongoing | 50% / 50% balance delivered  
(Target may be revised following the SHMA) | Housing Development Manager / Principal Planner (Policy) | Existing budgets |
<table>
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<th>Housing Strategic Priority</th>
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<th>Resources</th>
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</table>
| 3.10 Within the overall target, ensure a mix of house types to meet the needs for smaller units in line with the Housing Needs Survey 2006 findings and the Housing Register requirements | Ongoing      | - Increased mix of homes delivered  
- Consistent approach to “pepper potting”  
- Set annual %age house types targets for future monitoring *(see 3.16)*                                                                 | Housing Development Manager / Principal Planner (Policy)                     | Existing budgets         |
| 3.11 Undertake feasibility studies on the regeneration of Council-owned estates            | Ongoing      | Feasibility studies completed                                                                                                                         | Asst Director (Housing) / Housing Development Manager                        | Existing budgets         |
| 3.12 Promote the growth of the private rented sector to provide a more balanced housing market | Ongoing      | Increased number of private rented sector homes                                                                                                       | Private Sector Housing Manager                                              | Existing budgets         |
| 3.13 Address the need for “extra care” accommodation                                       | 2011         | Development of new Extra Care schemes with partners                                                                                                  | Housing Development Manager / Housing Operations Manager                    | Existing budgets         |
| 3.14 Continue to promote disabled adaptations, developing a register of adapted property and the needs of disabled people and considering the adoption of Lifetime Homes standards for new housing | Ongoing      | - Maximise the provision of new wheelchair accessible homes on a site by site basis, with a 5% target overall  
- 100% of new homes to be Lifetime Homes standard                                                                 | Private Sector Housing Manager / Housing Needs Manager / Housing Development Manager | Existing staff resources |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Housing Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Success Measures</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.15 Ensure the allocation of land for gypsy and traveller pitches in accordance with the requirements of the RSS (the South East Plan) as informed by the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2007 (15 pitches up to 2011)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Land for pitches allocated</td>
<td>Principal Planner (Policy)</td>
<td>Existing budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.16 Monitor the actual affordable housing delivery levels in future annual updates as recommended in the Housing Needs Survey 2006 (see 3.8 - 3.10)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Ongoing understanding of affordability across tenures and market constituents • Actions developed to tackle key affordability issues</td>
<td>Housing Development Manager / Housing Needs Manager</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17 Review existing partnership working with RSLs for gaps and duplication in delivering affordable housing, clear nomination agreements and the effective monitoring of performance (eg s106 performance, developments without public subsidy, commuted sums, etc)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Actions developed to tackle key affordability issues • Proportion of homes funded by sources other than the Housing Corporation / HCA</td>
<td>Housing Development Manager / Housing Needs Manager</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.18 Monitor and where appropriate, maximise affordable housing development opportunities provided by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (eg Local Housing Companies, Special Delivery Vehicles)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>New public and private investment secured and maximised</td>
<td>Asst Director (Housing) / Housing Development Manager</td>
<td>• Existing staff resources • Additional public and private investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Strategic Priority</td>
<td>Target Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.19  Review the Asset Management Plan to</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>New development opportunities secured and maximised</td>
<td>Housing Development Manager</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>assess affordable housing development</td>
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<td>opportunities</td>
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<td>3.20  Ensure value for money and accessible</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• 100% of new affordable housing developments published on website</td>
<td>Housing Development Manager /</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>services</td>
<td></td>
<td>• 100% of satisfied residents in new affordable housing developments</td>
<td>Housing Needs Manager</td>
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<td>Housing Strategic Priority 4: To tackle and</td>
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<tr>
<td>prevent homelessness and address the needs of</td>
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<tr>
<td>other vulnerable groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1   Please refer to the Homelessness</td>
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<td>Strategy 2008-13 for the full Action Plan for</td>
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<tr>
<td>working in partnership with key partners to</td>
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<td>prevent homelessness and, wherever possible,</td>
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<td>to assist people in finding suitable</td>
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<td>accommodation which meets their needs before</td>
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<td>homelessness arises</td>
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<tr>
<td>The strategic objectives are:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improve access to the private rented sector</td>
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<td>• Prevent homelessness and address the main</td>
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<td>causes</td>
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<td>• Reduce the use of temporary accommodation</td>
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<td>• Support people to access and maintain</td>
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<td>accommodation by providing housing advice and</td>
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<td>assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Address the problem of youth homelessness</td>
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<td>• Ensure effective partnership working</td>
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<td>• Improve the range and choice of affordable</td>
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<td>accommodation available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key components of the Action Plan include:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identifying the barriers preventing</td>
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<td>landlords from working with tenants in receipt</td>
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<td>of welfare benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Achieving a reduction in the number of</td>
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<td>homeless applications due to exclusion from</td>
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<td>the parental home</td>
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<td>• Exploring options and funding to provide</td>
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<td>welfare rights and debt counselling services</td>
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<td>• Investigating mortgage rescue schemes in</td>
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<td>partnership with RSLs</td>
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<td>Housing Strategic Priority</td>
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</table>
| • Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010  
• Raising awareness amongst young people at risk of becoming homeless  
• Not placing 16 and 17 year olds in bed and breakfast accommodation by 2010  
• Developing a joint assessment protocol  
• Establishing a Homelessness Forum to encourage early intervention | | | | |

4.2 Please refer to the Review of Social Housing Provision for Older People in Gravesham 2008 for the full Action Plan for developing the Council’s sheltered housing services

The strategic objectives are:
• Assessing and prioritising the need for support services and adaptations required to keep people in their own home  
• Re-assessing existing sheltered stock in meeting today’s housing standards and preferences.  
• Assessing the need for ‘extra care’ accommodation for the growing frail elderly population

Key components of the Action Plan include:
• Work with the Tenants Participation Scheme and KCC funded/supported developments to improve levels of housing information and advice available for older people in Gravesham  
• Given the current state of the housing market and a shortfall of sheltered housing accommodation, consider the extent to which GBC could build additional units as part of a collaborative development which would include RSL developments  
• Identify opportunities to develop schemes in rural areas  
• Identify the number of sheltered units not meeting Decent Homes Standards and prepare proposals to undertake relevant work  
• Review the role of the Home Improvement Agency to determine how it can extend its role to provide support to enable more older people to live in their own homes for as long as they wish  
• Ensure that the needs of older people who require support services are properly included when Choice Based Letting rolls out in 2009  
• Work with other GBC departments and local organisations to review the levels of transport services local amenities (eg shops) to meet the needs of a growing older population  
• Develop robust sheltered housing stock development plans in collaboration with RSLs and private developers  
• Further clarify the impact of developments in the Thames Gateway area on demand for supported accommodation in Gravesham  
• Develop a joint strategy for extra care accommodation in collaboration with KCC, the PCT and other stakeholder groups
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Housing Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
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<th>Resources</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>• Research completed</td>
<td>Housing Needs Manager / Corporate Housing Group</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategy and action plans developed and being implemented</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>• Research completed</td>
<td>Housing Needs Manager / Corporate Housing Group</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategy and action plans developed and being implemented</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Improved services</td>
<td>Housing Needs Manager / Housing Development Manager / Private Sector Housing Manager</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased service satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Improved services</td>
<td>Private Sector Housing Manager / Housing Needs Manager</td>
<td>Existing budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased service satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Strategic Priority</td>
<td>Target Date</td>
<td>Success Measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.7 Review joint working and partnerships for all vulnerable groups to improve referral routes and services</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Review completed</td>
<td>Housing Needs Manager</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Action plans developed and being implemented</td>
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<td>4.8 Support people to access and maintain accommodation</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Improved services</td>
<td>Housing Needs Manager</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Increased service satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 Ensure Supporting People standards are complied with and financial returns are submitted by deadlines</td>
<td>April 2009 and ongoing</td>
<td>• Standards comply</td>
<td>Housing Operations Manager</td>
<td>Supporting People budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Financial returns submitted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10 Contribute towards the review and update of the Five year Supporting People Strategy as a commissioning partner in the Kent Countywide Supporting People partnership</td>
<td>April 2009 and ongoing</td>
<td>• Review completed</td>
<td>Housing Policy &amp; Projects Manager</td>
<td>• Existing staff resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Action plans developed and being implemented</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Supporting People budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11 Ensure the Home Improvement Agency service is reviewed and available from April 2009 in conjunction with other local authority partners and Kent CC Supporting People Team</td>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>• Review completed</td>
<td>Private Sector Housing Manager</td>
<td>Existing budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• HIA available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased service satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12 Undertake equality impact assessments for all housing services</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Improved services</td>
<td>All service managers</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased service satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13 Ensure value for money and accessible services</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>• Improved efficiencies in homelessness prevention work</td>
<td>Housing Needs Manager</td>
<td>Existing staff resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved management of temporary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Strategic Priority</td>
<td>Target Date</td>
<td>Success Measures</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Resources</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>accommodation to ensure faster turnover and collection of arrears and charges • Ongoing strategic reviews of grant funding programme for homelessness service providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.14 **See items 3.10, 3.12, 3.13, 3.14 and 3.15 for related actions**
8. References

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9. **Appendices**

**Appendix 1**  Consultation Reports 2008 and 2009

**Appendix 2**  Gravesham Housing Needs Surveys 2001 and 2006

**Appendix 3**  Gravesham Sub-areas and Wards

**Appendix 4**  Gravesham Tenants’ Satisfaction Survey 2006

**Appendix 5**  Worker Registration Scheme – Gravesham 2004-2006

**Appendix 6**  Gravesham Financial Information

**Appendix 7**  Strategic Housing Performance Indicators for Kent
Appendix 1  Consultation Reports 2008 and 2009

April 2008

Background

On 11th February 2008, Cabinet agreed that the Housing Strategy Review 2007 would form the basis of consultation with partners, stakeholders and residents for the production of the Housing Strategy 2009-13. The Housing Strategy Review 2007 was based on a robust analysis of the issues faced by the Council and was the first phase in the production of the new Housing Strategy 2009-13.

The Housing Strategy Review 2007 highlighted four draft priorities reflecting the borough's housing needs:

- **Priority 1** – To deliver an excellent housing service for all residents of Gravesham (that is excellence in housing management, excellence in strategic planning, excellence in "place shaping").
- **Priority 2** – To improve the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors.
- **Priority 3** – With partners, to maximise the supply of affordable housing.
- **Priority 4** – To tackle and prevent homelessness and address the needs of other vulnerable groups.

Views were sought on:

- The four draft Housing Strategic Priorities listed above
- The actions the Council should take to achieve these priorities
- How consultation on the draft Housing Strategy should be undertaken
- How partners, stakeholders and residents would wish to be involved in monitoring the progress of the final Housing Strategy

Consultation responses

Copies of the Consultation Document were either e-mailed or posted to Gravesham BC tenant representatives and staff, Registered Social Landlords, Social / Health Care organisations, voluntary organisations and those attending the HomeBuy event on 20th March 2008. Also, copies were available for completion on the Council’s website.

**Respondents:**

31 responses were received during April 2008 as follows:

- 5 service users
- 5 Gravesham residents
- 7 Gravesham BC staff
- 5 Registered Social Landlords
- 5 service providers
- 4 others
Support for Housing Strategy Priorities

- 27 respondents supported the four Housing Strategy Priorities
- 2 “others” supported the priorities though wished to see the inclusion of mental health and a more detailed definition of affordable housing
- 1 service provider and 1 resident were both “not sure” about the priorities with one of the respondents adding that further assurances were required for single people seeking affordable housing

Suggested actions for achieving Housing Strategy Priority 1 – To deliver an excellent housing service for all residents of Gravesham (that is excellence in housing management, excellence in strategic planning, excellence in “place shaping”)

- **Service users**
  - This should be the highest priority
  - Swift and decisive action to deal with all maintenance
  - Careful and thorough vetting of all applicants (ie “suitability” for areas, especially when “place shaping” is involved)
  - A review of the financial imbalance of the Government’s claw-back from the Housing budget (ie the HRA subsidy system)

- **Gravesham residents**
  - Continue the current actions
  - Better communication between the Council and residents
  - Employ more housing officers to liaise with residents
  - Problem residents should be dealt with promptly
  - Place the correct tenants in high rise flats (ie drug addicts, alcoholics and ex-offenders should not be placed in the same blocks as elderly residents)
  - Consider the interviewing of potential residents by the Chair of the Residents’ Association (RA) or, where there is no RA, by an Executive Member of the Tenants’ Federation
  - Give greater priority to single men who need to move away from their parents. They should be interviewed rather than decisions being based solely on the information contained within application forms
  - Employ more cleaning staff to ensure that the communal area are kept clean
  - Encourage more residents’ associations to help people take a pride in their areas

- **Gravesham BC staff**
  - Ensure that the needs of customers are at the forefront of plans, involve them in the process and keep them informed of progress
  - Consult more with residents and at an early stage
  - Improve the level of customer service (ie “people complain that they are treated like problems”)
  - Try to minimise waiting times for high priority cases
  - Offer a better service to tenants by giving staff more flexibility and opportunity to assist tenants in making their estate a better place to live
  - Introduce a cross-cutting project board for housing that includes staff from Housing, Private Housing and Planning and Regeneration
• Share good practice with other service providers through, for example, HouseMark
• Invest in staff development and retention

**Registered Social Landlords**
• Encourage community involvement
• Sensible usage of commuted sums received as Planning Gain
• Subsidise those developments meeting the greatest housing need
• More partnership working on existing estates, particularly where there is more than one landlord
• More partnership with established housing associations already working in the borough to deliver good quality management services for social and private housing

**Service providers**
• Consultation with residents
• Strategic planning should maximise the use of brownfield sites and ensure a robust analysis of greenbelt land to benefit both people and the environment (ie greenbelt designation often applies to waste land that has remained dormant for over 50 years)

**Others**
• Work with CABE and utilise best practice on urban design for place-shaping (eg English Partnership's Urban Design Compendium)
• All housing should achieve the standards of “Lifetime Homes”, not just those that are defined as affordable homes
• More move-on accommodation required together with the provision of two bedroom accommodation
• Interagency Joint Forums, joint working and strategic planning all help deliver excellence in strategic planning (eg Kent Tameside Housing Subgroup)
• Review the Joint Stock Agreement to enable the delivery of an excellent housing service to all Gravesham residents (ie the agreement, process reporting and feedback all need improving and clarifying)
• Excellent housing and vibrant sustainable communities require good locations, accessible transport (eg Fastrack/bus routes) and health, social care and voluntary sector facilities which in turn encourage integrated communities
• Involve local resident groups at an early stage in shaping the community and mixed communities
• Involve other agencies in Housing Strategy partnership working and monitoring the development of the strategy and outcomes
• Be aware of the needs of vulnerable groups including offenders, which may require additional supported housing schemes
• The Council’s Housing Options Team should be able to give independent advice to those who are using the service. For instance, if a tenant is in dispute with the Council, is the team able to provide impartial advice or signpost to another agency? It is about transparency of the service offered by Housing Options Team
• Ensure that developers work towards mixed communities by not placing all the affordable housing, including socially affordable rented housing, in one area of the development
Suggested actions for achieving Housing Strategy Priority 2 – To improve the quality of housing in both the private and social sectors

- **Service users**
  - Greater and detailed consultation with residents and potential users of services
  - Deal with “problem / anti-social” persons quicker than at present and emphasise the “taking possession” of their property if they fail to keep it clean and tidy, etc
  - Review the investment in the maintenance of property

- **Gravesham residents**
  - Demand more of developers (ie better design, more space and more houses)
  - Fully supervise the private sector
  - Improving the quality of private sector properties should remain the responsibility of owners and landlords
  - New kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems should be installed in Council properties where they are old and costly to maintain
  - Council tenants should be given a choice of either a bath or shower cubicle and a choice of kitchen units and colour schemes when they are refurbished

- **Gravesham BC staff**
  - Consult more with residents
  - Promote grants and other schemes
  - Promote the renovation and reuse of empty properties in the borough that are a waste of resources and a blight on the landscape
  - Monitor the private sector more effectively in terms of the quality of housing provided
  - Be more efficient in both the speed and quality of work to repairs and empty properties, particularly in the choice of contractors or staff

- **Registered Social Landlords**
  - Increase the supply of high quality housing to meet the needs of different groups of people
  - Dictate through the planning process, the amount and type of housing required through the housing needs process and reflect what is needed for the future today
  - Imperative that Planners work with housing associations to ensure that empty properties are brought back into use whilst accepting that such properties might need adaptation

- **Service providers**
  - Adopt “Lifetime Homes” building principles to ensure that all new housing caters for the disabled, etc and is environmentally-friendly
  - Consider the width of doors, space for aids and adaptations in bathrooms, steps and high thresholds, local banks and shops, car-parking, street lighting and security

- **Others**
  - Ensure that partner RSLs prioritise estate improvements alongside new developments to address known issues
• Provide smaller homes (ie 1 or 2 bedrooms) encompassing different tenures to enable older people to downsize
• Provide Extra Care housing (1 and 2 bedrooms) for older people and people with dementia to improve housing quality
• DDA compliant housing incorporating “Lifetime Homes” standards and improved technology such as Telehealth and Telecare would greatly enhance housing quality
• Energy efficient homes meeting environmental standards would ensure that vulnerable people are not at risk of fuel poverty
• Overall housing quality would be improved by providing effective and efficient security both within the home and within the wider environment / community
• Ensure that all HMOs are inspected and licensed and brought up to the Decent Homes Standard
• Better communication and co-operation required between Planning and Housing departments, especially where some landlords / letting agents may let to an individual or organisation for letting as a non requirement for a HMO licence (eg three bed family home into shared accommodation for 3-4 people)
• Ensure that development under s.106 is 30% on 15 units and over
• Involve local resident groups at an early stage in shaping the community and mixed communities
• Involve private sector landlords or a representative in Housing Strategies, along with those from ethnic and faith groups
• Improve the availability of Rent Deposit Schemes so that they are accessible, fair and equable for all applicants

Suggested actions for achieving Housing Strategy Priority 3 – With partners, to maximise the supply of affordable housing

• Service users
  • Concentrate on affordable rented property not part-rent, part-buy
  • Some so called Key Worker rents and costs are too high, especially for some single people so thoroughly review the required salary levels
  • “Affordable” housing must mean what it says
  • Councils should purchase land that might be suitable for flats, etc
  • Insist that new developments consist of 25% affordable housing as a benchmark
  • Maximise any financial incentives available to the Council from the government

• Gravesesham residents
  • Continue the current actions
  • More affordable housing needs to be made available
  • Provide more family homes in both the affordable and social rented sectors
  • Empty houses should be boarded-up and then made habitable
  • There should be no more part-rent, part-buy schemes as they are too costly for the majority of Council tenants
  • Councils should be able to rent new homes from developers for renting out to tenants at an affordable rent
• The Council should enter a partnership with a developer on the understanding that the Council would have the responsibility for letting the properties to suitable tenants

• **Gravesend BC staff**
  • Ensure that partners take account of the needs of their customers and put them at the forefront of their plans, ensuring ongoing opportunities for feedback and change
  • Ensure that the provision of affordable housing matches the borough’s housing needs – “we are now awash with one and two bedroom flats when more family-friendly homes are needed”
  • Do more to help those people who are ineligible for social housing but cannot afford to purchase a property
  • Allow a housing association to take over the Council’s housing stock in order to access greater financial resources. Apply the approach being adopted at Christianfields more widely

• **Registered Social Landlords**
  • Good relations with the Housing and Planning departments help provide new homes for the borough
  • Streamline the planning process and fully resource the Planning Department
  • Adopt a partnership approach to procure housing opportunities on Council-owned land by releasing the land through the local plans rather than housing associations having to compete on the open market
  • Continue to work hard to secure properties through s.106 agreements whilst maintaining quality standards

• **Service providers**
  • Sale of Council land to finance housing
  • Develop initiatives with local community agencies
  • More supported accommodation for 16-21 year olds needed in the Gravesend area (ie young people will always remain a hidden statistic sleeping on a friend’s sofa rather than approaching the Council). “Crash pad” facilities are required
  • Young people (under 18) find enormous challenges when attempting to access housing (eg the need to find a guarantor). Could this be an area that the Council could develop?
  • Staff at all Councils should be trained in compassionate listening skills

• **Others**
  • Note the requirement for four bedroom properties and smaller flats. Regional targets also prioritise larger units
  • Tenure balance of 50/50 on affordable housing may conflict with the regional targets of 65% rented. This could be assisted by achieving 0 grant units via the planning process, particularly on low cost home ownership schemes, so that the balance of grant funded units meets government priorities
  • Support the lowering of thresholds to 15, given the numbers of affordable homes needed
  • Strongly support the priority for parish surveys and design statements – grants are available for acute rural housing needs
• Strongly support the use of Council-owned land as occurred at Lawrence Square. However, given grant per unit levels, this land may need to be below market value
• Support the aim to speed up the planning process by the use of best practice
• Maximise the opportunities for affordable housing offered by the major sites in the growth areas, with the excellence in design and place making which is possible on large sites
• Seek a higher percentage of affordable housing on new developments whilst ensuring nomination rights are for the most vulnerable within society
• Provide more shared ownership homes so that key workers can live close to where they work
• Agree nomination rights at a standard rate. Also, nominations should be through the Joint Stock Agreement
• Maximise the supply of affordable housing through partnership working with Kent County Council and other land owners so that land can be allocated for affordable housing
• Ensure that Mental Health remains a priority, especially in the provision of “move-on” accommodation from supported accommodation
• Ensure that development under s.106 is 30% on 15 units and over. The 30% element could be 5% shared ownership and 25% socially affordable rented housing
• Maintain a register of private landlords who wish to work with the Council (eg private sector leasing) so that the landlord knows that there will be a regular income from a long-standing agreement with the Council, which will include repairs and maintenance
• Provide regular updates on brownfield sites which could be use to develop social affordable housing
• Bring empty properties back into use, especially those which have been empty a long time, using all legal options to enforce. Also, consider using outside agencies to assist in bringing empty properties up to standard (eg Kent Probation Community Payback teams, Kent Prison Estate to utilise Prisoners who have specialised skills who are able to obtain day release, local colleges looking for placements for students for their final qualifications)

Suggested actions for achieving Housing Strategy Priority 4 – To tackle and prevent homelessness and address the needs of other vulnerable groups

• Service users
  • Increase the number of rented properties in Gravesend
  • Review the existing homeless forums and sub-divide them into specialist areas, giving providers the responsibility to deliver the agreed strategic priorities
  • Set up more joint working protocols as is starting to happen in East Kent
  • Continue to work in partnership and strengthen the existing partnerships with the Crime Reduction Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership mechanisms in order to carry on making Dartford & Gravesend safer
  • If one does not exist already, set up a Homeless Young Persons’ forum to look at prevention including mediation services
  • Develop direct access provision
  • Dartford’s and Gravesend’s proximity to London particularly through the main rail line from London Bridge, makes them one of the first “jumping
off" points in Kent so perhaps there should be a greater emphasis on relocation work
• Closer working with the Homeless Persons’ team in order to help keep accurate records of non priority cases, which could be linked to relocation work
• If not already a member, consider membership of the Private Landlords’ Forum in order to have closer working links with the private sector, particularly with the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance
• Consider a housing guide or lead officer to guide homeless and vulnerable groups through every stage of their housing application to ensure that they are not “overlooked”
• Consider a holding hostel for dependents and counselling on the many reasons that cause homelessness

• Gravesham residents
• Work more with other agencies
• Open more sheltered accommodation, supply more aids and adaptations and provide more advice to enable people to improve their situations
• Properties should be more “elderly friendly” with access being restricted to younger / middle aged tenants causing trouble
• Young people should continue to live with their parents until they marry or form a strong relationship
• Pregnant young girls should not be given a Council property automatically but encouraged to stay at home with their parents
• Consider “group living” for vulnerable groups initially before they move into independent accommodation with the provision of adequate support

• Gravesham BC staff
• More housing provides more homes and reduces the number of people “on the streets”
• Supported housing should be available for those who require it rather than placing them in general needs housing where they will struggle
• The Council should adopt a leadership role by working with other agencies (particularly those already experienced in tackling homelessness) rather than a sole provider role
• Work with partners more effectively to help those who are homeless / vulnerable to become independent or secure the support they need
• Work more with charities (eg Shelter and the churches)
• Priority should be given to vulnerable groups already living in the borough rather than the borough being a “soft target” for people refused accommodation by neighbouring authorities

• Registered Social Landlords
• Increase the usage of the floating support service to prevent homelessness
• Provide specialised care and support within existing communities and new developments. Early engagement with housing associations to provide services for the medium term through partnership

• Service providers
• Clarify the meaning of “vulnerable groups”
• Give mediation a chance to work
• Practice good prevention
• Provide sheltered housing
• "Crash pads" needed

• **Others**
  • Act to prevent homelessness as early as possible. However, recognise that if the preventative work does not lead to stable and sustainable accommodation then the applicant might not bother approaching the Council again leading to street homelessness, offending behaviour, substance misuse, etc
  • Address the needs of vulnerable groups through more independent living skills and training opportunities to acquire essential skills. Accommodation in the form of flats in the community is needed for this purpose
  • Provide "move on" accommodation for up to 6-12 months for young people with both physical and learning disabilities to enable some of the needs of vulnerable groups to be addressed
  • Ensure that there is access to a Rent Deposit Scheme
  • Ensure that joint protocols are implemented, including the Mental Health protocol
  • Consider positively the Kent Reconnection Policy agreed at the Joint Policy and Planning Board, and not use “local connection” as a reason to exclude vulnerable people from receiving consideration under the homeless legislation or as a reason to award a low priority. For instance, offenders who may have established links locally to agencies including Kent Probation Area should not be excluded by not having a previous local connection
  • Reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless referrals or through landlords who have unlicensed HMOs, as vulnerable groups are liable to exploitation
  • Undertake joined-up working with all agencies through a Joint Assessment Panel, where representative agencies are part of the Panel and to where vulnerable people might be referred. For example, those who are homeless or living in insecure accommodation (eg “sofa surfing” or squatting) are unable to access Supporting People floating support and may only be reachable by Kent SP outreach teams

**Suggestions for undertaking consultation on the draft Housing Strategy 2009-13**

Views were sought on the preferred methods of consultation for the draft Housing Strategy 2009-13. The responses were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newsletters</th>
<th>E-mails</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Service users</td>
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<td>Gravesham residents</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravesham BC staff</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registered Social Landlords</td>
<td>5</td>
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Suggestions for involving partners, stakeholders and residents in monitoring the progress of the final Housing Strategy 2009-13

Views were sought on the preferred methods of involvement in monitoring the progress of the final Housing Strategy 2009-13. The responses were as follows:

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<th>Newsletters</th>
<th>E-mails</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<tr>
<td>Service providers</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further suggestions for tackling the housing needs of the borough

- **Service users**
  - Stop building flats everywhere and start building houses that are so desperately needed
  - Councils should purchase “brownfield” sites for the construction of affordable housing for the borough’s residents rather than letting these sites be bought up by developers only interested in realising the maximum profit

- **Gravesham residents**
  - The Council needs to work with partners to create movement in all housing markets
  - Tenants to be placed in high-rise properties should be interviewed and vetted firstly so as to encourage their occupation by a wider range of applicants
- **Gravesham BC staff**
- Ensure that housing is affordable
- Involve other agencies like the YMCA who have a clear role to play. Those in crisis really do not want to "jump through hoops"
- Need to be seen to work with all in housing need from the absolutely worse-off to those who cannot afford to purchase a home of their own

- **Registered Social Landlords**
- Meet more often as a RSL Strategy Group to receive progress reports on the delivery of the Housing Strategy and to share individual achievements so that outcomes can be monitored and changes incorporated (eg avoiding the oversupply of particular types of housing)

- **Service providers**
- Closer links with partner organisations

- **Others**
- Strong support for meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The needs in Kent are acute and sites need to be identified quickly, rather than waiting for the regional targets which could take some time

**Spring 2009**

*Results of 2009 consultation exercise to be included*
### Appendix 2  Gravesham Housing Needs Surveys 2001 and 2006

#### HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT MODEL

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B – BACKLOG OF NEED</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households in unsuitable housing</td>
<td>3548</td>
<td>4722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MINUS Council / RSL tenants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MINUS cases where in-situ solution is the most appropriate</td>
<td>2660</td>
<td>1213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2660</td>
<td>2660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households in unsuitable housing and need to move</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>2535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMES proportion unable to afford to buy or rent</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
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<td><strong>MINUS Social renting tenants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>189</td>
<td>408</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLUS Backlog – homeless households</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL BACKLOG NEED</strong></td>
<td>556</td>
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<td>TIMES Quota to progressively reduce backlog</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ANNUAL NEED TO REDUCE BACKLOG</strong></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **N – NEWLY ARISING NEED** |      |      |
| New household formation | 388  | 426  |
| TIMES Proportion unable to access private market | 49.9% | 76.2% |
| PLUS Ex-institutional population moving into community | 0 | 0 |
| **PLUS Existing households falling into need** | 253  | -    |
| **PLUS Existing households falling into priority need** | 305  | 299  |
| **PLUS In-migrant households unable to afford market housing** | - | 139 |
| **TOTAL NEWLY ARISING NEED** | 752  | 763  |

| **S – SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE UNITS** |      |      |
| Supply of social relets | 454  | 454  |
| **Supply of Shared Ownership re-sales** |      | 342  |
|                      | 12   |      |
| **MINUS Increased vacancies and units taken out of management (eg RTB)** | 0 | 4 |
| Net social relets | 454  | 350  |
| PLUS Committed units of new affordable supply | 0 | 92 |
| **AFFORDABLE SUPPLY** | 454  | 442  |
| Annual needs to reduce backlog (B) | 111  | 256  |
| Newly arising need (N) | 752  | 763  |
| **TOTAL AFFORDABLE NEED (B+N)** | 863  | 1019 |
| MINUS Affordable supply (S) | 454  | 442  |

| **OVERALL ANNUAL SHORTFALL (B+N) – S** | 409  | 577  |

*Note: Headings in *italics* highlight the differences between the two models*
## Gravesham Sub–areas and Wards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub - area</th>
<th>Wards contained within:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gravesend Central</td>
<td>Pelham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riverside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravesend Outer East</td>
<td>Chalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riverview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westcourt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravesend Outer West</td>
<td>Singlewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whitehill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woodlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northfleet South</td>
<td>Northfleet South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coldharbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northfleet North</td>
<td>Northfleet North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Painters Ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Istead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meopham North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meopham South incl Vigo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shorne / Cobham / Luddesdown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4  Gravesham Tenants’ Satisfaction Survey 2006

The table below shows the percentage of respondents who consider various issues to be a “slight problem” or a “serious problem.” The data is divided into two categories: All and BME (Black, Minority Ethnic) respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Much of a Problem</th>
<th>% Respondents consider to be a “slight problem”</th>
<th>% Respondents consider to be a “serious problem”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>BME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter / rubbish in streets</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour problems</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial harassment</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise from people</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise from traffic</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People causing damage to home</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug dealing</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other crime</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4 (cont)

### Sample sizes

- **All respondents**: 716
- **BME respondents**: 26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services considered to be the “most important”</th>
<th>% Respondents consider to be important</th>
<th>% Respondents consider “some improvement” needed</th>
<th>% Respondents consider “much improvement” needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>BME</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping tenants informed</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of home</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking tenants’ views into account</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs and maintenance</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving tenants in management of housing</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money for rent</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sample sizes: All respondents (716) BME respondents (26)*
## Appendix 5  Worker Registration Scheme – Gravesham 2004-2006

### Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czech Rep</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>725</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
<td><strong>154</strong></td>
<td><strong>133</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>1288</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner, domestic staff</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packer</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process operative (other factory worker)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse operative</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen and catering assistant</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver, delivery van</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer, building</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launderer, dry cleaner, presser</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process operative (textiles)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher / meat cutter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>725</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
<td><strong>154</strong></td>
<td><strong>133</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>1288</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 5 (cont)

#### Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6  Gravesham Financial Information

It is essential that the aspirations and priorities for action within the Housing Strategy have the required financial provision. The Council has established a clear budget-setting process for the General Fund revenue account incorporating business planning techniques. This is coupled with a proactive approach to engaging with communities in the borough to identify and wherever possible meet their highest priority needs. Priorities are reviewed on an annual basis against the Medium Term Financial Plan which is formally updated twice a year. The Council appreciates the need for regular and robust monitoring of its budgets with responsibility being given to those who directly manage individual accounts on a day to day basis. In addition, a Corporate Use of Resources Group (chaired by the Service Manager – Finance) has been set up to focus on improvement and a sub-group has been set up to carry out the actions for delivery.

General Fund Review

The estimates for 2008/09 show a net budget provision of £13,570,270. A key concern is that the level of reserves is just above the absolute minimum £1 million requirement the Council has agreed to keep set aside to respond to emergencies. One of the priorities over the next two years is to improve this situation.

General Fund Capital

The capital programme for 2008/09 is £1,151,840. Tight financial management and income from the sale of assets, which has exceeded original estimates, has enabled any potential shortfall to be managed and enabled the capital programme for 2007-08 and 2008-09 to be balanced. The two major challenges facing the Council on the capital programme are the absence of reserves and the limited availability of resources for on-going requirements and new initiatives to address priorities. Action to address these includes prioritisation and the pursuit of recognised good practices in asset management.

Housing Revenue Account

The net budget provision within the estimates for 2008/09 is a deficit of £461,770 and it is anticipated that the Housing Revenue Account will face significant financial pressures beyond 2008/09. The current level of reserves of £1.887m is at an acceptable level and the priority in 2008/09 and beyond is to ensure that there are sufficient resources within this budget to meet requirements.

Housing Capital

The total provision available for the three financial years 2008/09 to 2010/11 is estimated to be £22,311,850. The Council balloted all of its tenants in 2006, giving them the opportunity to stay with the Council, but the Decent Homes Plus programme, which historically had been budgeted at £2 million per annum, would cease and they would receive a very reduced and basic capital programme. Tenants voted in favour of remaining with the Council at that time and the Council is still on target to deliver what was contained within the offer document including the basic Decent Homes Standard. It is, though, a matter of real concern that this basic provision could lead to an increasing deterioration of the housing stock. Action to seek to mitigate this unacceptable situation is being taken and the Council will be working with tenants over the forthcoming years to agree the appropriate options to pursue.
Appendix 6  (cont)

Housing Capital Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>2006/07 outturn £000</th>
<th>2007/08 outturn £000</th>
<th>2008/09 planned £000</th>
<th>2009/10 proposed £000</th>
<th>2010/11 proposed £000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing within the HRA</td>
<td>5844</td>
<td>4874</td>
<td>6427</td>
<td>5600</td>
<td>5141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Housing Grant (LASHG)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other support for RSLs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other housing</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>1684</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>1120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6663</td>
<td>5580</td>
<td>8111</td>
<td>6720</td>
<td>6261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total financed by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital grants</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useable capital receipts</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>2179</td>
<td>1477</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions from revenue</td>
<td>5441</td>
<td>4471</td>
<td>4795</td>
<td>4324</td>
<td>4409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other finance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2008
## Appendix 6 (cont)

### Housing General Fund Capital Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Total Cost £000</th>
<th>Probable Budget 2007/08 £000</th>
<th>Estimated Budget 2008/09 £000</th>
<th>Estimated Budget Future years £000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing schemes</td>
<td>2061</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty properties programme</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled facilities grant</td>
<td>2698</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>1560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coldbusters</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector renewals grant (including minor works and Warm Front top-up)</td>
<td>1768</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7703</strong></td>
<td><strong>1913</strong></td>
<td><strong>1300</strong></td>
<td><strong>4490</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total financed by:

| Source: | Gravesham Borough Council 2008 |

| Capital receipts | 604 | 1811 |
| Commuted sums    | 180 | 1130 |
| Disabled facilities grants | 312 | 936  |
| Private sector allocation | 204 | 613  |
## Strategic Housing Performance Indicators for Kent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Brief Definition</th>
<th>Collection period</th>
<th>Reason for collecting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No. of households in temporary accommodation (NII 156)</td>
<td>As per CLG definition – all households (not just households with dependent children or a pregnant woman) in temporary accommodation as recorded on the P1E – E6 10c</td>
<td>Quarterly – in line with P1E collection. End of year figure an average of all 4 quarters</td>
<td>NII 156 is one of the 198 National Indicators and therefore requires monitoring by LAs but has not been included within the Kent LAA2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No. of homeless households per 1000 households in the area for whom housing advice casework resolved the situation (former BVPI 213)</td>
<td>As per current definition of BVPI 213</td>
<td>Quarterly – cumulative no. of cases during the year divided by per 1000 households</td>
<td>Prevention agenda is still a major issue and those cases prevented and a subsequent reduction in those accepted under the homelessness legislation need to be monitored when looking at those households in temporary accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No. of homeless applications accepted</td>
<td>Homeless applications where the applicant is in priority need and unintentionally homeless as recorded on the P1E – E1 1w</td>
<td>Quarterly – in line with P1E collection. End of year figure is a total of all 4 quarters. Quarterly figure is cumulative</td>
<td>As BVPI 213 above, this contributes to monitoring progress with the temporary accommodation indicator. Previously the indicator has shown the fall/rise in homelessness. However for most LAs this will level out and for some LAs they will not be able to deliver a % decrease at such a high rate as they have already achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Brief Definition</td>
<td>Collection period</td>
<td>Reason for collecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No. of homeless applications received</td>
<td>Those who make a homeless application and are recorded as such on the P1E – E1 6w</td>
<td>Quarterly – in line with P1E collection. End of year figure is a total of all 4 quarters</td>
<td>Provides a further indication of the effectiveness of homelessness prevention activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No. of rural affordable homes delivered</td>
<td>No. of affordable homes recorded under NII 155 that are in rural areas</td>
<td>Quarterly. End of year figure is a total of all 4 quarters</td>
<td>All Kent district council areas include significant rural communities with specific rural housing needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No. of homes achieving Decent Homes Standard as a result of action by the local authority</td>
<td>No. of homes improved to meet Decent Homes Standard following Council action. Current Kent LAA1 definition – HSSA HSk13e</td>
<td>Quarterly – Cumulative total as at end Q4</td>
<td>Provides a measure of the effectiveness of local housing authorities in improving house conditions and bringing properties up to the Decent Homes Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No. of HMO properties brought up to standard as a direct result of action by the local authority</td>
<td>Number of HMO properties brought up to standard (HHSRS and any other relevant standards) as a result of Council action</td>
<td>Quarterly – Cumulative total as at end Q4</td>
<td>Provides a measure of the effectiveness of local housing authorities in improving house conditions in HMOs which tend to be poorer quality housing frequently occupied by vulnerable people and those on low incomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No. of HMO dwelling units brought up to standard as a direct result of action by the local authority</td>
<td>Number of HMO dwelling units (as opposed to HMO properties) brought up to standard (HHSRS and any other relevant standards) as a result of Council action</td>
<td>Quarterly – Cumulative total as at end Q4</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Brief Definition</td>
<td>Collection period</td>
<td>Reason for collecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>No. of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants completed to enable people to stay in their own homes</td>
<td>No. of DFGs completed within financial year – HSSA HSm1d</td>
<td>Quarterly – Cumulative total as at end Q4</td>
<td>Provides a measure of the effectiveness of local housing authorities in assisting disabled people to remain independent in their own home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Long-term empty private sector dwellings brought back to occupation/demolished as a direct result of action by the Council, as a % of all long-term empty private sector dwellings in the local authority area at the start of the financial year</td>
<td>No. of private sector dwellings which have been vacant for more than six months returned to occupation/demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority expressed as a % of all private sector dwellings in the local authority area vacant at the start of the financial year (as per HSSA HSa7a2e)</td>
<td>Quarterly. End of year figure is a total of all 4 quarters</td>
<td>Provides a measure of the effectiveness of local housing authorities in bringing vacant properties back into use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kent Housing Group
10. Glossary of terms

**Affordable housing:** Housing for people who are unable to resolve their housing needs in the local private market because of the relationship between housing costs and income. This includes housing for social rent and intermediate housing (i.e., shared ownership, low cost home ownership and sub-market rent).

**Anti-social behaviour:** Behaviour which causes harassment, alarm or distress to any household other than itself.

**Arm’s Length Management Organisation (ALMO):** Whereby the Council housing stock is still owned by the Council but managed by a separate organisation. A board normally made up of Councillors, residents and independent specialists manage the company.

**Audit Commission:** An independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively and delivers high-quality local services for the public. Within the Audit Commission, the Housing Inspectorate inspects and monitors the performance of local authority housing departments, local authorities administering Supporting People programmes, arm’s length management organisations and housing associations (www.audit-commission.gov.uk).

**Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups:** A generic term used for people or communities who are not “White British”.

**Brownfield land:** Land that has previously been developed.

**Capital receipts:** Receipts from the sale of a council asset including council house sales under the Right to Buy legislation.

**Choice based lettings:** A new way of allocating social housing based on the applicant’s preferences and choice of properties.

**Decent Homes Standard:** A minimum standard for homes set by the Government in relation to the age and condition of key elements of the property. This standard must be met reach by 2010 for Council owned homes.

**Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG):** The government department responsible for housing, urban regeneration, planning and local government and promoting community cohesion and equality (www.clg.gov.uk).

**Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG):** A mandatory grant to help disabled people to have their homes adapted, allowing them to remain in that property. Grants are partially Government funded.

**Enabling:** The process by which the Council supports and encourages partners and other organisations, particularly housing associations, to deliver strategic priorities.

**Extra care housing:** A type of accommodation service for elderly people who require medical and social support but do not need residential care.

**Fit for Purpose Criteria:** The criteria against which the Regional Government Office evaluates Housing Strategies and HRA Business Plans.
**Floating Support:** Support provided to tenants and owners of general needs housing to enable them to live independently in the community.

**Government Office for the South East (GOSE):** The relevant Regional Government Office of the Department for Communities and Local government (CLG) ([www.gose.gov.uk](http://www.gose.gov.uk)).

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO):** A property split into smaller units of accommodation, often sharing basic amenities.

**Housing association:** A non profit-making organisation formed to provide housing. Also known as a Registered Social Landlord (see RSL).

**Housing Corporation:** A Government body that provides grant funding for housing associations to develop new affordable housing, which is also responsible for monitoring their performance. The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 established the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) on 1st December 2008. The HCA will focus on delivering more new and affordable homes across all tenures, in mixed and sustainable communities, and will drive and invest in regeneration and the revitalisation of existing communities. The TSA will be the new regulator of social housing, responsible for ensuring that registered housing providers meet the needs of tenants. It is anticipated that local authorities will be brought within the scope of the regulator ([http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/nav.001](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/nav.001)).

**Housing Needs Survey:** A survey of local people to assess the need for affordable housing and other housing services across the borough.

**Housing Revenue Account (HRA):** The ring-fenced revenue account for Council landlord services. The other powers and duties of a housing authority (eg homelessness, enabling, private sector grants, etc) are General Fund activities.

**Key workers:** Key people employed in the public sector (eg police, nurses, teachers).

**Key Worker Living Programme:** A Government funded initiative providing assistance to Key workers to allow them to secure a home.

**Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT):** The process to transfer the ownership of council housing to a housing association. The council receives a capital receipt on transfer of the stock, usually to spend on new affordable housing.

**Local Area Agreements:** A contract between central and local government to improve central/local relations; service delivery; efficiency and partnership working; and to enable local authorities to provide better leadership.

**Local Development Framework (LDF):** The LDF replaces the old system of Local Plans and sets out the Council’s plans for all land use and development across the borough.

**Local Housing Companies (LHC):** A partnership between local authorities and other stakeholders to build more homes. They might take a variety of forms such as an equity investment vehicle (perhaps a limited liability partnership) or a charitable company limited by guarantee or even a subsidiary of the local authority itself.

**Local Strategic Partnership:** A single body comprising representatives from all sectors for the planning of local services.
Parish Housing Needs Survey: A local housing survey to assess local housing need, undertaken at parish level in rural areas by the Action with Communities in Rural Kent.

Private sector housing: Housing not provided by the Council or other public / voluntary bodies.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL): Landlords registered with the Housing Corporation. Most RSLs are Housing Associations.

Rent restructuring: A formula for rent setting that brings council rents and housing association rents in line. Rents are based on property size, location and condition of the property.

Right to Buy (RTB): A statutory right of council tenants to buy their council home at a discount.

Rural Exception Policy: A planning policy to allow development outside the normal limits (ie on the outskirts of a village, potentially within the Green Belt) where there is an exceptional need for local affordable housing.

Section 106 agreement: Conditions imposed on new housing developments at the planning stage to provide various infrastructure and community gains, including new affordable housing.

Sheltered housing: Housing provided to vulnerable people (often older people) where support is provided.

Social Housing Grant: Local authority and Housing Corporation grant funding towards the development of new affordable housing by a housing association.

Stakeholders: Individuals and groups of people with an interest in a given subject (usually tenants, leaseholders, Council Members and staff in the case of housing but can also include developers, voluntary organisations and other local authorities).

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA): A study of evidence on house prices and predicted future demand to shape the Council’s housing plans.

Supporting People: The Supporting People programme is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people have the opportunity to live independently in the community. It allows funding to be linked to the person and not the accommodation and is a working partnership between the Council, Health, Probation, Housing Associations, the voluntary and independent sectors and also service users and cares.

Telecare: A generic term for technological aids to assist vulnerable people to maintain their independence at home.
11. **Contacts**

Thank you for reading this Housing Strategy. Any comments or questions you wish to make would be welcome. You can contact:

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Copies of this Housing Strategy can be provided in large print, audio tape or translated into a language other than English.