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## **HOUSING STRATEGY - UPDATE**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report appraises Members of the development of the Housing Strategy.

### **2 PROCESS**

- 2.1 A report which explained the new criteria for producing "fit for purpose" Housing Strategies and Housing Revenue Account Business Plans was considered at this Committee in October 2003, together with the first draft of a new Housing Strategy that had been submitted to GO East for comment.
- 2.2 The first draft strategy was amended in the light of Member comment and feedback from GO East, and was circulated to a wide range of organisations.
- 2.3 Further amendments have been made as a result of the work carried out for Comprehensive Performance Assessment and to take account of developments, for example, in the stock options appraisal process and the funding of housing scheme developments in the District. The revised strategy has been submitted again to GO East for consideration and their decision on whether it now meets the fitness for purpose criteria is awaited.
- 2.4 Although the Housing Strategy looks forward several years it will need to be regularly reviewed and updated to take account of new information, such as the outcomes from the housing needs study, and changing external factors, such as the East of England regional Housing Strategy.
- 2.5 The latest draft strategy will be circulated to Members separately.

### **3 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The strategy has close links with objectives in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.

### **4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are close links between the housing strategy and spatial planning issues, particularly in terms of the provision of new housing. There are also links with energy conservation.

### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial information set out in the strategy is as set out in the budget and capital programme.

**6 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1 Strategic Risk**

The Housing Strategy is essential to provide a framework for investment and action.

**6.2 Resource Risk**

Investment in housing and support needs to be targeted on agreed priorities. External funding is, at least partly, dependent on the production of a fit for purpose Housing Strategy.

**7 RECOMMENDATION**

**7.1 It is proposed that the Committee RESOLVES**

That, subject to any comments from GO East, the latest draft of the Housing Strategy be approved.

Graham Woolhouse

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**Background Papers:-**

None

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**Rochford District  
Council**

# **HOUSING STRATEGY 2004 – 2007**

## **THIRD DRAFT**

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background**

This Housing strategy assesses the District's current and future Housing Needs, and sets out the Council's approach to meeting those needs. It takes account of national and sub-regional priorities and links between other Council strategies that influence and are influenced by this Housing Strategy.

The Council cannot deliver the Housing strategy alone and working in partnership with other organisations and across traditional local authority boundaries is essential to effective delivery.

The Strategy identifies the Council's key housing priorities and how it intends to deliver them.

## **1.2 Corporate Approach**

The Council takes a corporate approach to the housing strategy. Although this strategy is co-ordinated by the Head of Housing Health & Community Care, it has been produced in collaboration with other services of the Council, in particular Head of Revenue & Housing Management, Head of Planning Services, Head of Financial Services, Property Maintenance & Highways Manager and Corporate Policy Manager

## **1.3 Period of Housing Strategy**

This Strategy sets out the District's housing plans for the medium term i.e. three years. However, these plans have been formulated with regard to the housing objectives for the longer term, which in some cases span a period of thirty years.

## **1.4 Changes from previous Housing Strategy**

The Housing Strategy has been extensively restructured and revised since the last strategy 2001 – 2004. There are three main reasons for this change:-

1. The Strategy takes account of the recommendations made by the Audit Commission following a Best Value Inspection of Housing Strategy and Housing Management conducted in April 2003.
2. It embraces the revised guidance on the production of Housing Strategies that are "fit for purpose".
3. It is strongly influenced by the developing regional and sub-regional housing agenda.

## **2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Profile of Rochford**

Rochford District is situated in the south of Essex and covers an area of approximately sixty-five square miles. It is bounded by the River Crouch to the north and Southend-on-Sea to the south.

The district contains two large urban areas, Rayleigh and Rochford and a number of smaller settlements. Outside of the main settlements it is largely rural in character.

The latest census carried out in 2001 revealed the following key facts:-

- The District has a population of 78489 people, approximately 1.7% of whom are from a mixed or ethnic minority background.
- There are approximately 33000 households, 86% of which live in owner-occupied accommodation, 8% in social rented housing (either renting from the Council, a Housing Association or a Registered Social Landlord) and the remaining 6% renting privately or living rent free.
- The average price of all types of housing is higher than in England and Wales generally, except in the case of flats where it is lower.
- The proportion of one-person households is 25% compared to the England and Wales average of 30% and the proportion of lone parent households with dependant children is 4% compared to an average of 6%.
- There is lower unemployment than the England and Wales average but a higher proportion of retired people.
- Levels of all types of crime are much lower than the average.

Population forecasts project that the annual rate of population increase will continue to steadily rise at an average rate of 0.08% over the period to 2011, growing over the period by 1200 people. Over the period to 2011 there is an increase of 2.4% in the 45 to retirement group and 15.2% in the post retirement group. The number of over 75 year old people is forecast to rise to almost 8200 in the period to 2011. The number over 85 years will rise by 15% between 2001 and 2006, and by 30% to a total of 2600 by 2011.

The District is relatively affluent, and is ranked 311<sup>th</sup> least deprived out of 354 Districts. The unemployment rate is 2.4%.

#### **(i) Local Authority Housing**

The Council has a small housing stock and this is being further depleted by right to buy sales. As at 1 April 2004 the total stock was 1178 comprising 1113 OAP and sheltered units and 665 general needs housing units.



## 2.2 Relationship with National, Regional and Local Strategies

### (i) National Housing Policy

In December 2000 the Government produced its housing policy statement “Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All” which sets out the strategic agenda at national level and gives direction to local authorities on housing strategies.

Three key issues in the national plan, and the action the Council is taking are set out below:-

| <b>NATIONAL POLICY</b>  | <b>RESPONSE</b>  |
|---|--|
| Local authorities to take a strategic role in local housing markets   | The Council has separated its landlord role from other housing functions. It has produced a detailed business plan for its own stock, so this strategy deals with the main strategic issues across all tenures. The Council will complete a stock option appraisal in 2004 to consider future ownership and management of its stock. |
| All social housing to be of a “decent” standard by 2010   | The Council has a detailed plan to ensure its stock meets the target (HRA Business Plan)   |
| Introduce a system to reduce the differences between Local Authority and Registered Social Landlord’s rents | The Council has revised its rent structure to deliver convergence with RSL rents over a 10 year period   |

### (ii) The Sustainable Communities Plan (SCP)

In February 2003, the Deputy Prime Minister published “Sustainable Communities: building for the future”.

This sets out a 15 – 20 year national programme of action to deliver sustainable communities, to create step-change in housing supply, to create four growth areas, to tackle non-decent homes, homelessness and bad landlords and to deal with countryside and local environmental issues.

The document describes the requirements for a “sustainable community” in which people want to live:-

- A flourishing local economy
- Effective engagement of local people
- A safe and healthy environment
- Good public transport
- A well integrated mix of decent homes that meet a range of needs

- Good quality local public services
- A 'sense of place'

The SCP contains details of many initiatives, but some of the key areas of particular importance to this District, and the actions the Council is taking, are set out below:-

| <b>SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN</b>   | <b>RDC RESPONSE</b>  |
|---|--|
| Local authorities should separate their landlord function from their strategic housing responsibilities                           | The Council has completed this   |
| Local authorities should complete an objective and rigorous appraisal of investment options for Government sign-off, by July 2005 | The Council will complete a stock option appraisal for sign-off by Government office for the East by Summer 2005   |
| Local authorities can offer a wider range of financial help   | The Council has published its policy for private sector financial assistance and is investigating further options of equity release and loans with financial institutions  |
| Anti-social behaviour needs to be tackled   | In addition to existing initiatives in the Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy, a Best Value Review has identified further opportunities to strengthen enforcement against environmental crime and anti-social activities  |
| Local authorities should take a proactive role in identifying and responding to housing need                                      | The Replacement Local Plan includes policies relating to the provision of affordable housing on new housing sites. The mix of house types on new schemes must reflect not just the need for affordable housing provision but a mix of types, including smaller units, that are required by the community   |
| All local authorities will put in place a new style development plan  | The format of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan is intended to reflect some of the key characteristics of the forthcoming Local Development Documents. The replacement local plan will proceed through to adoption, but detailed work will commence in 2004/05 to enable the LDDs to be published in good time within the proposed three year conversion period |

| <b>SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN</b>  | <b>RDC RESPONSE</b>   |
|--|---|
| To ensure that in tackling the housing shortage the countryside is protected and enhanced and rural housing needs are met. | Seven parishes have received rural designation to provide some protection for properties purchased under Right to Buy. Local Plan policies provide for rural development to meet proven housing need.   |
| Actions on homelessness form a central part of the agenda to tackle social exclusion                                       | The Council has published its review of homelessness and its Homelessness Strategy and is implementing new schemes to reduce homelessness.  |
| Encourage renovation of long-term empty homes  | The Council has committed to producing a strategy to tackle long-term empty homes.  |
| Encourage shared ownership   | The Council supports the Homebuy Scheme. It has delivered shared ownership homes through Section 106 planning agreements.   |
| Provide support for development of “key worker” housing  | The Council has agreed with Essex County Council that one acre of land at the former Park School site will be developed for key worker housing. A scheme for the redevelopment of a traditional sheltered housing scheme includes some provision for key worker housing and some properties being built as part of a Section 106 planning agreement are being designated for key workers. |
| Protecting the countryside and promoting accessible green space  | The Council has clear planning policies to protect the Green Belt. It manages many public open spaces and woodlands and has developed a new 106 acre Country Park   |
| Rough Sleeping   | The district has few rough sleepers but the Homelessness Strategy includes actions to better identify the issues and take appropriate action.   |
| Tackle abandonment, low demand and bad landlords   | There is high housing demand across all sections in the District and the problems experienced in parts of the North and Midlands do not affect the local housing market.  |

The daughter document “Sustainable Communities in the East of England: Building for the future” describes the pressures facing the Region, particularly on housing. It sets out a plan for growth in three areas of the Region, including the Thames Gateway.

### (iii) East of England Regional Housing Strategy

The first East of England Regional Housing Strategy was produced in June 2003, taking forward the work of earlier years which had produced an annual housing statement. The Regional Housing Strategy is in the process of being updated.

The strategy represents a significant development, and it will be used by the Regional Housing Board to inform investment decisions. It has the following vision and strategic aims:-

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>VISION</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ To achieve the sustainability of our communities and the environment they live in</li></ul>  |
| <b>STRATEGIC AIMS</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ To ensure everyone can live in a decent home at an affordable price</li><li>■ To contribute effectively to social inclusion within sustainable communities</li><li>■ To enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality</li><li>■ To use housing investment to complement sustainable economic development</li><li>■ To contribute to a sustainable environment</li></ul> |

Of particular importance to Rochford, the Strategy recommends that investment be divided between the various housing themes as indicated below:-

| <b>THEME</b> | <b>PROPORTION OF INVESTMENT</b> | <b>TARGET</b>  |
|--------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Growth       | 40%                             | Growth areas – including Thames Gateway South Essex  |
| Regeneration | 30%                             | Thames Gateway South Essex   |
| Rural        | 15%                             | Market towns, villages under 3000 population, other sustainable villages in need of affordable housing |

| THEME                                   | PROPORTION OF INVESTMENT | TARGET   |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| Supported housing                       | 10%                      | All regions, for these client groups:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mental health</li> <li>■ Learning disabilities</li> <li>■ Physical difficulties</li> <li>■ Alcohol and drug related problems</li> <li>■ Frail older people</li> <li>■ Vulnerable young people</li> <li>■ People with HIV/AIDS</li> <li>■ Homeless people</li> <li>■ Ex-offenders</li> <li>■ People fleeing domestic violence</li> <li>■ Vulnerable lone parents with babies</li> </ul> |
| Black and minority ethnic housing (BME) | 5%                       | All regions but focussed on areas with relatively high BME populations   |

The Council participated in the preparatory work for the Regional Housing Strategy through the research, consultation, drafting and planning meetings conducted by the Regional Housing Forum, and through documents submitted by the Essex Housing Officers' Group and the Thames Gateway South Essex group of housing authorities.

**(iv) Sub Regional Housing Strategy**

The Regional Housing Strategy 2003-2006 identifies 9 sub-regions which have been grouped together to reflect the combination of a number of factors namely: broad housing market areas, towns – cities and their journey to work – catchment areas, common- similar housing characteristics and local economies.

Rochford District is within the Thames Gateway South-Essex (TGSE) Sub-Region which also includes Thurrock, Basildon, Castle Point and Southend. The sub-region has a population of over 630,000. In addition to addressing the future growth needs, sub-regional partners are dealing with an existing regeneration agenda and backlog of housing needs. Current housing needs surveys reveal an annual shortfall of almost 3000 homes across the sub-region. Current provision is 33,294 Local Authority homes and 10,284 with Registered Social Landlords.

The existing housing stock, including the private sector is generally in good condition and will meet the 2010 decent homes target. There are 6,920 non-decent homes currently across the region.

Across the sub region, the type and mix of existing social rented stock may not be appropriate to meet future needs. For example, there is an over supply of traditional sheltered accommodation whilst suitable temporary accommodation for homeless families is in short supply.

Accommodating future growth in the sub region will require focus on land assembly and planning mechanisms as well as over coming shortages in the building work force. This is already an issue in current construction and renovation projects in the sub-region.

The Council has fully participated in discussions and the drafting and updating of the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-regional entry within the Regional Housing Strategy, through membership of a sub-regional grouping of housing authorities which has representation on the Regional Housing Forum. The TGSE group of authorities is jointly commissioning research and strategy development work

Rochford sees its key roles in TGSE as an area for the development of leisure, recreation and tourism activity, providing a balance to the communities of South Essex.

**(v) Rochford Community Strategy 2004**

The Community Strategy is the first produced for the Rochford District. It illustrates how local businesses, statutory agencies and the community and voluntary sectors work through a Local Strategic Partnership to determine long, medium and short term visions for the District. There are a number of key themes with clear links to the Housing Strategy.

| <b>KEY THEMES</b>              | <b>LINKS TO HOUSING STRATEGY</b>   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Feeling safe                   | <p>Continue to support the Springboard Handy Persons Service</p> <p>Develop the pilot project to provide gardening support for elderly residents and people with disabilities.</p>   |
| Looking after our environment. | <p>Delivery of 30 extra care units for elderly and frail elderly residents.</p> <p>Delivery of 5 supported housing units for women and children who have fled domestic violence.</p> <p>Delivery of 6 supported units for adults with learning difficulties.</p> |

| KEY THEMES     | LINKS TO HOUSING STRATEGY  |
|----------------|--|
| Healthy Living | <p>Further expand intermediate care projects e.g. Step up Step Down which supports other residents so that they can stay in their own homes with a support package of care.</p> <p>Further expand the provision of intermediate care facilities within housing schemes.</p> <p>Use the collaborative care premises to provide care for patients as they leave hospitals.</p> |

**(vi) Corporate Strategy**

The Council's vision for the District is a simple one .... *"to make Rochford the place of choice in the County to live work and visit"*.

To help realise that vision, the Council has adopted six principal aims, some of which can be delivered directly by the Authority, others of which can only be delivered through working with other organisations in the District. The aims are to:-

- Provide quality, cost effective services.
- Work towards a safer and more caring community.
- Provide a green and sustainable environment.
- Encourage a thriving local economy.
- Improve the quality of life for people in the District.
- Maintain and enhance the local heritage.

The Council's Best Value Performance Plan sets out a number of key priorities for 2004/5. Examples which directly link with this strategy are:-

- Progress the housing options appraisal process in connection with the Councils housing stock.

**Key targets:**

Complete tenant consultation and road shows by October 2004.

Submit the preferred option to Government by March 2005.

- Upgrade the Council offices to provide better meeting facilities and better access for the disabled.

**Key targets:**

A new reception at Rochford operational by October 2004.

A lift and new toilet for the disabled installed at the Civic Suite in Rayleigh by February 2005.

- Meet efficiency targets contained within the Public Service Agreement with Essex County Council.

**Key targets:**

Process 85% of homelessness applications within 33 days by March 2005.

Process 83% of renewal claims for housing and Council tax benefit on time by March 2005.

The Best Value Performance Plan also identifies some key priorities for the longer term. Examples with links to this strategy are:-

- Provide affordable homes to meet local needs.

**Key targets:**

Complete the refurbishment of Hardwick House to provide 22 homes for rent and 30 new flats for the elderly by December 2005.

Complete six new homes with support for those with learning difficulties by March 2005.

Complete a joint project with Castle Point Borough Council to provide five new homes for those who are living in a refuge as a result of domestic violence, by February 2005.

Commence 27 new build flats for rent on the former Reads Nursery with estimated completion by Summer of 2005.

Complete developments to provide two flats for move on accommodation by December 2004.

- Implement the result of the Council Housing Options Appraisal process.

**Key targets:**

Obtain Government approval of the proposed option by September 2005.

Commence work on the chosen path by April 2006.

Put new measures in place by April 2008.



- Improve our performance on statutory indicators compared with other Councils.

***Key targets:***

Increase the number of statutory indicators in the top two quartiles by 5% each year.

### **3 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT AND FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

A Housing Needs Study of the District was carried out in 1999 to assess current and future housing need. It was carried out by consultants and comprised a postal survey of 4500 households and face-to-face interview survey of 500 households. The survey found that the clear majority of people in Rochford considered themselves adequately housed and most people were very satisfied with their housing conditions.

Since the study was undertaken, some aspects of the research have been updated or added to by analysis of information from homelessness and housing advice enquires, from the housing register and joint transfer list, from the audit of needs undertaken as part of the preparation for implementation of the Supporting People framework and from the research projects commissioned by the Council and Essex Housing Officers' Group into areas such as older persons' housing, move-on accommodation and Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

A more formalised process of annually updating and reporting housing needs will be introduced following a new housing needs study and housing market assessment to be carried out in 2004. The Council is working with its sub-regional housing authority partners to commission this study which, will report by the end of 2004.

#### **3.2 Housing Market**

The Housing Needs Study included a local house prices and income study using the Halifax House Price Index Database. The most notable results were that district house prices were similar to the average in Essex and higher than national levels. However, although a considerable spread of incomes is evident, a number of people live on relatively low incomes. Consequently, the two most important issues identified were the problem of affordability and the level of concealed households living with an existing household, the vast majority of whom are not recorded on a register of housing need.

The house price and income study showed that most of these concealed households were not able to afford even the cheapest housing in the District leaving nearly all available property beyond their means, particularly parts of the rural areas where terraced house prices are high and flats are in limited supply. Most new household demand was for smaller and affordable types of housing, particularly one and two bedroom flats and terraced housing which were identified as being under-represented in the existing stock.

#### **3.3 Need for Affordable Housing**

The 1999 survey identified there was a total affordable housing need of 1690 units in the period up to 2004. This figure was based on projected supply of 1350 units over the period based on current levels of re-lets of existing stock and a new programme of 20 units per annum. This would result in an outstanding net total need of 340 at April 2004.

The current levels of re-lets of existing stock are not meeting the expected targets due to continuing and increasing Right to Buy sales and the new build/acquisition programme of 20 units per year has not been achieved.

The survey identified 650 new forming households requiring rented housing and 380 requiring low cost home ownership.

The housing needs study and housing market analysis will provide up to date information about affordable housing needs.

### **3.4 Needs of Different Groups**

Detailed background information about particular groups' needs is given in Appendix 1, but some of the key issues are set out below.

#### **Homeless**

The Council has had difficulty in meeting the duties placed on it under homelessness legislation, particularly the restrictions on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation which came into effect in April 2004. The buoyant local housing market means that private landlords are often unwilling to let to homeless families or those in receipt of housing benefit. Termination of assured short-hold tenancies is a significant cause of homelessness, as is the breakdown of relationships between parents and children. There have been particular difficulties in finding suitable accommodation and support for single people who have mental illness and/or substance misuse problems.

#### **Elderly and Frail Elderly**

The numbers of residents who are over 75 years is forecast to rise more rapidly in the District than in Essex and nationally. Both the Council and housing associations still operate some sheltered housing schemes that have shared bathroom facilities and are not up to modern expectations. There is a generous supply of traditional sheltered housing but relatively poor supply of accommodation with higher levels of care.

In the private sector, support is needed by some elderly residents who wish to remain in their own homes but will experience difficulty without appropriate services.

#### **Physical and Sensory Disabilities**

The Housing Needs Study showed that only about a quarter of homes containing a wheelchair user have been adapted. Recommendations for adaptations, both in Council homes and the private sector, remain at a high level, placing pressure on budgets and staff resources.

#### **Learning Disabilities**

There is an identified need for additional shared housing with support and for supported independent living for people with learning disabilities.

## **Mental Health**

There is an unmet need for accommodation with support for people with mental health problems, including accommodation which can be accessed quickly and also to ease problems of delayed discharge from hospital.

## **Move-on**

A study undertaken with Essex Housing Officers Group identified a need for more move-on accommodation, particularly for young people.

## **Council Housing**

Council tenants have, through consultation, identified a number of priorities for investment. These include:

- Shower facilities in bathrooms.
- Parks for electric scooters at sheltered schemes.
- Improved ventilation in flats.
- Entry phone video systems for added security in blocks of flats.
- Car parking improvements.

## **4 STRATEGIC LINKS AND KEY PARTNERS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The Housing Strategy is only one of a range of complementary and inter-related strategic documents and plans produced by the Council. In formulating this Housing Strategy careful regard has been given to relevant Corporate objectives and strategies.

### **4.2 Council Strategies and Plans**

This section sets out where the Housing strategy sits in relation to other Council strategies.

- Best Value Performance Plan

This sets out on an annual basis the Council's detailed plans for the following year, and indicates key longer term issues. It reviews performance on the previous year's plans and sets targets for performance improvements.

- Capital Strategy

This provides the Council's strategies on how capital projects will be planned, funded, delivered and monitored, together with details of the Council's Housing Revenue Account and General Fund Capital programmes.

- Tenant and Leaseholder Participation Agreements

An agreement (compact) between the Council and its tenants is presently in operation, is reviewed regularly and sets out the approach the Council will take to ensure that tenants are able to participate in the delivery of their housing service, receive good quality information and are consulted about housing issues.

A new Leaseholder Policy has been adopted and sent to all leaseholders, setting out the Council's policy on consultation and involvement of leaseholders within the participation process.

- Homelessness Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 required Local authorities to produce Homelessness strategies in consultation with partner agencies. This strategy, together with a detailed action plan, was adopted by Council in 2003. It has clear links with the delivery of the Housing Strategy.

- Private Sector Renewal Strategy

The Regulatory Reform Order 2002 abolished Renovation Grants and Home Repair Assistance and gave local authorities greater freedom to determine priorities and means of assistance provided to the private sector. The Council published its policy on financial assistance in July 2003, and will keep the policy under review, having regard to the overall financial position. It will also review its overall strategy for private sector housing.

- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

The HRA Business Plan is an important document that impacts on the Housing Strategy. In summary the purpose of the plan is to:

- Set out the Council's aims and purpose as a Social landlord
- Set out objectives and standards for the service
- Analyse the current position
- Plan how to achieve the objectives and standards through the formulation of strategies
- Provide a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in delivering the Business Plan
- Communicate the Council's plans to the government, key stake holders particularly tenants, partners and the wider community.

The main linkages with the Housing Strategy are social rent convergence, condition of the public sector housing stock, the delivery of the government's decent homes standards, tenant participation and energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

- Rochford Local Plan

This sets out the Council's planning policy framework against which all planning applications are decided. The main link with the housing strategy concerns new housing development. The plan has been reviewed and consultation on the draft revised plan took place in Autumn 2003.

#### **4.3 Strategies Produced by or with Other Agencies**

- Community Strategy

This is the overarching strategic document which sets out the vision and strategic direction for the District over a five year period. Following wide consultation, the Community Plan was adapted by all the partners on the Local Strategic Partnership in May 2004.

- Essex Structure Plan

Produced by the County Council and sets out the broad structure for the future of the County's physical environment including targets for house building in each district. The main linkage to the Housing strategy is in respect of housing provision.

- County Supporting People Strategy

Produced by the County Council in consultation with a range of other agencies. It sets out the approach of a county-wide commissioning body towards the current and future provision of supported housing within the County. A 5 year strategy is being produced by Essex County Council due for publication in early 2005.

- Local Supporting People Strategy

Produced by the District Council on behalf of the Supporting People Strategy group, in consultation with an inclusive forum of providers and users. The linkage of the local Supporting People Strategy with the Housing Strategy is in respect of supported housing.

- Rochford District Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy 2002 – 2005

Produced by the Council on behalf of the Local Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, comprising Essex Police, Essex County Council, Castle Point & Rochford Primary Care Trust and the National Offender Management Service. This sets out the local approach to reducing crime, disorder and their social and economic cost within Rochford District area. The main linkages with the Housing strategy are in respect of anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, racial incidents and substance misuse.

- Health Improvement & Modernisation Programme (HIMP)

Produced by the Castle Point & Rochford Primary Care Trust and contains health improvement targets and programmes for action based on a local health needs assessment to achieve good health and to reduce health inequalities amongst the local population. Main linkages with the Housing strategy are supported housing, affordable housing and energy efficiency/fuel poverty issues.

#### **4.4 Cross-Border Strategic and Operational Issues**

In order to deliver its Housing Strategy effectively, not only must the Council work in partnership with other agencies, it must also work across traditional geographical boundaries. Such cross-border working brings a more cohesive approach to meeting housing needs within the local housing market area and also benefits from economies of scale and shared expertise. The Council has been involved in a number of cross-boundary working initiatives:-

- Supported Housing Need Index

The Council participates in the Essex Supported Housing Need Index which records the special housing needs of people in a range of client groups across the County, broken down by district. The index helps identify levels of need to assist with the planning of supported housing schemes.

- Essex Strategic Reserve

All fourteen Essex Housing Authorities have agreed to work together through a joint commissioning process with the support of the Housing Corporation to ensure the development of strategic supported housing schemes for a range of client groups including less welcome groups.

- Supported Housing Move - On Strategy

The Council participated in the research carried out by Essex Housing Officers Group and agreed a strategy to work together in the re-housing of clients in strategic supported housing schemes.

- Essex Womens' Refuge

For many years all the Essex Local authorities have contributed financially to the running of the six women's refuges in Essex to ensure that women escaping domestic violence have access to such provision. Under the Supporting People arrangements from April 2003, revenue funding for the refuges will be met from Supporting People funds. The Council's financial contribution is now being used by Basildon's Women's Refuge to provide outreach services to Rochford clients, which includes school programmes and information services. A weekly support scheme has been provided by Basildon's refuge at a local office in Rochford from September 2003.

A joint scheme with Castle Point Borough Council has been agreed and funded to provide second stage accommodation for victims of domestic violence.

- Sub Regional Issues

In view of the increasing importance of the Regional Housing Strategy and sub-regions, Officers from Local Authorities and RSLs within the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region agreed to work together. A sub-regional group was formed to discuss common issues affecting the sub-region and to help better inform the Regional Housing Strategy.

- Partnership Bidding Arrangements

The Council entered into partnership bidding arrangements with Castle Point Borough Council and New Essex Housing Association for funds for a supported housing scheme and general needs housing on a vacant Essex County Council owned site, just over the Rochford District Council boundary. Within the joint arrangement, Rochford will receive nomination rights to five general needs properties. This represented one of the first cross-boundary partnership both in Essex and in the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region.



- Research

Through the Essex Housing Officers Group the Council worked in partnership with other Councils in Essex to jointly commission and fund two independent studies on the housing needs of less welcome groups in Essex and the housing needs of black and minority ethnic groups in Essex.

A sub – group of Housing Officers, comprising of Basildon, Thurrock, Castle Point, Southend, Brentwood and Rochford was formed in order to discuss the Homelessness Act 2002 with regard to allocation policies. The legal implications were considered, good practice and draft new lettings policies shared in order to ensure a uniformity of approach and interpretation of the Act.

#### **4.5 The Council's Partners**

The Council is unable to deliver the Housing Strategy alone and must work with its partners:-

- GO East

The Government office provides guidance to the Council on Government policy and is responsible for the allocation of borrowing approvals to the Council based on its capital and housing strategies and for monitoring the Council's performance on housing.

- Housing Corporation

This government agency provides capital funding to RSLs in the District to provide new affordable and supported housing as well as monitoring and regulating their activities.

- Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)

These are non-profit making organisations that are the main providers of new housing at affordable rent and low cost home ownership. The Council works closely with three local RSLs, to provide affordable housing within the District. It also works with other RSLs which have housing schemes within the district, but which do not wish to undertake further development work, and with other RSLs to provide support services.

- Essex County Council (ECC)

The main housing partnerships are with Essex County Council's Social Care Case Teams, Supporting People Commissioning Team on supported housing issues and in the use of the Essex Strategic Reserve. ECC and the Council have agreed a Local Public Service Agreement which includes housing related initiatives.

- Local Strategic Partnership

Producing a Community Strategy for the Rochford District is a statutory duty and a key task for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP draws together local authorities, health, the police, business and voluntary sectors.

- Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust

Responsible for the provision of primary health services within the two Districts. It is important that health and housing provision are co-ordinated and complement each other especially in relation to social housing provision, supported housing and the alleviation of the conditions that result in fuel poverty, injury or ill health.

- Citizens Advice Bureau

The Council grant aids the Rochford & Rayleigh Citizens Advice Bureau which provides advice to local residents including debt counselling and advice on housing matters.

- HARP

The Homeless Action Resource Project (HARP) provides advice and assistance on tenancy sustainment and benefits through its Day Services in Westcliff (the Southend Centre for the Homeless). They also provide meals, clothing, and outreach services. There is close liaison with both the under eighteen's specialist support worker who monitors young vulnerable people and the accommodation officer for those over eighteen.

There is also close liaison with HARP Night Services in Southend (The Nightshelter) who also provide general advice services.

- Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEEAC)

The Council works with EEEAC which provides energy efficiency advice to Rochford residents and promotes schemes for discounted energy saving products.

- Tenants and Leaseholders

The views of tenants and leaseholders are important to the Council in deciding priorities on service delivery. Further information is given in Appendix 1.

- South Essex Partnership NHS Trust

The Council works with the Trust on mental health issues, including the provision of housing and support.

- Private Sector Landlords

Private rented accommodation is an important housing option for some people. The Council works with private landlords to help ensure that the housing benefit system operates effectively and to secure some tenancies for homeless people.

- Contractors

All the Council's planned and responsive building works are carried out using private contractors, and there are very good working relationships.

The Council consulted widely in formulating this strategy. Details of the organisations consulted, responses received and changes made are given in Appendix 3. There has also been extensive consultation with tenants and leaseholders.

#### **4.6 Consultation**

The Council consulted widely in formulating this strategy. Details of the organisations consulted, responses received and changes made are given in Appendix 4. There has also been extensive consultation with tenants and leaseholders.

## 5 PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2003/04

This section of the Strategy summarises progress in improving services on housing objectives over the last three years.

### 5.1 Service Improvements

The Council has conducted a series of Best Value Reviews, which apply a number of principles, sometimes referred to as the '4 C's'.

- *Challenge* why, how and by whom a service is being delivered.
- *Compare* own performance with others across a range of indicators.
- *Consult* local taxpayers, users, and businesses about services and the setting of performance targets.
- Use fair and open *Competition* in securing efficient and effective services.

Three housing related service reviews have been completed to date, a pilot review covering homelessness and housing advice services, housing management and housing strategy.

Implementation of the action plans which followed from these reviews and from the Housing Strategy 2001/4 has resulting a number of improvements and achievements, the most important of which are:-

#### New Developments

- £2.8 million bid approved by Housing Corporation under the Approved Development Programme for 22 flats from refurbished accommodation for general needs housing, including key workers accommodation, by a partner RSL. The approved bid also includes the development of a range of supported housing in the District by a partner RSL on identified Council-owned infill sites.
- Cross boundary partnership with the neighbouring local authority, Castle Point Borough Council and partner RSL, for a supported housing scheme and general needs housing on a derelict Essex County Council owned site just outside the District boundary.
- £375,000 Local Authority Social Housing Grant programme for the provision of temporary accommodation for the homeless to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. The programme with a partner RSL includes the purchase of five units and use of six nominations to RSL stock.
- Development of an 'intermediate care' facility in one flat within a Council owned sheltered housing scheme, and a second flat as a base for a collaborative care team in partnership with PCT and social services.

- Procurement of one acre of land for key worker housing in the design brief for large development site in West Rayleigh

#### Improvement to Stock

- Completion of enveloping works and conversion of two vacant shops to provide self-contained accommodation for use as temporary accommodation.
- Improvements to Council owned hostel accommodation to create self-contained units.

#### Management Improvements

- Re-introduction of the Council's Transfer Incentive Scheme to free-up multi-bedroom property.
- The re-designation of 300 OAP designated flats as general needs housing to provide more flexibility of lettings.
- One year trial of revised working practices in management of sheltered housing schemes by using central control for out of hours working and on site day wardens.
- Release of multi-bedroom vacancies through a Cash Incentive Scheme.
- Reduction in void turn round times from 56 days to 26 days on average.

#### Joint Working Practices

- Development of a floating support scheme to help support tenancies in Council owned stock and homeless families in temporary accommodation.
- Development of joint protocols with a range of agencies including mental health and drug and alcohol services.

#### Surveys

- Completion of a Private Sector Stock Condition Survey the results of which will be fed into the Private Sector Renewal Strategy.
- Completion of the second phase of a study which will inform the development of strategy to address older persons housing, support and care needs within the District.
- Independent soft market testing showing the Council's "in-house" costs are reasonable.

- Appointment of consultants in collaboration with the other Thames Gateway South Essex housing authorities, to conduct a housing needs survey and local housing market appraisal.

## **5.2 Performance Monitoring**

The Council has robust performance monitoring systems for collecting and evaluating information on a regular basis, principally through Quarterly Performance Reports. These report on national and local indicators, volume statistics and good and poor performance highlights. They are considered by operational managers, the Council's Corporate Management Board and reported to Members. Housing management performance information is reported to tenants and leaseholders through tenants' meetings and the Council's "Your Home" newsletter. Residents and other stakeholder receive the information through the annual Performance Plan.

Individual staff are accountable for the delivery of action points through target setting and monitoring as part of the Council's Performance Review and Development process.

Monitoring of progress with implementation of action plans, and of the performance of housing services generally is dealt with by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which from time to time establishes sub-Committees to investigate particular issues.

## **5.3 Performance Indicators**

A summary of the performance indicators for housing services, and targets, is included at Appendix 6.

## **6 PRIORITIES AND OPTIONS FOR DELIVERY**

6.1 With finite resources, it is not possible to achieve everything the Council and its partners would want, so it has been necessary to make some difficult choices about housing priorities.

In choosing these, a number of factors were taken into account: -

- Key objectives of the Council and Local Strategic Partnership on housing and community issues.
- The issues of greatest concern to stakeholders and consultees.
- National, regional and sub-regional priorities and plans on housing and sustainable community issues.
- What is deliverable and makes the best use of the finite resources that are available now and likely to be available over the life of the strategy..

6.2 The Council's strategic housing priorities are:-

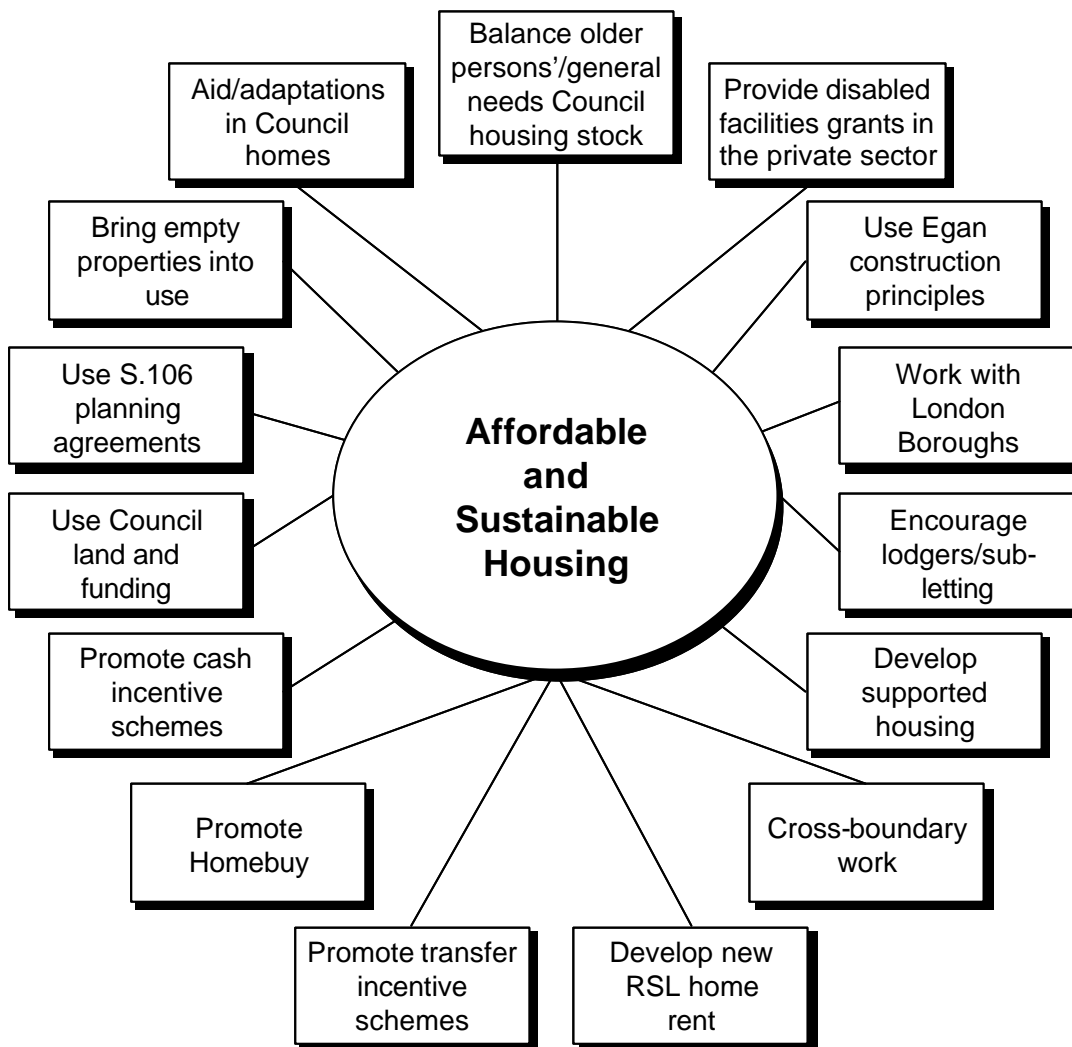
- (1) To ensure provision of sufficient affordable and sustainable housing for the local people, including those with special needs, which takes account of cost, size and location requirements.
- (2) To ensure all homes in the District are of a suitable standard for modern living and for the promotion of safety and good health.
- (3) To improve our performance in preventing and dealing with homelessness.
- (4) To ensure that older persons' housing, care and support needs are effectively addressed.
- (5) To ensure that the Option Appraisal in relation to the Council's housing stock is completed to timetable.

### **Strategic Housing Priority (1)**

To ensure provision of sufficient affordable and sustainable housing for local people, including those with special needs, which takes account of cost, size and location requirements.

This could be achieved in a number of ways as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 - Strategic Housing Priority 1**



***The options to be pursued are:-***

- Encouraging the development of new RSL homes and use of Council owned land. Seeking Housing Corporation funding to achieve the most benefit and numbers of nominations to additional affordable housing.
- Seek the provision of 10 – 20% of the new dwellings provided on larger developments as affordable housing to meet local needs through the use of Section 106 planning agreements.
- Make effective use of existing housing stock by discouraging under-occupation through the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
- Try to release multi- bedroom Council dwellings by providing a cash incentive to assist eligible tenants to purchase in the private sector.
- Promote the development of Homebuy through a partner RSL to release Council and RSL dwellings for re-letting under nomination arrangements whilst also promoting home ownership.



- Regularly review the re-designation of OAP designated homes as general needs housing to ensure flexibility of lettings.
- Provide key worker's housing through a partner RSL under the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme, to meet any need identified through the housing needs study.
- Provide supported housing including homes for people with learning disabilities, women escaping violence and move-on accommodation with a partner RSL under the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme.
- Develop supported housing for older people with a partner RSL who will build a frail elderly scheme under the Corporation's Approved Development Programme.
- Encourage the more vulnerable in the community to remain in their own homes by targeting the funding of grant aid to those in the greatest need and also by providing the installation of aids and adaptations in Council properties.
- Investigate the application of Egan principles in construction particularly with a view to adopting partnering arrangements.
- Continue to work with neighbouring authorities, particularly those in the Thames Gateway South Essex Sub-region, to provide affordable and supported housing through cross boundary schemes.
- Develop a strategy to tackle long-term empty homes within the District.

***The reasons for not pursuing the remainder of the options are:-***

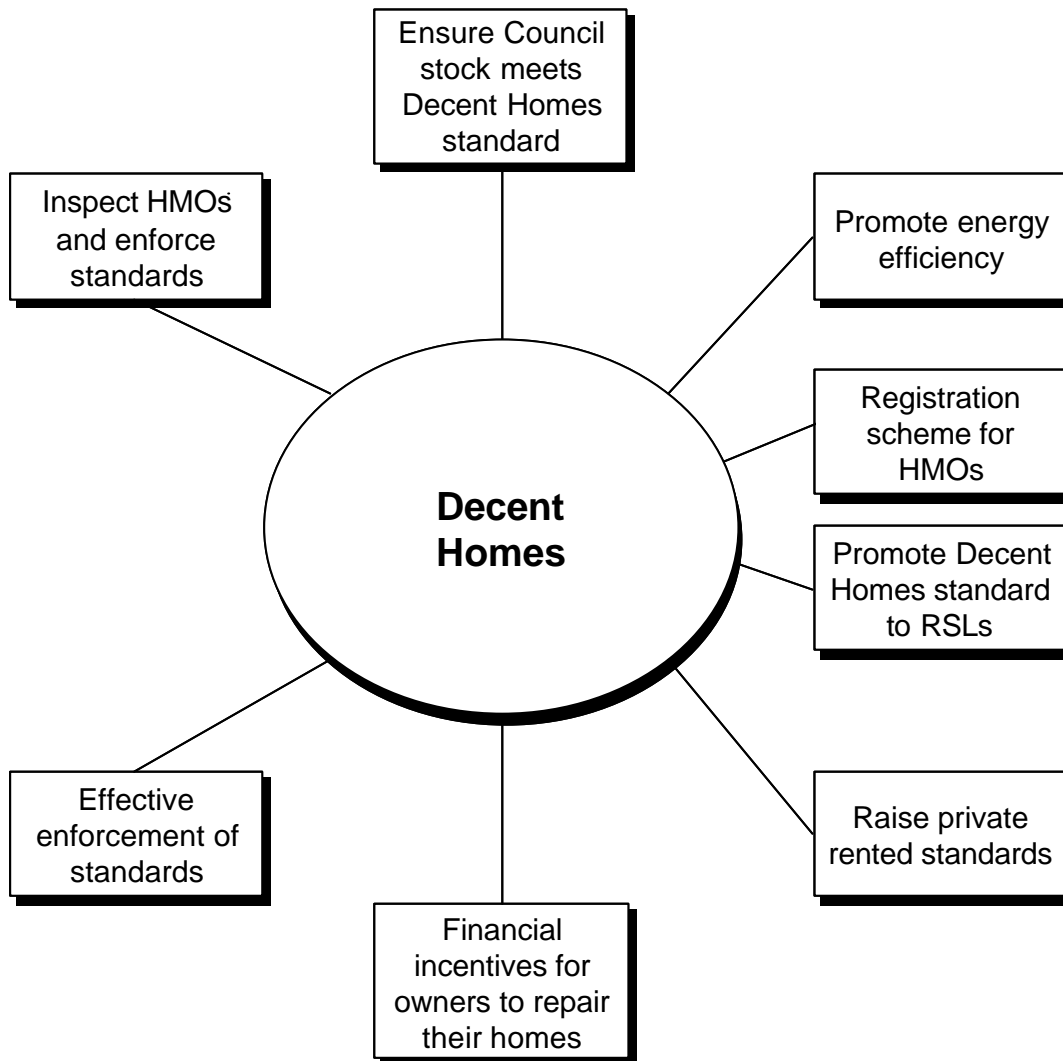
- Encouraging lodger/subletting arrangements is resource intensive for limited returns given the small size of the housing stock in the District and not considered best use of resources.
- Working with London Boroughs to provide additional homes in the District is not a considered option as it will only deliver limited numbers and will use scarce land.

**Strategic Housing Priority (2)**

To ensure all homes in the District are of a suitable standard for modern living and for the promotion of safety and good health.

This could be achieved in a number of ways as illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 - Strategic Housing Priority 2**



**The options to be pursued are:-**

- Implement the strategy for delivering decent Council homes by 2010 and working with tenants to identify a Decent Homes Plus Standard.
- Improve energy efficiency in Council homes by delivering the Decent Homes Standard.
- Promote Energy Saving Schemes with the Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.
- Use the Private Landlords Forum to promote good conditions in the private rented sector.

- Use Rochford's Home Maintenance and Adaptation Grant (RH MAG) to target limited finances to those residents who most need it. Keep under review the terms of the RH MAG scheme to try and ensure that grants are appropriately targeted.
- Use housing legislation to remedy disrepair and overcrowding. Building on a review of regulatory services, performance standards will be set and resources prioritised to deal with the highest risk situations.
- Implement a programme to inspect and risk rate Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

***The reasons for not pursuing the remainder of the options are:-***

- The Housing Corporation play an active role in monitoring the performance of Housing Associations and the Council does not have sufficient resources to become involved.

**Strategic Housing Priority (3)**

To improve our performance in dealing with homelessness.

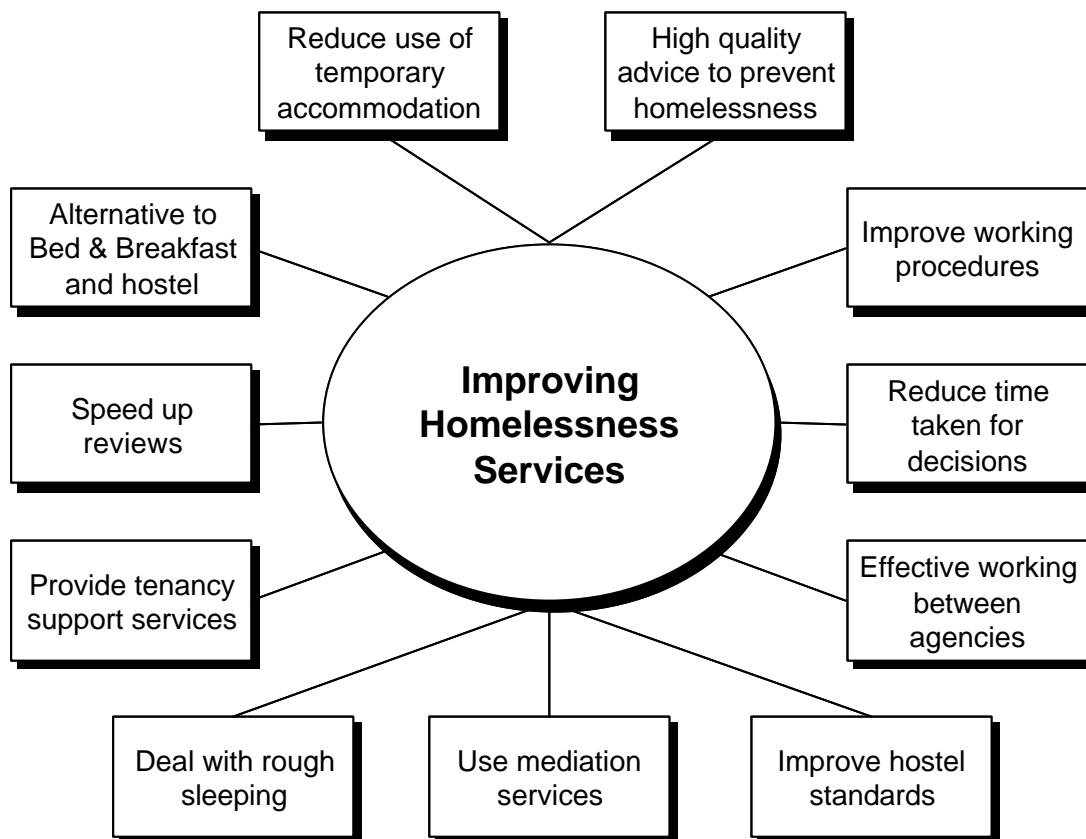
A detailed action plan is included in the Council's Homelessness strategy, but some of the main issues are listed here

This could be achieved in a number of ways as illustrated in Figure 3.

***These are the options we intend to pursue:-***

- Develop proposals for improving housing advice services and deliver them more independently of the homelessness service including exploring funding arrangements.
- Improve working procedures, based on best practice elsewhere.
- Develop suitable alternatives to hostel and bed/breakfast accommodation, which includes working with RSL partners and private sector landlords.
- Develop the use of mediation services, particularly between parents and children in Council stock.
- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation within Council stock by the provision of more permanent tenancies and increase the number of homes for rent through RSLs and the private sector.
- Further improve standards within the Council's hostel.

### Figure 3 - Strategic Housing Priority 3



- Look against the process used to deal with homelessness reviews.
- Further develop the working protocols between the Council and other agencies.
- Continue to use the Floating Support Scheme with a partner RSL to ensure support is provided to help prevent people from becoming homeless and seek to expand this service, subject to Supporting People funding.

#### ***The reasons for not pursuing the other option is:-***

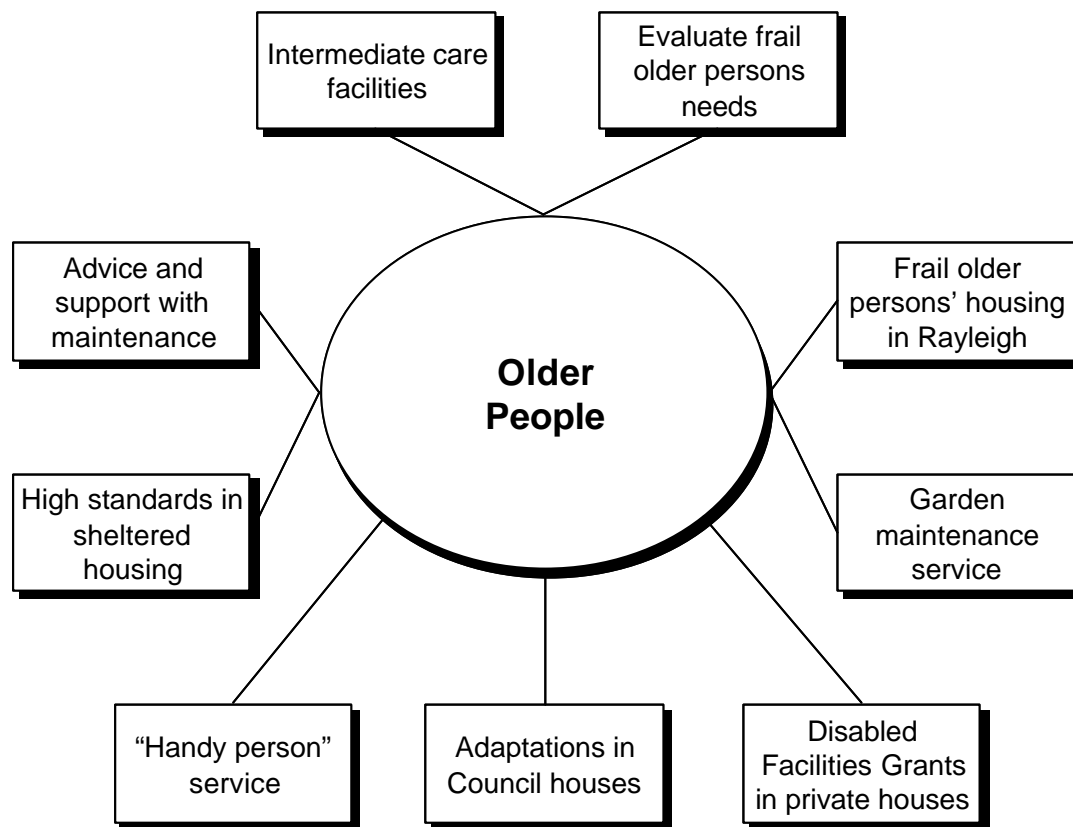
- There are very low levels of rough sleeping in the District so a full survey would not be a good use of resources. Information will instead be gathered in accordance with Best Value Performance Indicator guidance.

#### **Strategic Housing Priority (4)**

To ensure that older persons housing, care and support needs are effectively addressed.

This could be achieved in a number of ways illustrated in Figure 4.

**Figure 4 - Strategic Housing Priority 4**



***These are the options to be pursued:-***

- Continue to explore the opportunities with health and social care providers to use sheltered schemes flats both for intermediate care and collaborative care team use.
- Provide the Springboard garden maintenance scheme for older people who are unable to tend their gardens, in conjunction with Essex County Council and the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership and investigate future funding options to expand the service.
- Undertake adaptations to Council properties and provide Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Maintenance and Adaptation Grants to support older residents in their homes.
- Provide the Springboard Handy person service in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust and Essex County Council, and investigate future funding options to expand the service.
- Finalise a strategy for older person's housing, building on the research work already complete.
- Ensure that the accommodation in the Council's sheltered schemes meets modern standards.

***The reason for not pursuing the other options:-***

- The Housing Corporation monitors the improvements plans of RSLs to meet the decent homes standard and it would not be a good use of the Council's resource to duplicate this.

**Strategic Housing Priority (5)**

To ensure that the Option Appraisal in relation to the Council's housing stock is completed to timetable.

The Council will consider the following options in line with government guidelines:-

- Arms length Management Organisation (ALMO)
- Stock Transfer (LSVT)
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

Further information on the Option Appraisal Process can be found in the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

## **7 DELIVERING THE STRATEGY**

### **7.1 Decision Making**

#### **(i) Organisational Framework**

The Housing Strategy is a key strategic document for the Council.

As a small authority, the Council decided to retain a committee structure. Housing and related issues, such as health, social care and crime and disorder reduction all fall within the terms of reference of the Community Services Committee.

Scrutiny of that Committee's decisions and consideration of policy development is dealt with by the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Council will be reviewing its scrutiny function and may move to a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee for all services.

Delivery of the strategy rests with the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) operating through senior managers. The landlord functions of managing the Council's own housing stock have been separated from strategic and other housing functions. The relationship is illustrated at Figure 1.

### **7.2 Resources for Housing**

Fundamental to the delivery of the housing service are financial resources. These can be either revenue or capital.

Revenue covers the day to day income and expenditure. For Council housing the major items are the management and repair of property and paying for outstanding loans, which were incurred in providing new housing. The major source of income is the rents and charges to tenants. The account also includes the statutory financial adjustments with the Government. Although this is termed Housing Subsidy it is currently a payment from the revenue account to the Government.

The Housing Revenue Account has been under considerable pressure over recent years, however from 2004/05 additional funds have been made available by the Government which have improved the financial position. Subject to the continuation of the current funding arrangements the revenue account is now projected to remain in balance throughout the length of the current business plan to 2010/11.

**Full details of the Housing Revenue Account can be found in the appendix to the Housing Business Plan.**

For 2004/05 the major items with the Housing Revenue Account are:-

|                               | £ 000's |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Expenditure</b>            |         |
| Supervision and Management    | 1,840   |
| Repairs and Maintenance       | 920     |
| Interest on Loans             | 1,000   |
| Government subsidy adjustment | 510     |
| Major Repairs Allowance       | 1,140   |
| Option Appraisal              | 300     |
|                               |         |
| <b>Income</b>                 |         |
| Rents                         | 4,810   |
| Charges                       | 730     |
| Garages                       | 150     |
| Misc. Income                  | 50      |

The term capital is used to describe the investment in assets. Therefore previous house building would have been capital. Currently capital expenditure is directed towards the delivery of decent homes and may therefore include major repairs and improvements such as heating replacements and updating kitchens and bathrooms.

The Council is responsible for the financing of all services including Housing. It deals with competing priorities through a capital strategy. The key priorities within the Capital Strategy that relate directly to Housing are the investment in statutory and priority services to ensure the continuation and improvement of essential services and value for money and to ensure that landlord and owner responsibilities are undertaken.

**Full details of the capital works for council housing can be found in the appendix to the Housing Business Plan.**

The current capital programme for Council housing is financed mainly from the Major Repairs Allowance. These are funds made available by the Government and are currently around £1m per year. Capital expenditure is also supported from capital receipts.

Capital receipts arise from the sale of assets, an asset is sold and the money received is a capital receipt. Government regulations specify how much of the capital receipts can be used to fund new expenditure. The amounts so determined are termed usable capital receipts. New usable capital receipts are currently estimated at around £300,000 per year.

For future years the use of these receipts will be determined by the capital strategy. The planned use will be to cover General Fund items, support for housing associations and grants to support people in private sector housing with essential repairs, improvements and disabled adaptation. General fund services include open spaces, leisure, public conveniences and works to ensure compliance with the Disabled Discrimination Act.

Over the next 7 years the current programme shows that 63% of capital receipts will be used for General Fund services and 37% for Housing.



For 2004/05 the total housing capital programme will be

|                            | <b>£ 000's</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Decent Homes delivery      | 706            |
| Private sector renewal     | 120            |
| Estate regeneration        | 15             |
| Other Capital works        | 402            |
| Disabled Facilities Grants | 152            |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>1,545</b>   |

### **Private Sector Renewal**

With one the highest levels of owner occupation in the country at nearly 90%, the private sector clearly has the greatest potential to meet the housing needs of the District.

The Council will target its private sector renewal budget and disabled facilities grants to those in the greatest need who unable to remedy unsatisfactory conditions without help.

### **Affordable Housing Provision**

The need for additional affordable housing is a high priority for the Council and the Council has a variety of opportunities to secure lettings. They can come from its own stock through natural turnover from nomination to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) existing stock and through the provision of additional funds through RSLs. The latter can be provided through grant funding from the Council and through negotiations with developers through the planning process (Section 106 Agreements).

### **Lettings of Existing Council/RSL Housing**

In 2003/04 the number of new Council voids (houses becoming vacant) available for letting decreased to 128 from 141 in 2002/03, reflecting a loss of properties through Right to Buy.

The Council works closely with RSLs to allocate properties in Rochford and the RSLs request nominations from the Council for a proportion of their void properties. In 2003/04 the Council made 32 nominations to RSL properties compared to 24 in 2002/03.

Although there has been a small increase in the number of nominations to RSLs last year, new Council voids available for reletting has declined, increasing the pressure on affordable social housing available in the District.

## **Need to improve provision of affordable housing**

The Council is well aware of the need to address the need to provide additional affordable housing through Section 106 negotiations and with funding from the Housing Corporation on behalf of the Regional Housing Board. A step towards this has been taken through the commissioning of the Thames Gateway South Essex Housing Needs Study which will inform the updating of the District Local Plan for Rochford, including the provision of affordable housing through Section 106 Agreements.

### **7.3 Housing Benefits Administration**

The Council's administration of Housing Benefits (HB) has an impact on the delivery of the Housing Strategy, especially in respect of the key housing theme of supported housing and special needs. Our approach to the administration of the scheme is given in the HRA Business Plan.

We have taken a very proactive approach to HB administration. The Council adopted the HB Verification Framework in January 2002 and became fully compliant in July 2002. In October 2002 we agreed an action plan which would see all of the Housing Benefit Performance Standards met by 2007. We have made successful bids to the D.W.P. Performance Standards Fund to improve the service delivered to claimants.

The Council aims to deliver a first class service to customers and these are the objectives associated with how we intend to meet that aim.

- By driving down the cost of administering claims to around £86 per claim.
- By taking a proactive approach to fraud investigation, prosecuting fraudsters and obtaining administrative penalties to ensure that cash goes only to those who have an entitlement.
- By processing 85% of HB claims within 14 days.
- By processing new claims for HB within 40 days.
- By processing changes of circumstances within 9 days.
- By processing 83% of renewal claims on time.
- By ensuring a 97.25% accuracy rate of claims processing.
- By recovering 67% of overpaid HB within the year of occurrence.
- By providing clear information and guidance to tenants on aspects of the scheme as assisting elderly and disabled claimants to complete application forms.

## **7.4 E-Government**

In 2002, the Council published its Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) Statement, setting out how it is working towards the Government's target of providing 100% of its services by electronic service delivery by 2005. This will have a positive effect on how this Housing Strategy can be delivered.

Also, in 2002, the Council conducted a public survey concerning methods of contacting the Council. Around 35% of respondents stated that they used the internet, with 23% of those saying they would consider contacting the Council by this method.

In October 2001, the Council launched its interactive housing service ([www.rochford.gov.uk/housing](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/housing)) on the Council's website, in order to increase the accessibility to housing services via the internet. In the medium term, it is proposed to place the Council's Mutual Exchange Register on the site. The website has recently been extensively revised and improved.

The Council is making full use of the services provided by the Planning Portal and recently became the seventh authority in the country to accept the electronic submission of planning applications. The Council's replacement Local Plan is also available for viewing through the portal.

## **7.5 Monitoring, Reviewing and Updating the Housing Strategy**

The Council places great importance on performance monitoring and management, and monitoring of progress with implementation of the housing strategy will be part of the framework. The Heads of Service and other senior Managers within Finance & External Services Directorate produce quarterly performance reports giving key performance indicators and an overall assessment. Every six months, updated Service Action Plans are produced for each major project. All these are published and circulated to Councillors.

Important projects which form part of the Council's Best Value Action Plan/Corporate Plan (a combined document) are monitored by the Council's Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee twice a year.

The housing strategy will be annually updated in line with guidance from the ODPM and GO East.

## **8 ROCHFORD - HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

### **CORPORATE AIMS**

- 1 To provide quality cost effective services
- 2 To work towards a safer and more caring community
- 3 To promote a green and sustainable environment
- 4 To encourage thriving economy
- 5 To improve the quality of life for people in the District
- 6 To maintain and enhance the local heritage and culture

**Strategic Priority 1 To ensure provision of sufficient affordable and sustainable housing for local people including those with special needs, which takes account of cost, size and location of requirements**

| <b>TASK</b>  | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>                              | <b>RESOURCES</b>   | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>   |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|--|--|------------------|---|
| Development of affordable rented RSL homes to help maintain/develop sustainable communities. | High            | 5                     | 91 homes between 2004 - 2006                       | Housing Corporation ADP £3.7M 2004 - 2006  | HHCC             | Supply of additional homes towards meeting general housing need, needs of elderly people and special client groups.           |
| Provision of supported housing to meet the needs of older people.                            | High            | 2                     | Provision of Extra Care Scheme through RSL in 2005 | Housing Corporation ADP funding of £2.8m approved (included in above)              | HHCC             | Fills gap in supported housing for this special needs group   |
| Target DFGs in the private sector to those in greatest need                                  | High            | 2                     | Budget used in full each year                      | Funding of £152,000 2004/5 for DFGs and £120,000 for Private Sector Renewal grants | HHCC             | Limited resources go to those in greatest need.<br><br>Assists elderly/disabled to live independently in own home.            |
| Installation of Aids & adaptations in Council properties                                     | High            | 2                     | Ongoing  | Capital funding of £60,000 2004/5  | RHM              | Assists elderly/disabled to live independently in own home. Increased facilities to cater for increasingly ageing population. |

**Strategic Priority 1 To ensure provision of sufficient affordable and sustainable housing for local people including those with special needs, which takes account of cost, size and location of requirements**

| <b>TASK</b>  | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>   | <b>RESOURCES</b>   | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>  |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--|------------------|--|
| Provision of supported housing for a range of special need groups                  | High            | 2                     | By 2005 11 homes for special needs groups                               | ADP financing of £676,000 through Housing Corporation and revenue funding through 'Supporting People' budget | HHCC             | Additional homes towards meeting the housing needs of women escaping domestic violence, those with a learning disability, and move on accommodation. |
| Seek use of Egan methods of construction in refurbishment and new homes            | Medium          | 2                     | Ongoing project with RSL partner to engage in this construction method. |  | HHCC             | Better value for money.<br>Faster building process   |
| Deliver affordable housing through use of Section 106 planning agreements          | High            | 5                     | As planning permissions for larger sites are granted                    |  | PS               | More affordable homes in District to meet local need.  |
| Identify a minimum of three Council owed sites for affordable housing through RSLs | Medium          | 5                     | Three sites by 2007   | Free land in Council ownership   | HHCC             | Additional affordable housing in District.   |

**Strategic Priority 1 To ensure provision of sufficient affordable and sustainable housing for local people including those with special needs, which takes account of cost, size and location of requirements**

| <b>TASK</b>   | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>   | <b>RESOURCES</b>  | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>   |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---|------------------|---|
| Promote financial schemes to deliver more homes for rent                        | High            | 5                     | Inclusion in budget of minimum funding of £50,000 each year. Two cash incentive moves completed each year | £75,000 for cash incentive scheme to deliver 3 homes for rent in 2004 – 2005. | HHCC             | Release of three homes for reletting in 2004/5 and two each year in 2005/6 and 2006/7   |
| Promote financial schemes to deliver more homes for rent                        | High            | 5                     | Four Homebuy purchases completed by 2006  | Deliver four homes through Homebuy scheme £204,000 funding approved.          | HHCC             | Encourage owner occupation and release homes for rent.                                  |
| Promote financial schemes to deliver more homes for rent.                       | High            | 5                     | Operate Transfer Incentive Scheme in 2004/05, releasing six multi-bedroom properties per year             | £20,000 in budget for 2004/05   | RHM              | Multi bedroom vacancies for re-letting to housing register and transfer list applicants |
| Develop a strategy to bring long-term empty homes in the District back into use | High            | 2                     | April 2005  | £5,000 for consultancy fees   | HHCC             | Renovation of long-term empty homes and increased supply of properties for letting      |

**Strategic Priority 1 To ensure provision of sufficient affordable and sustainable housing for local people including those with special needs, which takes account of cost, size and location of requirements**

| TASK  | PRIORITY | CORPORATE AIMS | TARGET/BY WHEN   | RESOURCES  | LEAD TEAM | EXPECTED OUTCOME  |
|---|----------|----------------|--|--|-----------|---|
| Work with neighbouring Authorities including those in Thames Gateway South Essex sub region to deliver cross-boundary schemes following completion of sub-regional housing needs and market assessment. | High     | 5              | Housing Needs Study/Market Analysis completed by December 2004 | £35.000 for Housing Needs Study for Rochford plus financial contribution from 4 other Local Authorities in region. | HHCC      | More affordable homes provided across sub-region based on identified Housing Need |



**Strategic Priority 2 To ensure all homes in the District are of a suitable standard for modern housing and for the promotion of safety and good health**

| <b>TASK</b>   | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>                       | <b>RESOURCES</b>   | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>   |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--|------------------|---|
| All Council properties to meet as a minimum the Decent Homes Standard | High            | 5                     | All homes compliant by 2010                 | Capital Programme  | RHM              | Decent Homes Standard achieved by 2010.   |
| Identify and inspect HMOs   | Medium          | 5                     | By end of 2006                              | £10,000 to employ staff/consultants in budget                    | HHCC             | All multiple occupied properties identified and risk rated. Inspection programme in place. Enforcement where needed to ensure satisfactory standards. |
| Promote high standards with private landlords                         | Medium          | 5                     | Private sector landlord forum meetings held | From own resources   | HHCC             | Higher standards in private sector.   |
| Promote financial incentives for owner-occupiers                      | High            | 5                     | Budget used in full each year               | Funding of £120,000 for 2004/5 for Private Sector Renewal grants | HHCC             | Elderly/disabled assisted to live independently in own home.  |

**Strategic Priority 2 To ensure all homes in the District are of a suitable standard for modern housing and for the promotion of safety and good health**

| TASK   | PRIORITY                          | CORPORATE AIMS             | TARGET/BY WHEN  | RESOURCES   | LEAD TEAM                          | EXPECTED OUTCOME   |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Promote energy efficiency by</p> <p>(i) Continuity surveys to determine changes in home energy efficiency.</p> <p>(ii) Improve energy efficiency in Council homes by providing better loft insulation and by providing more efficient gas central heating boilers.</p> <p>(iii) Work with energy supply companies and Essex Energy Advice Centre to develop Projects.</p> | <p>Low</p> <p>High</p> <p>Low</p> | <p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p> | <p>Annually by July. 2000 surveys distributed. Target 400 responses as minimum</p> <p>158 homes identified to be improved in 2004-2006</p> <p>'Affordable Energy Schemes' with Essex Energy Advice Centre implemented</p> | <p>Within existing resources</p> <p>Capital Programme provision of £200,000 each year</p> <p>Resources provided by EEAC</p> | <p>HHCC</p> <p>RHM</p> <p>HHCC</p> | <p>Will highlight need and evaluate targets to be more efficient.</p> <p>All properties will meet DHS by 2006 in relation to thermal comfort.</p> <p>More homes with energy efficiency measures installed.</p> |

**Strategic Priority 3 To improve our performance in dealing with homelessness**

| <b>TASK</b>  | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>   | <b>FUNDING</b>  | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>  |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---|------------------|--|
| To produce proposals for housing advice services for consideration by the Council. | High            | 1                     | September 2004. Target has slipped  | Options to be developed alongside proposals   | HHCC             | To provide an independent advice service.                            |
| Faster homelessness application decision making.                                   | High            | 1                     | 85% of applications decided in 33 working days by April 2005.                 | ODPM funding £19,000 for 2004/5 and 2005/6  | HHCC             | Reduced time in making decisions and improved service to applicants. |
| Develop suitable alternatives to hostel and bed/breakfast accommodation            | High            | 2                     | Comply with statutory requirements.<br><br>Six private tenancies secured p.a. | Accommodation budget £200,000 2004/5<br><br>£6,000 for rent/deposit scheme 2004/5<br><br>ODPM funding £19,000 for 2004/5 and 2005/6 | HHCC             | Reduced use of bed & breakfast/hostel.                               |

**Strategic Priority 3 To improve our performance in dealing with homelessness**

| <b>TASK</b>   | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>  | <b>FUNDING</b>   | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>  |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|--|--|------------------|--|
| Reduce use of temporary accommodation in our own stock  | High            | 5                     | Three additional properties for nominations from the Council by April 2006 | Capital funding £150,000 identified to assist RSLs purchase properties   | HHCC/RHM         | Provision of more permanent homes through RSLs.                  |
| Reconsider the process used to deal with homelessness reviews to try and reduce the time taken    | High            | 1                     | 2004/05  | Target savings to be identified  | HHCC             | Better service to homeless applicants undergoing review process. |
| Continue to use floating support to provide support to help prevent people from becoming homeless | High            | 2                     | 100 hours per week support provided  | Contractual agreement with partner RSL funded through Supporting People. | HHCC/RHM         | Homelessness, especially repeat homelessness, prevented.         |

**Strategic Priority 4 To ensure that older persons housing care and support needs within the District are effectively addressed**

| <b>TASK</b>  | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>   | <b>FUNDING</b>  | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>   |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---|------------------|---|
| To work with a partner RSL to develop a frail elderly scheme in Rayleigh                                       | High            | 2                     | March 2006  | Capital funding of £1.9M secured through ADP and £70,000 revenue funding through 'Supporting People' programme. | HHCC             | Will fill gap in supported housing for this 'Special Need' group.   |
| Work with health and social care partners to provide intermediate care facilities in Council sheltered schemes | Medium          | 2                     | One scheme in use during 2004/5. Agreement reached with PCT/Social Care on need for further schemes by March 2005 | £10,000 from Capital Programme previously provided  | RHM              | Promotes diverse use of accommodation, helps prevent delayed discharge of care and promotes independence. |

**Strategic Priority 4 To ensure that older persons housing care and support needs within the District are effectively addressed**

| <b>TASK</b>  | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>                    | <b>FUNDING</b>  | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>  |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|--|---|------------------|--|
| To provide a garden maintenance scheme for older people in conjunction with partner organisations. | High            | 2                     | SLA targets for 2004/05 to be determined | £10,000 from revenue funding 2004/05; £7,500 from Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership; £3,000 from Social Services | HHCC             | Improved services for the elderly to help promote independent living opportunities reduced |
| To provide adaptations in Council properties   | High            | 2                     | Budget used in full each year.           | £60,000 in 2004 – 2005 programme  | RHM              | Improved services for those tenants who require adaptations to remain in their own home.   |

**Strategic Priority 4 To ensure that older persons housing care and support needs within the District are effectively addressed**

| <b>TASK</b>  | <b>PRIORITY</b> | <b>CORPORATE AIMS</b> | <b>TARGET/BY WHEN</b>         | <b>FUNDING</b>  | <b>LEAD TEAM</b> | <b>EXPECTED OUTCOME</b>                   |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|------------------|---|
| To provide Disabled Facilities Grants                                      | High            | 2                     | Budget used in full each year | Budget £152,000 for 2004/5  | HHCC             | Effective services for vulnerable groups. |
| To provide Home Maintenance and Adaptation Grants                          | High            | 2                     | Budget used in full each year | Budget £120,000 for 2004/5  | HHCC             | Effective services for vulnerable groups. |
| To provide Handy Persons service in conjunction with partner organisations | High            | 2                     | Annually                      | £10,000 revenue funding per annum<br>£8,000 from Social Services<br>£4,000 from PCT | HHCC             | Effective services for vulnerable groups. |

**Strategic Priority 5 To ensure that the Option Appraisal in relation to the Council's housing stock is completed to timetable**

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| TASK   | PRIORITY    | CORPORATE AIMS | TARGET/BY WHEN  | FUNDING   | LEAD TEAM  | EXPECTED OUTCOME   |
|--|-------------|----------------|---|---|------------|--|
| <p>Carry out a robust housing stock options appraisal in line with ODPM guidance as per key target timetable.</p> <p>(i) Planning project and setup period.</p> <p>(ii) Set up Options Appraisal Board.</p> <p>(iii) Develop strategy for addressing local aspirations (Decent Homes Plus)</p> <p>(iv) Appoint Independent Tenants Advisor (ITA)</p> | <p>High</p> | <p>5</p>       | <p>February 2005</p> <p>March 2004</p> <p>April 2004</p> <p>September 2004</p> <p>June 2004</p> | <p>HRA Budget provision of £300,000 for overall process</p> | <p>RHM</p> | <p>Deliver options for Council Housing stock.</p> <p>Set up achieved to timetable.</p> <p>Rochford Options Appraisal Board formed to timetable.</p> <p>On target.</p> <p>ITA appointed to timetable.</p> |



**Strategic Priority 5 To ensure that the Option Appraisal in relation to the Council's housing stock is completed to timetable**

| TASK   | PRIORITY | CORPORATE AIMS | TARGET/BY WHEN   | FUNDING | LEAD TEAM                        | EXPECTED OUTCOME  |
|--|----------|----------------|--|---------|----------------------------------|---|
| (v) Appoint Financial Consultant<br>(vi) Produce Tenant empowerment/ involvement strategy.<br>(vii) Develop communications strategy.<br>(viii) Carry out Housing Needs Study on sub-regional basis<br>(ix) Carry out stock condition survey<br>(x) Technical and financial options detailed appraisal process. |          |                | September 2004<br><br>July 2004<br><br>July 2004<br><br>Draft report by November 2004<br><br>October 2004<br><br>February 2005 |         | {<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>RHM | Financial Consultant appointed ahead of schedule.<br>Produced by August 2004.<br><br>Produced by August 2004.<br><br>On target.<br><br>On target.<br><br>On target. |

**Strategic Priority 5** To ensure that the Option Appraisal in relation to the Council's housing stock is completed to timetable

| TASK  | PRIORITY | CORPORATE AIMS | TARGET/BY WHEN | FUNDING | LEAD TEAM | EXPECTED OUTCOME |
|---|----------|----------------|----------------|---------|-----------|------------------|
| (xi) Submit report to GO-EAST for sign off. |          |                | May 2005       |         | RHM       | On target.       |

**Key:**

- HHCC - Housing Health and Community Care.
- RHM - Revenues and Housing Management.
- PS - Planning Services.

## **APPENDIX 1 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON HOUSING ISSUES**

The following sections provide background information to a number of the District's important housing issues:-

- Housing provision
- Homelessness
- Supported housing & special needs groups
- Private sector housing
- Public sector housing
- Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty
- Tenant & leaseholder participation

### **1 HOUSING PROVISION**

#### **(i) Structure Plan Requirements**

The Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan (ESRSP) sets the requirements for housing provision in the district in the period 1996 – 2011. The allocation provided in the plan is based upon the Government's 1992 based housing projections and the housing provision rates provided in the Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9, March 2001).

The Structure Plan considers that, strong emphasis will continue to be given to safeguarding the stated purposes of the Metropolitan Green Belt and to protecting the natural and built environment. Further development provision, it is argued, should primarily be concentrated within existing larger urban areas through increases in their urban capacity, by redevelopment and land use change. The plan concludes that in the Southend and South Essex sub-region, which includes Rochford, further long-term housing provision up to 2011 will be strongly restrained.

Taking into account the need to continue to safeguard the Green Belt and the natural and built environment of the district, the Structure Plan requires 3,050 new dwellings to be provided in the district between 1996 – 2011.

The Structure Plan makes no attempt to allocate or require land to be safeguarded for residential development beyond 2011. Instead, the plan makes clear that housing provision post 2011 will be considered by a review of the plan in the context of new regional planning guidance (RPG14 Regional Planning Guidance for the East of England). Therefore, the local plan makes no provision for housing post 2011. Future allocations will be dependent then on the outcome of a review of the Structure Plan.

## **(ii) Urban Capacity**

A detailed study of urban capacity was carried out in 2000/2001. The study examined the potential for further intensification of the built-up areas, sub division of dwellings, the use of employment sites, car parks, rural sites and living over the shop.

The study concluded that there is sufficient capacity within the urban areas to accommodate the District's dwelling requirements to 2011 and that there should be no requirement to allocate greenfield sites for development.

## **(iii) Housing Needs & Affordable Housing**

The Council defines 'affordable housing' as housing that is provided, with subsidy, for local people who are unable to resolve their housing needs in the private sector because of the relationship between housing costs and incomes.

The Housing Needs Survey established that in 2004 there would be an outstanding net total need for 340 affordable homes. This calculation took into account the Council's waiting list, homeless and concealed households, and requirements emanating from demographic changes. It is clear from the study that there is too little affordable housing in the district to satisfy local needs and planning policies are designed to ensure that all developers of larger sites provide an affordable housing contribution. The Council is closely monitoring planning policy guidance developments.

The Council will need to be satisfied that affordable dwellings will be enjoyed by successive as well as initial occupiers. That is best achieved through the involvement of a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and the Council has active links with several Housing Associations operating in the District. The Local Planning Authority will require the applicant to enter into a Section 106 obligation (planning agreement) under the provisions of planning legislation before planning permission is granted.

Low cost market housing is cited by the Government as part of the 'affordable housing' equation. It may very well be that smaller units of accommodation (flats and terraced housing) cost less to purchase on the open market. However, the Housing Needs Study demonstrated that the relationship between income levels of a significant segment of the population and the market value of smaller units meant that they could not be classified as 'affordable'. Therefore, whilst the Local Planning Authority will require developers to provide a mix of dwelling sizes on new developments, smaller units will not be considered as a contribution to the affordable housing required by the policy. The key is that an element of subsidy is included.

## **(iv) Rural Affordable Housing**

The affordable housing needs of villages can usually be met through the provision of suitable accommodation in a nearby town. However, there may be instances when a small development adjacent to an existing rural settlement might be acceptable to fulfil a proven total need.

Additionally, the Council has obtained rural designation from the ODPM in respect of 7 Parishes within the Rochford District. This designation ensures that if an owner wishes to re-sell a property purchased under Right to Buy, they may only do so to someone who has lived or worked locally (within the Rochford District) for 3 years and applies to any subsequent re-sale. This will ensure that potentially 136 properties continue to be available for local people in perpetuity.

## **2 HOMELESSNESS**

### **(i) Legislation**

The Housing Act 1996 is the main piece of legislation governing homelessness. It requires Local Housing authorities to provide advice on homelessness and the prevention of homelessness.

When someone applies for housing assistance the Act details the duties the Authority has according to the applicants circumstances. Enquiries have to be made to establish whether the applicant is eligible for assistance, homeless or threatened with homelessness, in priority need and whether they became homeless intentionally. The Government has produced a Code of Guidance to assist Authorities in meeting the requirements of the Act.

With the introduction of the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities are required to take a more strategic approach to homelessness. A greater emphasis has been placed on prevention of homelessness as well as the provision of support and accommodation.

A Homelessness strategy has been produced, based on a review of homelessness in the District. This strategy must be kept under review and a new strategy published at least every five years.

### **(ii) Statistics**

#### **Review of Homelessness - Information**

| <b>Year</b>                                 | <b>2000/1</b> | <b>2001/2</b> | <b>2002/3</b> | <b>2003/4</b> |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Homelessness applications                   | 199           | 125           | 135           | 181           |
| Decisions made                              | 71            | 55            | 81            | 143           |
| Decisions within 33 working days (%)        | 42            | 53            | 60            | 70            |
| Full duty owed*                             | 44            | 40            | 56            | 67            |
| Housing Advice enquiries                    | No data       | 488           | 677           | 532           |
| No: of homeless people housed from register | 28            | 31            | 28            | 31            |

\*This is where the local authority has a duty to secure accommodation for the applicant

## Reasons for priority need

| Year                                    | 2000/1 | 2001/2 | 2002/3 | 2003/4 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 child                                 | 14     | 16     | 16     | 21     |
| 2 children                              | 14     | 10     | 10     | 8      |
| 3 or more children                      | 6      | 7      | 7      | 6      |
| Pregnant - no other dependant children  | 5      | 2      | 1      | 6      |
| 16/17 year old                          | -      | -      | 5      | 9      |
| Formerly in care and 18-20 years old    | -      | -      | 2      | 1      |
| Vulnerable due to - old age             | 1      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| - physical disability                   | 0      | 1      | 1      | 0      |
| - mental ill health/Learning Disability | 4      | 1      | 6      | 8      |
| - young person                          | 0      | 2      | 1      | 0      |
| - domestic violence                     | 0      | 0      | 1      | 0      |
| - other                                 | 0      | 1      | 6      | 8      |
| Homeless in emergency                   | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |

## Reason for Homelessness

| Year  | 2000/1 | 2001/2 | 2002/3 | 2002/4 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Parents will no longer accommodate                    | 6      | 8      | 18     | 28     |
| Friends will no longer accommodate                    | 2      | 1      | 9      | 10     |
| Non-violent relationship breakdown                    | 4      | 1      | 2      | 3      |
| Violent breakdown of relationship involving - partner | 6      | 4      | 6      | 5      |
| - associated person                                   | 0      | 0      | 0      | 2      |
| Racially motivated violence                           | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| Other violence  | 0      | 0      | 3      | 3      |
| Harassment - racially motivated                       | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| - other   | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| Mortgage arrears                                      | 2      | 1      | 2      | 2      |
| Rent arrears - LA                                     | 1      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| - RSL   | 0      | 0      | 1      | 0      |
| - Private   | 1      | 0      | 2      | 2      |
| Termination of assured shorthold tenancy              | 15     | 17     | 8      | 4      |
| Other reason for loss of rented/tied                  | 0      | 3      | 1      | 0      |

| Year  | 2000/1 | 2001/2 | 2002/3 | 2002/4 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| accommodation                                 |        |        |        |        |
| Required to leave N.A.S.S. accommodation      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| In institution or care                        | 1      | 0      | 2      | 3      |
| Other reason (emergency, ex-H.M. Forces, etc) | 6      | 5      | 2      | 5      |

### **(iii) Trends**

The information indicates that there has been a rise in the number of homelessness applications over the last year. This reflects the national picture and is not unexpected. This is attributable in part to the fact that the Homelessness Act 2002 broadened the statutory safety net to ensure more vulnerable people get the help they need.

There is a rising trend in homelessness caused by parents refusing to continue to accommodate their children and is very often the main cause of homelessness. There is a similar trend in cases where people have been staying with friends. On the other hand homelessness due to the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy appears to be decreasing but nevertheless is still the third most common reason for homelessness. Again these mirror the national picture. The statistics clearly show that there has been a considerable increase in the number of requests for housing advice.

The number of homeless people to whom the Council owes a full accommodation duty each year exceeds the number who are being housed from the housing register. As a result of this there has been a gradual increase in the number of households being accommodated in temporary accommodation.

### **(iv) Accommodating Homeless Applicants**

The Council currently has forty-one units of temporary accommodation dispersed across the district. This comprises eight hostel rooms (three of which are self-contained), four self-contained bedsits and twenty-nine houses and flats. Ten of the units are owned by Springboard Housing Association and provided under a contract to the Council. A further unit is still to be secured under this contract. During 2003/4 the Council will be providing two additional bedsits by converting some disused business premises and a further unit is being secured through Swan Housing Association.

### **(v) Rough Sleeping**

Rough sleeping is not thought to be a significant issue in the District. However, homelessness staff occasionally deal with applicants who have been sleeping rough. Further research to establish the true extent is needed.

### **3 SUPPORTED HOUSING AND SPECIAL NEEDS GROUPS**

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken over recent years to attempt to provide a full and accurate assessment of the number of people in the District who have special housing needs. This work has included the Housing Needs Study, participation in the Essex Supported Housing Index, undertaking a study of the needs of frail older people and the needs mapping which is an integral element of the Supporting People framework

However, there is still further work to be done before a truly comprehensive picture of need is available.

‘Special Needs’ covers a variety of groups, including the elderly, those with physical or sensory disabilities, people with learning difficulties or mental illness and people who are vulnerable, for example, because of substance abuse.

#### **(i) Supporting People**

Supporting People (SP) is one of the most challenging changes to supported housing in recent times. For the first time there is a single method of grant payment to meet housing related support costs which has involved the biggest transfer of resources from Central to Local Government since the introduction of the Community Care system.

Supporting People assists a range of people with support needs including older people, homeless people, people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependency, women fleeing domestic violence, ex-offenders and vulnerable young people. The programme is intended to maintain people in their own homes, promote independence and choice and, where appropriate, delay or prevent the need to move into hospital or residential care.

The Supporting People framework enables decision to be made locally regarding local priorities within the objectives set by Central Government. Local partnerships between housing, social services, health and probation have the power to make decisions about the services that should be provided in Rochford.

Rochford is part of a two tier structure and works jointly with Essex County Council in monitoring and maintaining the Supporting People programme. The Council has also taken a joint approach with Castle Point District Council with a joint Local Supporting People Officer appointment.

The Council produced a Supporting People position statement in 2002, and this is being updated to produce a local strategy document.



## **(ii) Elderly and Frail Elderly People**

People over 65 account for 23% of the District's population. By 2011 this will have risen to 28%. There are currently approximately 6,300 people over 75 years old living in the district and it is estimated that this will increase by 17% over the next ten years. The number of those over 85 years old will increase well above the national average.

There is a good supply of sheltered housing across all sectors and a high level of leasehold provision which reflects the similarly high level of owner-occupation, but low levels of residential and nursing care provision. All the extra care housing provision is currently in the eastern part of the district, near Rochford town centre.

A number of both local authority and RSL sheltered schemes still have shared bathrooms.

In the private sector, there are some elderly residents who are unable to properly maintain their homes either through frailty or financial problems.

## **(iii) People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities**

There is a continuing demand for adaptations to homes to make them more suitable for people with physical or sensory disabilities. This is achieved through the use of Disabled Facilities Grant in the private sector, and by the council and RSLs carrying out work for their tenants.

The Housing Needs Study showed that only about one quarter of homes that have a wheelchair user in them have been adapted to make them suitable for wheelchair use.

## **(iv) People with Learning Disabilities**

The Essex Learning Disability Partnership Board has produced a housing strategy for Essex which identifies that there are 179 known people with a learning disability living in the district. There is an identified unmet need both for shared housing with support and for supported independent living. This is being addressed through a cross boundary scheme with Castle Point Borough Council which will provide units for young adults with learning disabilities funded through the Essex Strategic Reserve programme. The scheme is currently in development and will open between 2005 and 2006.

## **(v) Young People**

The Homelessness Act 2002 has placed additional duties on local authorities to provide accommodation for 16 and 17 year old children and for 18 – 21 young people leaving care.

The Council is receiving an increased number of homeless applications from younger people, many of whom have special support needs. The provision of appropriate accommodation for young people leaving care is currently being addressed through an Essex Strategic Reserve programme in Rochford although a site has yet to be identified.

**(vi) Intermediate Care**

Work with the South Essex Partnership NHS Trust to identify housing and support needs for people who have had mental health problems.

**(viii) Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME)**

Rochford has one of the lowest ethnic minority populations and well below half the national average.

In May 2000 the Council adopted the Commission for Racial Equality Race Relations Code of Practice in Rented Housing.

In compliance with the Code of Practice the Council has monitored the number of people within ethnic groups who are on the Council's housing register and who have been re-housed.

The Council is a member of the South East Racial Incident Panel comprising a wide range of partner agencies and is represented by an officer from the Council's Community Safety Team.

The Council is presently evaluating Essex Wide Independent research conducted on the housing needs of Black & minority Ethnic groups to determine whether it can complement its landlords' role.

**(ix) Mental Health**

The Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust and the South Essex Partnership NHS Trust have identified that there is a shortage of supported housing services for various client groups who have had mental health problems, but further work is needed to better identify the type and location of any housing or related support that is required to meet shortfalls.

**4 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

The District has one of the highest levels of owner-occupation in the country at nearly 90%, so the private sector clearly has the greatest potential to meet the housing needs of the district. The Council has a range of powers including planning controls, enforcement action and financial incentives that it can use to influence the private housing market, but with such high levels of owner-occupation and limited resources, bringing about significant changes is difficult. Surveys have shown that the vast majority of the district's residents are satisfied with their housing and the Council supports the principle that most people will use their own resources to look after and improve their own properties.

**(i) Stock Condition**

The Rochford District is a relatively affluent area which is reflected in the condition of the stock. The findings of a recent private stock condition survey show that 2.71% of the stock is unfit for habitation, which is much lower than in the previous survey and below the national average of 7%. The survey also found that 3.4% of the stock is in need of substantial repair.

The results of the survey, which also included an estimate of the cost of monitoring the stock in good repair, are currently being evaluated. Once this is done, the outcome will be used to review and update the private sector renewal strategy.

**(ii) Housing Grants**

It is recognised that most owners are able to maintain their property themselves. A minority though, find this difficult without some form of financial and technical assistance.

Until the change in legislation governing grants in July 2003, the Council used its limited budgets to provide renovation grant aid to owner occupiers over 60 years old living in unfit houses. It also provided Home Repair Assistance to elderly or disabled residents in receipt of income related benefit for a variety of works including repairs, improvement, adaptations, energy efficiency and security measures.

Since July 2003 the Council has adopted a policy to provide assistance similar to Home Repair Assistance but to a wider range of applicants, including families on low incomes. This policy will be kept under review, as will the development of alternative schemes of assistance such as equity release and loans.

**(iii) Disabled Facilities Grants**

The Council has an active programme and works in close co-operation with the Social Services Occupational Therapy Team.

Following the changes in the law governing grants which removed the availability of discretionary renovation grant, the Council has adopted a policy of providing assistance for discretionary works, for topping up mandatory grants and for helping residents to relocate to a property more suitable for adaptation.

**(iv) Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

The exact number of HMOs in the district is not known but believed to be small. The recent private sector stock condition survey did not identify any HMOs and consideration is being given to alternative ways of gathering the information needed.

**(v) Mobile Homes**

There are approximately 600 households living in mobile homes on residential caravan sites in the District. In recent years, the Council has had a proactive programme to improve conditions on these sites to bring them up to current model standards. This work is almost completed but regular monitoring will continue to ensure standards are maintained.

**(vi) Private Rented Property**

The amount of private rented property in the District is relatively low representing approximately 4.5% of the total stock.

A Best Value Review of Public Regulation, Inspection & Protection has been undertaken which included housing Enforcement activities. The Review put forward several proposals, including the setting of service standards for service improvements.

**(vii) Springboard Home Improvement Service**

The Council, in partnership with Social Services, funds Springboard Home Improvement Service. This agency provides a wide range of assistance to home owners, particularly the vulnerable in maintaining and adapting their home. They frequently act on behalf of residents in making grant applications. They also administer the Council's new grant scheme, having previously administered Home Repair Assistance.

**(viii) Springboard Handyperson Service**

The Council, in partnership with Social Services and the Primary Care Trust, funds the Springboard Handyperson Service. This service is aimed at helping the elderly or disabled who have a limited income to carry out minor repairs, improvements and adaptations.

**(ix) Gypsies and other Travellers**

There have been a number of unauthorised encampments in the District in recent years which have led to damage. The Council intends to review its policies and service response during 2004/5.

**(x) Empty Homes**

At the end of October 2003, there were 333 homes in the district which had been empty for over 6 months. Empty homes have in the past only been dealt with in response to complaints. The Council recognises the need for an Empty Homes Strategy and it aims to develop this by April 2005.

**5 PUBLIC SECTOR HOUSING**

The Council and RSLs operating within the district own and manage around 9.7% of the district's housing stock. Although this Housing Strategy covers the District's housing as a whole, it is acknowledged that public sector landlords (the Council and RSLs) have an important part to play in meeting the district's needs.

In its HRA Business Plan the council sets out in detail its approach to the management and maintenance of its own stock; similarly, RSLs produce detailed business plans which reflect their own individual approach to stock maintenance. Partner RSLs and others exchange business plans and annual reports with the Council so that it can monitor and evaluate the effect of its

overarching policies in relation to management and maintenance, and strategic delivery.

Issues concerning strategic delivery are of such importance that they require inclusion in this document although they are beyond the direct control of the Council.

**(i) Decent Homes Initiative**

The Council produces annually a Repairs and Maintenance Work Plan, which forms part of its HRA Business Plan. This sets out the detailed aims, issues, objectives, targets and performance in respect of the maintenance of the Council's housing stock.

The Council is mid-way through a comprehensive in-house stock condition survey of its own stock as part of its delivery initiative on Decent Homes. Base-line information established over many years has been verified by an external firm of Chartered Surveyors using 'beacon properties' across the district. These properties represent the type style and age of all the Council's stock and number around 110 units (6% of the overall stock).

Although the Council has invested significant expenditure on the maintenance and improvement of the Council's housing stock over the years, many properties built in the 1960's and 1970's have now reached that point in their life when they require extensive expenditure. This has been identified as dove-tailing into the Decent Homes Initiative which focuses on bringing build elements up to decency standards. £6.2m will have been identified in the Business Plan to achieve and maintain all properties at decency standards.

The Council's Major Repairs Allowance goes some way to improving standards but the Council is currently examining a variety of ways to improve standards within the statutory timescales and an examination of our planned maintenance to responsive repairs (40:60) is currently under scrutiny. We aim to reverse this quotient to 60:40 in line with Audit Commission guidelines.

The Decent Homes Standards requires that homes must:-

- Meet the statutory minimum fitness standard;
- Be in a reasonable state of repair (i.e. must not have one or more key building components in an old/poor condition, or two or more other components that are old and need replacement or major repair);
- Have reasonably modern facilities (i.e. must not lack three or more specified facilities); and
- Provide thermal comfort (i.e. have effective insulation and heating)

The Council supports the Government's proposals and aims to meet the decency criteria by the target dates.

Extrapolation of the verified stock condition survey identifies 23 properties (2% of the general stock) failing the decency standard based on the age criteria. This needs to be compared with the Government's declared national average of 31% for local authorities of Rochford's size.

**(ii) Rent Re-structuring and Rent Convergence**

Generally, for historical reasons, RSL rents in the district are significantly higher than Council rents. However, the Government has required all Councils and RSLs to restructure the way they calculate their rent levels, by reference to individual property values, regional and national earnings, national average rent levels and numbers of bedrooms. All Councils and RSLs must also ensure that their rent levels are brought in line with each other by 2010. In Rochford this process was started in April 2002.

**(iii) Choice Based Lettings**

The Government through its Housing Policy Statement and the Homelessness Act 2002, is encouraging local authorities to introduce "choice based lettings", whereby housing applicants are able to choose the property that is let to them, rather than being "allocated" properties. The Council is pro-actively considering such an approach.

Several models have been examined, all of which rely on having a reasonable large pool of properties. It may, therefore, be necessary to combine resources with another local authority or group of RSLs to achieve a comprehensive choice based letting scheme.

The Council's current IT provider has just introduced a choice based lettings module which the Council will examine.

**(iv) Option Appraisal**

A major task for 2003/04 and 2004/05 will be to complete the Housing Stock Option Appraisal exercise. This process will determine the most appropriate future ownership and management of the Council's 1800 housing units.

An action plan to achieve the appraisal exercise by July 2005 has been agreed and is being implemented.

This exercise will cause a considerable drain on the Council's limited financial and human resources. The likelihood is that consultants will need to be appointed to undertake most of the work. This associated expenditure is likely to divert resources away from maintenance and repair.

**(v) Anti-Social Behaviour**

Although serious anti-social behaviour within the district is uncommon, there has been a marked increase in the number of anti-social behaviour cases in recent years. Public sector landlords therefore take seriously their responsibilities to minimise such behaviour through the enforcement of their tenancy conditions and other available remedies. Often, such behaviour can be curtailed simply by a housing officer visiting or writing to the alleged

perpetrators. Alternatively, mediation by an independent third party can be used.

Following consultation with tenants, the Council has recently considered the introduction of a new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. From August 2003 this was incorporated into the Conditions of Tenancy reinforcing the Council's commitment to stamp out anti-social behaviour. However, if the anti-social behaviour is serious or continues, the Council and RSLs will use one or more of the following remedies:-

- Repossession – Under the Housing Act 1996, Councils and RSLs can seek to repossess a property if a tenant, resident or visitor causes (or is likely to cause) a nuisance to other residents in the locality, or if they are convicted of using their property for illegal purposes, or convicted of an arrestable offence in or near the property.
- Injunctions – also under the Housing Act 1996, Councils (only) can seek an injunction from the courts to prohibit a person from causing a nuisance to other residents in the area, or using premises for illegal purposes. However, these can only be granted if violence is used or threatened, and if there would be a significant risk of harm if an injunction was not granted.
- Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) – Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council or the Police, in consultation with each other, can seek an ASBO from the courts if there is ongoing criminal type behaviour. The person must be over 10 years of age and be acting anti-socially towards others, causing harassment, alarm or distress. The ASBO prohibits the person from continuing with the anti-social behaviour. A breach of the order is a criminal offence, with a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment.

The Council has recently appointed an Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator to work closely with Essex Police on the implementation of best practice.

## **6 ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND FUEL POVERTY**

### **(i) National Policy**

Local authorities have an important role to play in taking and encouraging local action which improves sustainable development.

Specifically, they have duties under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 to take action to conserve energy used in domestic premises and to facilitate an increase in the energy efficiency of all dwellings by 30% in the period 1996 – 2011, based on 1995 levels. The Council has published a Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Strategy.

### **(ii) Energy Efficiency Ratings**

These are measured using either National Home Energy Ratings (NHER) or Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) ratings.

The private housing stock condition survey draft report indicates that the private stock has high levels of energy efficiency. Average NHER ratings are 6.3 compared to an average NHER of 4.5 in the country as a whole. One of the challenges facing the Council is how to raise energy efficiency levels even higher. The Government's "Warmfront" scheme to provide free or discounted energy efficiency work for people in receipt of benefits or on low incomes does not have a high take-up in the District.

The average SAP rating for the Council's stock is 56, which is in line with the national figure for local authority housing. About 98% of Council homes have double glazing.

### **(iii) Fuel Poverty**

The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 places a duty on local authorities to consider fuel poverty. The UK fuel poverty strategy has set targets to eradicate fuel poverty to all vulnerable groups by 2020 and to all groups by 2016. Although the district is relatively affluent, efforts need to be concentrated on identifying those groups who are most likely to suffer fuel poverty. This will need close links with health, social care and voluntary agencies.

## **7 TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PARTICIPATION**

Tenant consultation and participation is a key element of Government policy in social housing. Legislation requires social landlords to provide information about tenancies and to consult tenants on matters of housing management.

"Tenant Participation Compacts" are written agreements between tenants and social landlords which set out what has been agreed about how tenant participation will take place.

The Council is fully committed to the principles of tenant participation and has used a variety of methods in the past to encourage involvement. However, the level of interest has not been high and finding new and better ways to invigorate the process remains a key task.

The Council and its tenants have agreed a Tenant Participation Compact which is described by the Audit Commission as comprehensive.

Registered Social Landlords operating within the district have arrangements in place for tenant participation.



## APPENDIX 2 - CONTACTS

ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL  
 COUNCIL OFFICES, SOUTH STREET,  
 ROCHFORD, ESSEX, SS4 1BW  
[www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)

| <b>FUNCTION</b>                     | <b>OFFICER</b>   | <b>TEL. No.</b> | <b>EMAIL</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| Best Value Performance Plan         | Mrs Chris Paget<br>Audit & Process Review Manager              | 01702 318031    | <a href="mailto:chris.paget@rochford.gov.uk">chris.paget@rochford.gov.uk</a>         |
| Capital Strategy                    | Dave Deeks<br>Head of Financial Services                       | 01702 546366    | <a href="mailto:dave.deeks@rochford.gov.uk">dave.deeks@rochford.gov.uk</a>           |
| Community Plan                      | Charles Thomas<br>Emergency Planning & Health & Safety Manager | 01702 318132    | <a href="mailto:charles.thomas@rochford.gov.uk">charles.thomas@rochford.gov.uk</a>   |
| Council Stock Condition             | Dave Timson<br>Property Maintenance and Highways Manager       | 01702 318110    | <a href="mailto:david.timson@rochford.gov.uk">david.timson@rochford.gov.uk</a>       |
| Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy | Stephen Garland<br>Community Safety Officer                    | 01702 318083    | <a href="mailto:stephen.garland@rochford.gov.uk">stephen.garland@rochford.gov.uk</a> |
| E-Government                        | Ms Sarah Fowler<br>Head of Administrative and Member Services  | 01702318135     | <a href="mailto:sarah.fowler@rochford.gov.uk">sarah.fowler@rochford.gov.uk</a>       |
| Energy Efficiency (Private Sector)  | Steve Neville<br>Residential Service Unit Manager              | 01702 318046    | <a href="mailto:steve.neville@rochford.gov.uk">steve.neville@rochford.gov.uk</a>     |
| Energy Efficiency (Council stock)   | Dave Timson  |                 |  |
| HRA Business Plan                   | Steve Clarkson<br>Head of Revenue and Housing Management       | 01702 318005    | <a href="mailto:steve.Clarkson@rochford.gov.uk">steve.Clarkson@rochford.gov.uk</a>   |
| Homelessness                        | Steve Neville  |                 |  |

| <b>FUNCTION</b>           | <b>OFFICER</b>  | <b>TEL. No.</b> | <b>EMAIL</b>   |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------|--|
| Housing Benefits          | Scott Logan<br>Revenue and<br>Benefits Manager            | 01702 318006    | <a href="mailto:scott.logan@rochford.gov.uk">scott.logan@rochford.gov.uk</a>         |
| Housing Strategy          | Alex Coulson<br>Housing Client<br>and Strategy<br>Officer | 01702 546366    | <a href="mailto:alex.coulson@rochford.gov.uk">alex.coulson@rochford.gov.uk</a>       |
| Local Plan                | Shaun Scrutton<br>Head of Planning<br>Services            | 01702 318100    | <a href="mailto:shaun.scrutton@rochford.gov.uk">shaun.scrutton@rochford.gov.uk</a>   |
| Private Sector<br>Housing | Steve Neville   |                 |  |
| Council Housing<br>Rents  | Steve Clarkson  |                 |  |
| Supporting<br>People      | Alex Coulson  |                 |  |
| Tenant<br>Participation   | Sarah Schofield<br>Tenant<br>Participation<br>Officer     | 01702 318064    | <a href="mailto:sarah.schofield@rochford.gov.uk">sarah.schofield@rochford.gov.uk</a> |

### APPENDIX 3 - LIST OF RSLs ACTIVE IN ROCHFORD DISTRICT

| RSL  | ADDRESS  | CONTACT           | TEL. No:        | E-MAIL   |
|--|--|-------------------|-----------------|--|
| Advance Housing  | 2 Witan Way<br>Witney<br>OXON<br>OX8 5FE   | Julie Moynihan    | 01993<br>772885 | No email address listed  |
| Estuary Housing Association                            | 10 Coopers Way,<br>Southend-on-Sea<br>Essex<br>SS2 5TE   | Tony Churton      | 01702<br>462246 | <a href="mailto:t.churton@estuary.co.uk">t.churton@estuary.co.uk</a>               |
| Hanover Housing Association                            | Midlands Region<br>Nelson House<br>Allington Road<br>Eynesbury<br>St. Neots<br>CAMBS<br>PE19 6RE | Juliette Daniel   | 01480<br>475069 | <a href="mailto:Juliette.daniel@hanover.org.uk">Juliette.daniel@hanover.org.uk</a> |
| Housing 21   | Embatoll Health<br>104 High Street<br>London Colney<br>St. Albans<br>HERTS<br>AL2 1QZ            |                   | 01727<br>825282 | <a href="mailto:Addressee@housing21.org.uk">Addressee@housing21.org.uk</a>         |
| John Grooms Housing Association                        | 50 Scrutton Street<br>London<br>EC2A 4XQ   | Clive Cook        | 0207<br>4522000 | <a href="mailto:c.cook@johngroom.org.uk">c.cook@johngroom.org.uk</a>               |
| Ling Housing Trust                                     | 13 East Stockwell Street<br>Colchester<br>CO1 1SS  | Sarah Howard      | 01206<br>769246 | No email address listed  |
| London & Quadrant Housing Trust                        | Heraldic House<br>160-162<br>Cranbrook Road<br>Ilford<br>Essex<br>IG1 4PE                        | Lee Hackett       | 0208<br>2624400 | <a href="mailto:l.hackett@lagroup.org.uk">l.hackett@lagroup.org.uk</a>             |
| New Essex Housing Association                          | Broad Oak House<br>1 Broad Walk<br>Corringham<br>SS17 1LZ  | Yvonne Arrowsmith | 01375<br>361996 | <a href="mailto:Yvonne.arrowsmith@nihha.org.uk">Yvonne.arrowsmith@nihha.org.uk</a> |
| Plume Housing Association (part of Moat Housing Group) | The Square<br>Holloway Road<br>Heybridge<br>Maldon<br>CM9 4LH                                    | David Foden       | 01621<br>841180 | No email address listed  |

| <b>RSL</b>                      | <b>ADDRESS</b>   | <b>CONTACT</b> | <b>TEL. No:</b> | <b>E-MAIL</b>  |
|---------------------------------|--|----------------|-----------------|--|
| Sanctuary Housing Association   | East Anglian Area Office<br>Rose House<br>5-7 St Peter's Street<br>Ipswich<br>Suffolk<br>1PI 1XF | Lesley Woods   | 01473<br>213342 | <a href="mailto:l.woods@sactuaryhousing.co.uk">l.woods@sactuaryhousing.co.uk</a>                       |
| Shaftesbury Housing Association | North Thames & Eastern Region<br>90C Broomfield Road<br>Chelmsford<br>CM1 1SS                    | Emma Dear      | 01254<br>495944 | <a href="mailto:Eastareaoffice@shaftesburyhousing.org.uk">Eastareaoffice@shaftesburyhousing.org.uk</a> |
| Springboard Housing Association | Springboard House<br>2A Cloughton Road<br>London<br>E13 9PN                                      | Alan Beak      | 0208<br>4750033 | <a href="mailto:a.beak@springboardhousing.org.uk">a.beak@springboardhousing.org.uk</a>                 |
| Swan Housing Group              | Pilgrim House<br>High Street<br>Billericay<br>CM12 9XY   | Trevor Burns   | 01277<br>844700 | <a href="mailto:tburns@swan.org.uk">tburns@swan.org.uk</a>   |

## **APPENDIX 4 - CONSULTEES AND RESPONSES**

### **Housing Associations**

Swan Housing Group  
Springboard  
Stonham  
Acorn  
Advance Housing & Support  
Estuary  
Plume  
Housing 21  
John Grooms  
Shaftsbury  
Sanctuary  
London & Quadrant  
Hanover  
New Essex  
Ling Trust

### **Local Authorities**

Southend Borough Council  
Castle Point Borough Council

### **Parish Councils**

All Parish Council within the Rochford District

### **Private House Building Developers**

Barrett Eastern Counties  
Bellway Homes  
Crest Homes  
McCartney & Stone  
Wilson Homes  
Ladbury Homes  
McClellan Homes  
Hecray Co Ltd  
David Wilson Homes

### **Estate/Letting Agencies**

Hudson Estates  
H V Sorrell  
M & D Property Management  
Dedman & Sons  
Global Estates  
Rona & Partners  
Abbotts  
Butler Booth  
Regus Group  
Tudor Estates

## **Other Organisations**

Primary Care Trust  
Social Services (Local Mental Health)  
Physical Disabilities, Hearing Disabilities &  
Young People Hearing Care teams)  
Rent Officer Service  
Family Mediation Service  
Drop-in Advice Surgery  
Citizens Advice Bureaux  
NACRO  
Homeless Action Resources Project  
Southend Community Furniture Store  
YMCA  
Action on Elder Abuse  
Essex Racial Equality Council  
Rayleigh Police (Domestic Violence Unit)  
Victim Support  
Health Visitors for Homeless Team  
Gingerbread  
National Council for One Parent Families  
Rayleigh & Rochford Association for Voluntary Services  
Relate (South Essex)  
Drug & Alcohol Advice & Treatment Service  
Lodgerline  
Information Station for Young People  
Rochford Locality Youth Services  
South East Essex M S Society  
Fledgelings Child Contact  
Age Concern  
185 Young Peoples Information Advice & Support Services  
Mencap  
Benefit Agency  
Job Centre Plus  
Phoenix Agency  
Independent Living Advocacy

The following responses were received:-

| <b>Consultee</b>                | <b>Comment</b>  | <b>Response</b>  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Canewdon Parish Council         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Comments noted regarding safe guarding the Green Belt and also rural affordable housing</li> </ul>   | Strategy includes further investigation of needs with the Rural Housing enabler  |
| Citizens Advice Bureau          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Comment on Mediation Service – proposed amendment under the Council’s Partners</li> <li>■ Required details of the pilot garden maintenance scheme.</li> <li>■ Request for details of Empty Homes Strategy</li> </ul> | <p>Suggested amendment included</p> <p>Details provided</p> <p>Draft Strategy being prepared</p>                                       |
| Springboard Housing Association | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Comments on Key Targets under Supported &amp; Special Needs Groups &amp; Private Sector Housing</li> <li>■ Document informative – well laid out and easy to read.</li> </ul>   | <p>Amended to incorporate Comments</p> <p>Noted</p>  |
| Phoenix Agency                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Perturbed that no plans for any housing for mental health or any partnership initiatives</li> </ul>  | Gaining information on Clients needs has proved difficult. Attempting further engagement with Community Mental Team and other agencies |
| Estuary Housing Association     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Very good and comprehensive document.</li> </ul>   | Noted  |

## APPENDIX 5 - GLOSSARY OF TERMS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Affordable Housing</b>                         | Homes available at below market prices. These are usually Council or Registered Social Landlord/Housing Association   |
| <b>Approved Development Programme (ADP)</b>       | Yearly allocation of money made by the Housing Corporation to RSLs to fund schemes in partnership with Local Authorities  |
| <b>Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)</b> | A company established by the Local Authority for the purpose of carrying out the landlord role for council housing but not taking over ownership of the stock   |
| <b>Asset Management Plan</b>                      | A plan showing how capital assets will be maintained to meet user needs and the expected resources available for investment   |
| <b>Audit Commission</b>                           | An independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is used economically, efficiently and effectively  |
| <b>Best Value</b>                                 | A legal duty that requires a Council to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of all its services for the public  |
| <b>Capital Programme</b>                          | Financial provision for the planned repair and improvement of council housing stock   |
| <b>Capital Receipts</b>                           | Money paid by the buyers of Council owned homes   |
| <b>Capital Strategy</b>                           | This sets the framework within which the Council will award capital investment to ensure the best use of capital resources  |
| <b>Catch Up Repairs</b>                           | The level of repairs currently outstanding on Council stock necessary to bring the stock up to a good standard and to meet landlord obligations   |
| <b>Community Strategy</b>                         | A requirement as part of the Local Government Act 2000. It is intended to serve as a framework for improving the quality of life in the area by promoting social, economic and environmental well-being |
| <b>Contingent Major Repairs</b>                   | An allowance used to cover unexpected costs   |
| <b>Cyclical Maintenance</b>                       | Programmed maintenance of the housing stock on a regular cycle. This would include painting and mechanical and electrical servicing   |
| <b>Decent Home Standard (DHS)</b>                 | A requirement set by the Government for all social housing providers to meet specified minimum standards by 2010  |



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>'Fit for Purpose'</b>                     | <p>In 2002 the Government stipulated the housing strategy must be 'fit for purpose' effective and forward looking. The Government will reassess the strategy against a range of criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fits with the Council's wider objectives</li> <li>■ Fits with regional and sub-regional housing priorities</li> <li>■ Demonstrates effective consultation with stakeholders and partners</li> <li>■ Analyses the current and likely housing needs in all tenures</li> <li>■ Identifies resources for the future from a variety of sources</li> </ul> |
| <b>Future Major Repairs</b>                  | <p>The programme of major works (repairs and replacement of building components e.g. roofs, kitchens) sufficient to maintain the housing stock in good condition</p>   |
| <b>General Fund</b>                          | <p>The Council's income and spending on services other than Council housing</p>  |
| <b>GO East</b>                               | <p>The Government Office for the East of England. East of England region is an area stretching from the edge of London in the south to the coast and rural areas in the north and east. It covers 48 Local Authorities in the countries of Herts, Beds, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk with a combined population of 5.5 million.</p>  |
| <b>Housing Association/RSL</b>               | <p>A non-profit making organisation which provides affordable housing for those who cannot afford to buy a home. Most housing associations are Registered Social Landlords. (RSLs)</p>   |
| <b>Housing Revenue Account Business Plan</b> | <p>Plan detailing how the Council will manage, maintain and improve its housing stock over a period of 30 years</p>  |
| <b>Housing Corporation</b>                   | <p>A Government body which allocates public funds (Social Housing Grant) to Registered Social Landlords, and monitors their performance. Funds are made available via the annual Approved Development Programme. Allocations are made in accordance with priorities set by the Regional Housing Board</p>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>House in Multiple Occupation</b>               | A house/flat occupied by unrelated people who normally share a kitchen and bathroom   |
| <b>Housing Needs Study</b>                        | Research, including a survey of residents, to establish housing and support needs, and aspirations  |
| <b>Housing Plus</b>                               | The inclusion of additional items in new housing schemes, such as local employment and community development initiatives  |
| <b>Housing Register</b>                           | The register of those seeking first time Social Housing (formerly known as the “Waiting List”). There is a separate Transfer Register for existing Council and RSL tenants  |
| <b>Housing Revenue Account</b>                    | Council income and spending on its own housing is held in a separate account to the rest of Council expenditure. This account is called the HRA.  |
| <b>Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)</b>          | A group of key organisations – district wide – responsible for developing community action plans in the District. Comprises representatives from Rochford District Council Business, Essex County Council, Parish and Town Councils, Voluntary Service, Police PCT, Schools, South Essex Partnership NHS Trust and Thames Gateway South Essex |
| <b>LSVT</b>                                       | A large scale voluntary transfer of the Council stock to a RSL  |
| <b>Major Repairs Allowance (MRA)</b>              | A Government subsidy to help fund renewals and replacement of elements of the Council’s housing stock   |
| <b>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)</b> | Central Government office responsible for local government and the regions  |
| <b>Primary Care Trust (PCT)</b>                   | Rochford and Castle Point PCT commissions and develops community and primary care health services for local people  |
| <b>Private Finance Initiative (PFI)</b>           | Contract between the Council and an external service provider to make a capital investment at a revenue cost to the Council   |
| <b>Prudential Borrowing</b>                       | The Council not borrowing more than it can afford to repay  |
| <b>Registered Social Landlord</b>                 | A non-profit making organisation providing affordable housing registered with the Housing Corporation (see Housing Association)   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Responsive Repairs and Voids Maintenance</b>    | Day to day repairs of the housing stock in response to reported faults of building components failure e.g. broken doors. This would cover work needed to bring a property up to an acceptable standard before re-letting it  |
| <b>Section 106 Agreements</b>                      | Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows for agreements between landowners/developers and Local Authorities e.g. for social facilities or affordable housing to be included within the development of a site   |
| <b>Service Charges</b>                             | Identified charges raised by the Council to cover the cost of landlord services e.g. communal repairs, caretaking, window cleaning. These are recharged to the Council's leaseholders and collected as Leasehold Services charges each year  |
| <b>Shared Ownership</b>                            | The principle of shared ownership is that the household buys a share of a property (usually 50%) and the remainder is rented from a housing association or Council. It means that people who are unable to afford the full cost of buying a property can part-own a house. An alternative scheme, called 'Homebuy' is available mainly to tenants of social housing. An interest free loan for 25% of the value of a property is made to a household by a housing association. The house-holder(s) raise the remaining 75%. No rent is paid, but if the house is sold, 25% of the value of the property is repaid. The housing association can re-use the funds for another property |
| <b>Social Housing</b>                              | Rented homes provided by the Council, Housing Associations and other Registered Social Landlords.  |
| <b>Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP Ratings)</b> | An assessment of the energy efficiency of a home on a scale of 1 – 100. The higher the rating the more energy efficient the home   |
| <b>Support Charges</b>                             | Costs currently in the HRA which cover support as defined by the Supporting People guidance  |
| <b>Supporting People</b>                           | A funding framework for housing related support services. Central Government funding is provided to Administering Authorities (Essex County Council in the case of Rochford District) who contract support services in accordance with agreed priorities   |

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Sustainable Development</b> | Development which meets present needs without adversely affecting the ability of future generations to meet their needs  |
| <b>Sustainable Development</b> | Development which meets present needs without adversely affecting the ability of future generations to meet their needs  |
| <b>Target Rents</b>            | Recent guidance from the Government has changed the way rents will be worked out. From 2002/03, rents will begin to be based on local income and the price of housing locally. Councils and housing associations have until 2012 to ensure that rents have moved to a 'target rent'. This policy should mean those neighbouring properties of the same size and value should have similar rents – regardless of whether they are owned by a Council or a housing association |

**APPENDIX 6 - PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

**Housing**

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| No.             | Details of Indicator  | RDC Performance |         | RDC Targets |         |         |         | Comments  |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|---------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---|
|                 |   | 2002/03         | 2003/04 | 2003/04     | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 |   |
| BV62            | The proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of local authority action  | 0.90%           | 0.97%   | 2%          | 2%      | 2.5%    | 3%      |   |
| BV63            | Energy efficiency – the average SAP rating of local authority owned dwellings   | 56              | 56      | 56          | 56      | 62      | 65      | The data for 2003/04 is estimated. A new housing survey in 2004/05 will establish new levels                    |
| BV64            | The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished during the year as a direct result of action by the local authority | 1               | 0       | 2           | 2       | 2       | 2       |   |
| BV66            | The proportion of rent collected  | 98.90%          | 98.7%   | 98.60%      | 98.75%  | 98.80%  | 98.85%  |   |
| BV74            | Satisfaction of tenants of council housing with the overall service provided by their landlord, with results broken down by:                                      |                 |         |             |         |         |         | Results taken from tenant' satisfaction survey undertaken in 2003 - 1358 responses confidence interval +/-1.81% |
| New for 2003/04 | (a) the total population  | 87.74%          | 86.8%   | 93%         |         |         | 93%     |   |
|                 | (b) black and minority ethnic   |                 |         |             |         |         |         | Data for sections (b) and (c) was not available at the time of going to press                                   |
|                 | (c) non-black and minority ethnic   |                 |         |             |         |         |         |   |

## Housing

| No.             | Details of Indicator  | RDC Performance |         | RDC Targets |         |         |         | Comments  |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|---------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---|
|                 |   | 2002/03         | 2003/04 | 2003/04     | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 |   |
| BV75            | Satisfaction of tenants of Council housing with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord, with results broken down by:  |                 |         |             |         |         |         | Results taken from tenant' satisfaction survey undertaken in 2003 – 1060 responses with confidence interval +/- 2.79% |
| New for 2003/04 | (a) total population  | 54.6%           | 68.7%   | 60%         |         |         | 75%     | Data for sections (b) and (c) was not available at the time of going to press   |
|                 | (b) black and minority ethnic   |                 |         |             |         |         |         |   |
|                 | (c) non-black and minority ethnic   |                 |         |             |         |         |         |   |
| BV164           | Does the authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in rented housing and follow the Good Practice Standards for social landlords on tackling harassment included in the Code of Practice for Social Landlords: Tackling Racial Harassment? | Yes             | Yes     | Yes         | Yes     | Yes     | Yes     |   |

## Housing

| No.   | Details of Indicator  | RDC Performance |         | RDC Targets |          |          |          | Comments  |
|-------|---|-----------------|---------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|---|
|       |   | 2002/03         | 2003/04 | 2003/04     | 2004/05  | 2005/06  | 2006/07  |   |
| BV183 | The average length of stay (weeks) in:  |                 |         |             |          |          |          |   |
|       | (a) bed-and-breakfast accommodation   | 11.7            | 16.4    | 9           | 12       | 8        | 6        |   |
|       | (b) hostel accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need | 29.3            | 24.2    | 25          | 20       | 18       | 16       |   |
| BV184 | (a) The proportion of local authority properties that were non-decent at the beginning of the year  | 18%             | 18%     | 18%         | 15%      | 5%       | 3%       |   |
|       | (b) The percentage change in proportion of non-decent LA properties by the end of the year  | Nil             | 17.3%   | Nil         | 67%      | 40%      | 33%      |   |
| BV185 | Percentage of responsive (but not emergency) repairs during the year, for which the authority both made and kept an appointment                         | 0%              | 0%      | See note    | See note | See note | See note | Our appointment service does not operate as defined by the Audit Commission |

## Housing

| No.                              | Details of Indicator  | RDC Performance |         | RDC Targets |         |         |         | Comments |
|----------------------------------|---|-----------------|---------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
|                                  |   | 2002/03         | 2003/04 | 2003/04     | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 |          |
| BV203<br>New for<br>2004/05      | Percentage change in the average number of families, which include dependent children or a pregnant woman, placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year. |                 |         |             | 5%      | 5%      | 5%      |          |
| Local 2.30<br>(formerly<br>BV68) | Average turnaround time (days) for void properties  | 47              | 31.1    | 38          | 25      | 23      | 21      |          |
| Local 9.3<br>(formerly<br>BV67)  | Proportion of homelessness applications on which the authority makes a decision and issues written notification to the applicant within 33 working days   | 60%             | 70%     | 78%         | 85%     | 87%     | 89%     |          |