

Housing Strategy 2006 - 2009

*To improve the
quality, availability
and affordability of
homes for local
people in our District.*



Lewes District Council
www.lewes.gov.uk

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Housing Strategy 2006 to 2009	Page
1. Introduction by Councillor Mike Chartier	1
2. Lewes District & the Local Economy	2
3. Lewes District Housing Markets	3
4. National & Regional Housing Priorities	5
5. Corporate Strategy	7
6. Local Housing Priorities (Quality, Sustainability & Choice)	11
a) balancing housing markets	11
b) providing new affordable housing	14
c) tackling homelessness	17
d) stock improvement (private sector renewal policy) & decent homes	20
e) supporting vulnerable people	24
f) developing partnerships	26
g) promoting equality & valuing diversity	28
h) developing sustainable communities	30
I) providing for key workers	31
j) saving energy & tackling fuel poverty	33
7. Using Our Resources	34
8. Consulting & Empowering Communities	39
9. Summary of Achievements in 2003/05	40
10. Key Performance Information	42
11. Monitoring & Review 2006/09	44
 Appendices	
Appendix 1 - Housing Strategy Action Plans	46
Appendix 2 – Glossary of Terms	54
Appendix 3 – Contact Details	59

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1

Introduction

Welcome to Lewes District Council's Housing Strategy for 2006-2009.

Since the last edition in 2002 there have been many profound changes in the local, regional, and national agenda for decent affordable housing in the public and private sectors. These are described in this document, which will drive us forward over the medium term. In addition to the newly emerging regional framework for housing and planning we have been developing the local foundations for our strategies and plans in parallel with the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council undertaken by the Audit Commission.

In March 2003 the Council adopted the Local Plan after extensive consultation and we published our Homelessness Strategy in July 2003 after another consultative process. Before the end of that year we also completed major surveys into the housing needs and preferences of our communities and the condition of the private sector housing stock. The results have been fed into our strategy and the findings have been included in our action plans. Over the course of 2004/05 we have consulted our tenants, their representatives and other stakeholders on future options for the Council-owned stock. Working with neighbouring authorities in the Spring of 2005 we jointly commissioned a Pan Sussex Housing Needs Study in order to develop a sub regional approach to housing and planning solutions.

A Regional Housing Board was established in 2003 and the Housing Corporation later announced changes in its delivery of regional investment programmes through Social Housing Grant. The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004, and associated government guidance will have a major impact on the planning process, as might the proposed national park for the South Downs. The Housing Act, 2004, will impact substantially on our interventions in the private sector.

At district level we have committed to a programme of individual consultation with all town and parish councils to discuss the findings of the housing needs and stock condition surveys in their areas and examine opportunities for improvement. As with our Local Strategic Partnership, it is important to us to build our plans on the foundations of community involvement and equality of opportunity. The top-down approach exemplified by the new regional housing framework will need to take on board the local voices and local choices expressed by the communities with whom we work and for whom we are seeking decent and sustainable housing solutions.

I hope you find this document interesting and informative. We would like to know your views and promise to take them into account when we monitor and review our strategies and plans.

Councillor Mike Chartier
Lead Councillor for Housing
Lewes District Council

2

About Lewes District & the Local Economy

Local Facts

The District Council covers 292 sq.km extending inland from the Channel coast over the South Downs and into the Sussex Weald. It has 14 km of coastline and over one third forms part of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Half the district, including the county town of Lewes, is proposed to be included in the South Downs National Park. Crime levels are relatively low but anti-social behaviour is an increasing concern to local people. Most of the 92,177 (Census 2001) residents live in 5 urban areas of Seaford, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Telscombe and Lewes. The District also has a large rural community dispersed among 23 parishes. The 2001 Census shows an overall increase in population of 4.5% since 1991, due to inward migration. The population is ageing and is above the national average in every age band over 50 and below average in all age bands under 40. Overall, the average age is 43 but 25.5% of the population is over pensionable age, significantly above the average for the South East region (and 3.3% are over 85). Black and minority ethnic groups make up 2.1% of the population (2001) with Bengalis and Chinese comprising the main groups. Housing tenure is broadly as follows.

Owner Occupiers:	77.66%
Privately Rented:	8.68%
Council Rented	8.01%
Housing Association Rented	3.38%
Shared Ownership	0.19%
Tied Employment/Other	2.07%

The Local Economy

The service sector and small businesses dominate with few large private sector employers. The main employment markets are retail, financial and business services and public sector services. Most of the employed population work in skilled, administrative or professional occupations. A significant proportion of people aged 16 to 74 are professionally qualified or have relatively high levels of academic qualifications. This is above the levels for East Sussex as a whole but we have a comparatively higher proportion of people with no qualifications, which indicates a need to invest in skills training. See page 31 of this strategy on Providing for Key Workers. Unemployment is relatively low across the district at 2.3% but there are pockets of higher unemployment in the coastal towns, which form part of a “priority area for economic regeneration” in the Regional Economic Strategy.

The Office for National Statistics produces an index of multiple deprivation which also shows higher levels of deprivation among the coastal towns than in the rest of the district. In 2000 two wards in Newhaven and two in Peacehaven ranked among the 25% most deprived wards in the country. By 2004 none are in the bottom quartile but one in Newhaven is just above that level. Affordable housing investment in the Sussex coastal towns to support regeneration was also referred to in the Interim Regional Housing Strategy and we hope this will create an opportunity for our communities. In common with the rest of East Sussex there is a relatively high proportion of low wage and seasonal jobs.

Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford are linked by rail with connections to London, Gatwick Airport and the Sussex coast. The A27 and A259 roads link the coastal towns and Lewes to neighbouring Brighton and Eastbourne, while the nearby A23/M23 provides access to London, Gatwick and the M25. Some 60% of economically active people use a car to get to work. There is an adequate inter-urban bus network but most of the rural areas are poorly served by public transport. Traffic congestion is a regular problem along the A259 coast road and in Lewes.

3

Lewes District Housing Markets

Our research demonstrates that the overriding market dynamic is high house prices and private sector rents, with an increasing affordability gap and rising demand for affordable housing. In the 5 years since the quarter ending June 1999 the average price of a semi-detached house escalated from £90,268 to £204,330 by the quarter ending June 2004. During the year ending 31 March 2005 the average selling price of a semi-detached house was £216,620. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a study entitled “Can Work – Can’t Buy,” which was updated in 2003 to include movements in prices and incomes. It showed that Lewes District had the 10th highest house price-to-income ratio out of over 350 local authority areas at 5.86 to 1.

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) New Earnings Survey 2002 revealed that the average gross weekly pay of all workers in Lewes district was £330.89 compared to £412.19 in the region, locally almost 20% less than the regional average. The ONS local statistics cannot be directly compared to income data from the Council’s housing needs survey of 2003 because the Council measured household (not per person) weekly take home pay. However, 89% of local households in housing need had net weekly incomes of less than £400 and more than 40% received less than £165. Our 2005 survey showed that 43% of existing respondent households had incomes of up to £20,000 per annum.

There are 3 indicative housing markets in the District comprising the coastal strip, the High Weald market inland to the East and the Crawley-Gatwick market to the Northwest. Entry sales levels vary across the District with the lowest average prices for a 2-bed home starting at around £142,850 in Newhaven rising to £172,560 in Lewes. The 2004 indices of multiple deprivation also revealed issues around affordability, particularly in Lewes, Seaford, Peacehaven East and Newhaven Valley.

Housing Needs Surveys

The Council’s district-wide Housing Needs Survey was completed in late 2003. Over 18000 postal questionnaires were sent and more than 11000 were returned, representing a response rate of above 61%. 14% of total respondents expressed a need for separate accommodation in the local area within the next five years, with 16.5% of these stating that they need accommodation immediately. The most frequent reason for dissatisfaction with the present home was that it was too small, but other significant factors were the need for modernisation or repair, unsuitable for disability or in the wrong location. Among tenants in the private rented sector the major cause of dissatisfaction was that rents were too high. The largest groups expressing a need were single people and childless couples but almost 12% of need required family homes. Nearly 10% of respondents in need required homes designed or

adapted for disability. The most numerous group of respondents were aged 16 to 24. The majority of respondents expressing a housing need within a five year time frame wished to own their own home (66.2%) but only a minority (11.2%) had sufficient incomes to meet this aspiration now.

The report of the sub-regional Pan Sussex Housing Needs Survey, 2005, included a postal questionnaire to 4,400 households across five sub-areas in the Lewes District. The report became available in June 2005 and showed that the average price of flats and terraced houses in that year were £119,640 and £187,078 respectively. 75% of survey respondents could not afford private rental and home ownership was beyond the reach of 84% of concealed households (those living with a host household). Only 14% of concealed households earned over £27,300 pa, the national average. There was a need to develop a more balanced housing stock in all sectors, particularly for more flats and terraced houses in the private sector. The retired population will increase by 35.5% by 2021. There is an inextricable link between ageing and disability and 68% of those with a support need were over 60, and 52% had a walking disability.

Private Rental Income Thresholds (April 2005)

Area	Income Thresholds (£)		
	1 bed flat	2 bed flat	2 bed terrace
Lewes	20,400	31,200	33,600
Newhaven	21,800	28,800	31,200
Peacehaven	18,200	28,100	- nd -
Seaford	21,600	26,400	33,600
Telscombe	22,800	28,800	34,800
Chailey and surrounding areas	23,800	33,600	36,000
Ringmer and surrounding areas	23,300	32,600	33,600

When the above data is compared to indicative private sector rent levels the affordability gap is indicated (source: Pan Sussex Housing Survey, 2005).

Average & Entry Rent levels (April 2005)

Property Type (Average/ Entry Level Per Month)	Lewes		Newhaven		Peacehaven		Seaford	
	Average £	Entry £	Average £	Entry £	Average £	Entry £	Average £	Entry £
1-bed flat	575	425	491	455	456	400	505	450
2-bed flat	707	650	629	600	609	585	627	550
2-bed terraced	761	700	688	650	nd	nd	706	700
3-bed terraced	808	800	753	700	nd	nd	746	710
2-bed semi-detached	792	750	nd	nd	738	700	nd	Nd
3-bed semi-detached	918	875	753	700	nd	nd	838	800

National & Regional Housing Priorities

National Priorities

“**Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future**” was published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in February 2003. Its programme includes government targets for priorities such as housing supply, decent homes, the planning process, the environment and social inclusion. It provides a national framework that is supported by regional strategies. **Sustainable Communities: Homes for All** was published in January 2005 in which the Government sets out its housing plans for the next 5 years. This was followed in March 2005 by **Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives**, which concentrates exclusively on reducing homelessness and halving the numbers living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010.

The Housing Act, 2004, consolidates the strategic, enabling and regulatory role of local authorities and includes:

- Powers to licence private landlords, particularly in relation to houses in multiple occupation.
- Changes to the fitness for habitation standard and the introduction of a housing health and safety rating system
- Amendments to the Right to Buy
- Home Information Packs to be introduced to the process of buying and selling.

In November 2003 the government announced that it would use its delegated powers to make it unlawful for local authorities to leave homeless families with dependent children or pregnant women in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than 6 weeks. The Council met this standard on 1 March 2004. With effect from April 2004 the Council used its powers under the **Local Government Act, 2003**, to remove the Council Tax discount from empty homes and second homes. At the same time we promoted our private sector leasing scheme.

The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act was enacted in May 2004. It introduces Local Development Frameworks into the planning process with community involvement at the core and encourages a spatial vision for the whole area. The housing market appraisal will reinforce the already strong relationship between housing strategy and development and planning policy. The Act intends to simplify the process of Compulsory Purchase Orders where there would be a demonstrable improvement in the well-being of an area.

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order, 2002 effectively replaced most of the prescriptive legislation on renewal grants with new wide-ranging powers to provide assistance for housing renewal. Councils must find innovative ways of tackling unfitness in the private sector. With the government placing emphasis on home owners to maintain their properties the Council must ensure that its policies are equitable and focus on homes that are unfit and occupied by vulnerable people.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003, Section 12, amended the Housing Act, 1996. The Council published a statement of its policies and procedures in relation to anti-social behaviour in December 2004. It has links to our local priorities of encouraging and maintaining sustainable communities, fostering tenant empowerment, partnership with stakeholders and supporting the needs of vulnerable people. The Code of Guidance on Anti-Social Behaviour that was issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in August 2004 informed our preparations.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is a national programme of inspection by the Audit Commission charged with assisting local authorities to improve the delivery of their services. Lewes and all the other districts in East Sussex were inspected in November 2003 and the Council was judged as “good” overall.

Regional Priorities

Sustainable Communities in the South East

This document was produced following the publication of the national plan entitled “**Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future.**” It seeks to adapt the national vision to meet the needs of our region and its key priorities are:

- Produce more new homes to meet the needs of an expanding population
- Provide the type of homes that people need in places where they want to live
- Make more effective use of land
- Make housing, especially home ownership, more affordable
- Reduce homelessness and its associated deprivation
- Develop modern, sustainable methods of construction
- Tackle transport congestion
- Improve and make public transport safer.

It identifies 4 growth areas in the region to be targeted for substantial development. The Lewes District is not within one of the growth areas so one of our most important strategic objectives is to ensure that we attract the housing investment that our communities need.

Central government has created a regional framework to support development programmes and this has power to influence investment decisions across the region. **The South East Regional Assembly (SEERA)** is the principal regional body, whose membership is comprised of nominees from local authorities, other public bodies and voluntary organisations. Councillor Ann De Vecchi represents Lewes District Council at SEERA. Its aim is to protect and enhance the interests of the region in the UK and Europe and oversee the work of regional bodies such as the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).

The South East Regional Housing Board was established in 2003. The **Regional Housing Strategy**, published in July 2005, is a key document that determines the investment priorities from 2006 to 2009 to be met from a single regional capital fund for the two years 2006/07 and 2007/08. We responded to the Board’s prior consultation and welcome their statement of priorities in relation to the balance between new social rented housing and low-cost home ownership schemes, including that for key workers.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Ambition

Our ambition is to be recognised as a centre of excellence in environmental management and to make sustainable improvements in the quality of life of local communities by

Protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment

Supporting and promoting a diverse and prosperous local economy

Supporting the housing, health and social needs of everyone in our communities

By 2006/07 we want to achieve improved levels of satisfaction with Council services and to hear local people say that their District is a better place to live.

The **Council Plan** is an annual performance statement. It sets out the key elements of our corporate strategy and framework for performance management. Core strategies set out how we manage issues that have an impact on all our activities. Service strategies show how a particular service will be delivered and improved. Our strategic housing ambition is:

“To work with local communities to improve the quality, sustainability and affordability of housing choices of people in the district.”

We cannot achieve our ambition with a housing strategy that merely stands alone. It will impact on, and be influenced by, other strategies and plans in the district, county and region. The Housing Strategy Group (of officers) recognises the importance of a cross-cutting approach through many strategies and plans in order to avoid duplication, contradiction or social exclusion and to focus on improvement.

The Local Plan

On 31st March 2003 the Council adopted the Local Plan after extensive consultation. The guiding principle behind the Local Plan is: To conserve and enhance the special heritage of the natural and man-made environment of the district for enjoyment in the present and in the future, whilst providing for controlled development to meet the needs of residents, the local economy and the wider economic, cultural, and tourism roles of the district. For housing, the Local Plan aims and objectives are:

- To ensure that the existing housing stock and the land supply in the Plan Area provide adequate housing for the District over the Plan Period (2003-2011) to meet the Structure Plan requirement.
- To ensure that housing is available to cater for the differing needs, aspirations and abilities of residents.
- To ensure that housing respects and complements the character of urban and rural areas and minimises its impact on the environment.

The Plan has identified land for housing in accordance with the principles advocated in government guidance. For the period 2001/06 it allocates some 1113 units for residential development. The major sites are predominantly previously used sites, or sites in the most sustainable urban or rural locations.

Environmental Management

Eco-Management & Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a European Union standard for monitoring the environmental impact of our activities. The Council has been using EMAS since 1997 and has achieved and maintained registration under the scheme. In addition, we have undertaken an energy analysis as part of the 2003 private sector housing condition survey. We will:

- Communicate the Council's environmental policy to registered social landlords, private sector landlords with whom we have a relationship and providers of temporary accommodation for homeless persons. The Housing Corporation already requires all new affordable housing to meet high levels of environmental standards.

The Council's objectives as a social landlord are to reduce energy consumption in the Council-owned stock and adopt environmentally preferable building methods while maintaining value for money and functionality.

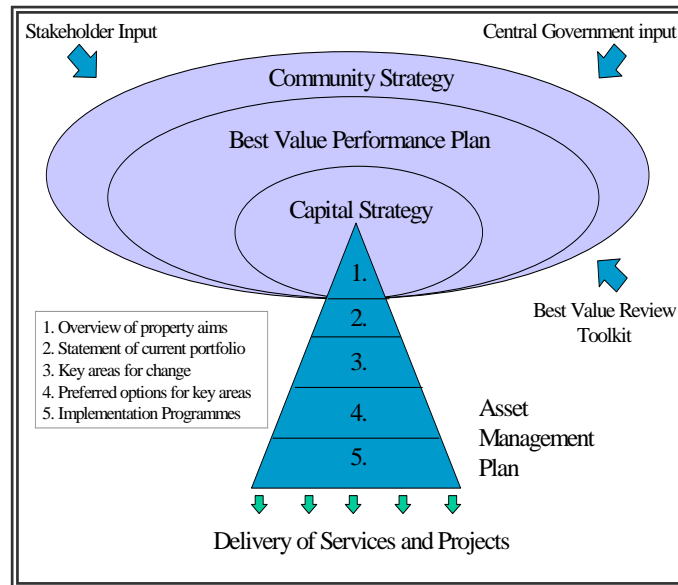
Capital Strategy

Housing Needs & Strategy, in parallel with the Council's landlord service, are key components together with the overarching Community Strategy. Our approach is to use the Major Repairs Allowance for Housing Revenue Account capital programmes, supplemented by any credit approvals to the level allowed in the housing subsidy allocation from the Government. Usable capital receipts from Council house sales will be channelled into schemes for the Council's own stock or private sector renewal (identified in our 2003 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey). Investment in new affordable housing will in the main be funded from the regional Affordable Housing Programme overseen by the Regional Housing Board and managed by the Housing Corporation. Between 2006 and 2009 we seek to achieve 300 completions of new affordable homes and our district-wide surveys of 2003 and 2005 prove the need.

Asset Management Plan

The Plan details the Council's approach to managing and maintaining its assets and is part of a process through which the Community Strategy provides priority services. It manages the Council's assets in a corporate and strategic manner. It enables the identification and valuation of surplus assets and their potential for disposal. For example, a review of accommodation needs resulted in the demolition of redundant District Council offices on a town centre site and the selection of a development partner following public consultation. Part of the site has been sold to East Sussex County Council and a library is currently under construction. A Housing Association is partnering the developer and the Council in the planning of new housing, including affordable homes. In January 2005 the Council chose partnerships with Housing Associations to deliver affordable housing as one of its top three priorities to 2007. The resultant programme includes a review of all the Council's landholdings to determine opportunities for disposal, particularly for affordable housing.

The indicative diagram on the following page illustrates the relationship of the Asset Management Plan to the Capital Strategy and the Council's overarching Community Strategy.



Community Strategy 2003/08

The Community Strategy is at the centre of the Council’s Corporate Strategy but is also a network of 5 inter-agency area partnerships grouped together into a **Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**. Its relationship to Housing Strategy and Planning (the Local Development Framework) is described on page 26 in the section entitled **Developing Partnerships**.

The 5 Area Partnerships comprise:

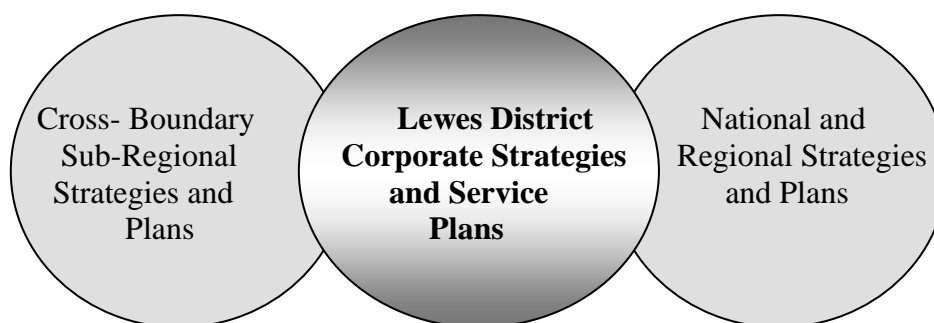
- Newhaven Strategic Network
- Seaford Community Partnership
- Lewes Town Community Partnership
- Peacehaven & Telscombe Regeneration Partnership
- Joint Rural Local Partnership.

The Local Strategic Partnership comprises representatives from 27 agencies. Of these, 12 have a remit within the District only and 15 are active not only in the District but also in East Sussex or both East and West Sussex. The LSP is linked to the East Sussex Strategic Partnership and is therefore well placed to address cross- boundary or sub-regional community issues.

Local Voices & Local Choices is the name given to the process of developing the Community Strategy, with the aim of setting out the priorities that local people have established, including their housing needs and preferences as evidenced by our recent local and sub-regional housing needs surveys in 2003 and 2005. The stated purpose of the LSP is

“Working in Partnership to improve the Quality of Life for everyone in the Lewes District.”

The diagram on the following page indicates the strategies and plans that form a network of local, sub-regional and regional housing and related community priorities.



Local Lewes District Council Plans and Strategies	Sub-Regional Cross-Boundary and County Plans and Strategies	National and Regional Plans and Strategies
Housing Strategy	Community Care Plan	Regional Housing Strategy
HRA Business Plan	Health Improvement Programme	Regional Planning Guidance
Housing Stock Options Appraisal	East Sussex Strategic Partnership	Regional Economic Strategy
Local Plan/Local Development Framework	Supporting People Strategy	Regional Social Inclusion Statement
Homelessness Strategy	Cross-Boundary Empty Homes Strategy	Housing Corporation Affordable Housing Programme
Supplementary Planning Guidance	Better Care Higher Standards	Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future
Empty Homes Strategy	Protection of Vulnerable Adults Protocol	Sustainable Communities: Homes for All
Housing BV Improvement Plan	Domestic Violence Strategy	Sustainable Communities in the South East
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	Key Worker Strategy	South East Plan
Private Sector Renewal Strategy	Landlord Accreditation Scheme	
Race Equality Scheme	Leaving Care Plan	
Community Strategy	Children's Services Plan	
Local Strategic Partnership	County-Wide Homelessness Strategy	
Medium Term Financial Strategy	Accessible Housing Group	
Capital Strategy & Asset Management Plan	Housing Strategic Group for Learning Disability	
Emergency Plan		
Crime Reduction Partnership		
Best Value Performance Plan		
Eco-Management & Audit Scheme		
Sustainability & Local Agenda 21		

The above strategies and plans directly or indirectly impact upon each other and on the housing needs, aspirations and resources of our communities both within the District and across its boundaries. They also inform our local housing priorities.

6

Local Housing Priorities

The three themes of quality, sustainability and choice run through **Sustainable Communities in the South East** and draft **Regional Housing Strategy**. They also recur throughout this local strategy because they are cross-cutting priorities for the Council and the communities it serves. There is a fourth, which is implied by the first three but is of such importance that it should stand out in its own right. This is promoting equality of opportunity and valuing diversity, in which all staff received training in 2003.

The Council has 8 well-established strategic housing priorities:

- To maximise provision of safe, energy efficient and affordable housing.
- To improve the condition of the housing stock.
- To reduce homelessness
- To support the needs of vulnerable people
- To encourage and maintain the development of sustainable communities
- To foster tenant empowerment and partnership with all stakeholders.
- To ensure good and continually improving environmental performance in the Council's housing and related activities.
- To promote equality and to provide good quality housing services that meet the chosen needs of the community.

They run like a thread through public and private sector housing markets and across all tenures throughout the district. Investment priorities are described in Chapter 7, under the title of "Using Our Resources." But first, the Council has had to understand its local housing markets in order to progress towards the achievement of its priorities.

Balancing Housing Markets

In the section on **Lewes District Housing Markets** on pages 3 and 4 we gave a brief outline of our research, which informed us that the overriding market dynamic is high house prices and private sector rents plus strong demand for social housing. Other key factors evident from our research are:

- A relatively modest but consistent rise in levels of homelessness until we adopted a preventative strategy in 2003/04. Homelessness was substantially reduced in 2004/05.
- Growth on the Housing register and in the volume of housing advice.
- A high and rising proportion of older people with difficulty in maintaining their homes.
- A substantial lack of affordable housing for all who need it, but particularly young people.
- Under-development of supported housing.

Since the last strategy update in 2002 our information base has been developed by new research, for example for the Homelessness Strategy in 2003, the Housing Needs Surveys in 2003 and 2005, the private sector stock condition survey of 2003 and on key workers. The East Sussex Supporting People Shadow Strategy (2003) and its 5 year strategy (2005/2010) have also proven valuable in mapping supported housing services for vulnerable people and has stimulated opportunities for joint working, particularly in relation to the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan (e.g., the opening of a refuge for survivors of domestic violence in 2003).

The Housing Strategy, Local Plan and many of the other strategies and plans listed in this Chapter and Chapter 5, Corporate Strategy) seek to address the imbalances in local housing markets, as follows:

IMBALANCE	POLICY RESPONSE	STRATEGY/PLAN
Need for more housing arising from household formation and in-migration	Identify sustainable housing land allocations (including Council-owned assets) & planning policies to deliver new housing & meet strategic requirements.	Local Plan. Emerging Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework.
Lack of affordable housing	Housing Needs Surveys of 2003 & 2005; enabling a programme of new affordable housing in urban and rural areas.	Housing Strategy; Local Plan; Supplementary Planning Guidance. The Council's priorities for 2005/07 as determined by Cabinet on 5 January 2005.
Some poor quality private sector housing stock	Stock Condition Survey; grants for improvement; landlord initiatives; home energy/fuel poverty initiatives; enforcement; investigation of loans/equity release schemes.	Housing Strategy; Private Sector Housing Strategy; Home Energy Conservation Strategy.
Under-occupation	Provide incentives & practical help to move: bring empty homes back into use.	Housing Strategy; HRA Business Plan; Empty Homes Strategy; Housing Allocations Scheme.
Lack of support for vulnerable people	Partnerships to help older people, BME groups, disabled people, youth, victims of crime etc.	Housing Strategy; Homelessness Strategy; East Sussex Supporting People Strategy etc.
Lack of housing for key workers	Key Worker Living Programme: Homebuy: East Sussex-wide strategy in preparation.	Housing Strategy; forthcoming County-wide key worker strategy.

These market imbalances are typical of the region. We have developed many successful initiatives with tangible outcomes for our residents, working with partners and attracting substantial external finance. They are described later. Yet we still struggle to shift housing markets towards a more balanced position. The strength of market forces, particularly those driving the widening affordability gap, require regional or sub-regional intervention. The Council has, and will continue to engage in cross-boundary initiatives to address market imbalances. These are also described later.

Responsibility for the Council's strategies and plans rests with our Cabinet. Councillor Mike Chartier is the Lead Member for Housing and Councillor Neil Commin leads for Planning. The Housing Strategy is a corporate priority, overseen by Cabinet and delivered by a cross-departmental Housing Strategy Group linked to external partners and consultees. This encourages widespread ownership. The main elements of our housing market research data are set out below.

Item	Updating Cycle	Scope	Comments
Housing Needs Survey	1998/2003/2005	District-wide survey of existing and newly forming households. The 2005 Pan Sussex Survey is a sub regional analysis but includes an update of Lewes District needs.	Should be triennial
Private Sector Housing Condition Survey	1998/2003	Sample condition survey of unfit, disrepair, energy efficiency/fuel poverty, empty homes	Completed in 2003/04
Housing Land Availability Statement	Annually	Monitoring of planning permission and completions of housing development	Ongoing
House prices	As required	From Land Registry Website and the Pan Sussex Housing Needs Survey	Monitored & periodically updated
Structure Plan Monitoring	Annually	Monitors housing markets in East Sussex/Brighton & Hove. Analyses 2001 Census	Ongoing

Consulting stakeholders	Annually or as required	Conferences, forums, focus groups on strategic housing issues	3 in 2003 on homelessness allocations policy and housing strategy. 2 homelessness focus groups
Lewes District Council Tenant Satisfaction survey.	2002/2004	100% postal survey.	Completed 2004. Will become annual

Providing New Affordable Housing

In Chapter 3 we demonstrated that the average gross weekly pay of all workers in the Lewes district was 20% lower than the regional average in 2002. The Land Registry recorded the average selling price for all dwellings in the district at £221,739 in the year ending 31 March 2005. The Council's housing needs surveys reinforce the evidence of an affordability gap, with 43% of respondents to the 2005 survey receiving annual household incomes of £20,000 or less. Furthermore, 60% of new Housing Association tenants in 2004/05 received net weekly household incomes of below £200. There is evidence from the Office for National Statistics that East Sussex has a low-wage economy. For example, the percentage of adults with gross weekly earnings of under £250 was the highest of County Councils in the South East in April 2002.

The provision of affordable housing is therefore a priority. If we failed to produce a carefully developed and managed programme of new affordable housing we would invite the following consequences:

- People on modest incomes will have little or no housing choice
- The affordability gap will widen and more people will be excluded
- Homelessness, poverty, poor health and other indices of deprivation will increase.

Under the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance, affordable housing is that which is provided, with private or public subsidy, for people who are unable to meet their housing needs in the local market because of the relationship between housing costs and incomes. Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act, 1990, enables the Council to negotiate planning obligations within development sites, including a proportion of affordable housing. In the three years to March 2004 61 such homes were procured from S106 agreements

In the 6 years ending 31st March 2004, 238 affordable homes were completed in the district by partnerships involving the Council, developers, housing associations and the Housing Corporation. Sadly, this was lower than the number of Council-owned dwellings sold under the Right to Buy in the same period. One of our housing strategy targets for 2002/03 and beyond was to provide 35 new affordable homes each year, with at least one rural scheme. This modest target was exceeded to 2003/04, as the following table shows:

Housing association completions	Actual 2001/02	Target 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Target 2003/04	Actual 2003/04	Actual 2004/05
New homes	29	35	36	61	61	2
Of which, from S106 Agreements	9	N/A	18	N/A	34	0

We aim to increase provision significantly over the next 5 years to 2010. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance includes the target that 25% of all housing from new building and conversions should be affordable, according to the following thresholds:

Town/Parish	Threshold (ie. number of units or hectare)
Lewes	15 units (or 0.5ha)
Newhaven	25 units (or 0.8ha)
Peacehaven/Telscombe Cliffs/East Saltdean	25 units (or 0.8ha)
Seaford	25 units (or 0.8 ha)
Ringmer	15 units (or 0.5ha)
All other villages	15 units (or 0.5ha)

The thresholds for inclusion of affordable housing and the percentages sought will be reviewed in light of experience, current guidance, the recommendations of the Pan Sussex Housing Needs Survey and the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework.

The Lewes District component of the Pan Sussex Housing Needs Survey (2005) includes a model of the affordable housing needed on an annual basis. This is calculated from the survey data to capture key demand sources, households requiring subsidised housing, homeless households, others living in unsuitable housing whose needs can only be met in a different dwelling and concealed household formation arising from demographic change. The model has been produced in accordance with good practice guidance issued by the ODPM in 2000. It is summarised in the following table.

Affordable Need Summary

Total annual need	566
Existing stock re-lets plus new affordable completions	336
Further new affordable homes needed	230

After allowing for existing stock net re-let supply and continued new affordable home completions at the recent yearly average of 32 (since 2002), there will still be an annual affordable housing shortfall of 230 dwellings, 7 times the yearly average of affordable newbuild completions. This is clearly undeliverable, as the report acknowledges, but the scale of need is such that the Council will review its Supplementary Planning Guidance in order to maximise provision. In 2005 the Council adopted the development of affordable housing in partnership with housing associations as one of three top priorities for 2005/07 and has begun a review of all land in its ownership to determine sites suitable for disposal.

The 2005 Housing Needs Survey did not identify an overall numeric affordable housing target for the District. Instead the report recommended that the Council should set a "target" for each site taking into account existing supply, survey demand and other regeneration, planning, sustainability and economic factors. However, the absence of an over-arching target would leave the Council unable to measure its progress and therefore we have adopted a target of 300 affordable housing completions between 2005 and 2010. An annual target is inappropriate in light of the Regional Housing Board's and Housing Corporation's adoption of two-year investment programmes but ours would equate to an average of 60 per annum over 5 years, an annual rate equal to our best ever year in 2003/04. It is considered achievable if sufficient investment is made and converted into homes through the planning and development process.

In October 2003 the Housing Corporation published a paper, **Reinventing Investment**, in which they announced a move to a new 2-year capital funding stream. The Corporation subsequently announced the allocation of £7.3M in the Lewes District to April 2006, including £1.5M carried over from 2003/04 for a development in Lewes Town. This equated to a potential 118 new affordable homes over two years in the settlements of Lewes, Seaford, Ringmer and Newhaven. We welcome this investment in housing solutions for our communities and we are determined with our partners in the public and private sectors to deliver the homes that people need in these and other settlements in the district. However, the outcome of 2004/05 was very disappointing, as the following table shows.

2003 to 2005 Affordable Housing Supply

Supply	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	Average
Council re-lets	176	176	179	177
RSL re-lets	141	118	135	131
Total	317	294	314	308
New RSL supply	36	61	2	33
Total Supply	353	355	314	340
Right to Buy	63	62	22	49

We therefore set a task to begin in September 2005 to review the programme to date with internal departments and external stakeholders: identify blockages and improve performance outcomes. The first priority identified was to improve liaison between Housing and Planning Services and support the Council’s Scrutiny Committee review of land holdings to determine opportunities for affordable housing development through the planning and investment processes. The next stage of the ongoing review is to engage with Registered Social Landlords and other development partners to improve delivery on identified sites, in accordance with the priority declared by Cabinet in January 2005.

Our Supplementary Planning Guidance recognises the need for affordable housing without recourse to public subsidy. There is a requirement that developments on sites subject to a Section 106 Agreement should attract a developer contribution towards the cost of affordable housing without recourse to public subsidy, which reflects the guidance from government. The response from developers is therefore of considerable interest to the Council but there will still be a need for subsidy from the Regional Housing Board, via the Housing Corporation, to achieve the volume of affordable housing needed throughout the district.

The demise of Local Authority Social Housing Grant from April 2003 began major changes, currently taking place, in planning and funding for affordable housing. The Council is keen to consider all options and would encourage housing associations to seek innovative solutions. In particular it is hoped that future changes to the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) might open up viable opportunities for development funding.

The Council continues to work with neighbouring authorities, particularly in light of the emphasis placed on regional and sub-regional plans and programmes. We will seek to reinvigorate the East Sussex Planning and Social Housing Forum in light of the finding and recommendations of the sub-regional housing needs survey, 2005. This forum, together with the East Sussex Policy & Development Officers Group, can work on a number of cross-boundary initiatives to maximise opportunities for new affordable housing and the most effective use of existing stock. These are described later under the heading **“Developing Partnerships.”**

In its approach towards balancing housing markets and encouraging sustainable communities the Council will seek the provision of sites of mixed tenure and ensure, wherever possible, that affordable housing is not ghettoised into one corner of new developments but spread around (called pepper-potting). A proportion of new shared ownership homes will be available for key workers but consideration is also being given to rented schemes for this group (by the East Sussex Policy & Development Officers Group).

In order to ensure that no opportunities are lost, Housing and Planning officers meet regularly to monitor progress on sites which are under development and to consider the merits of other sites that are likely to become available. Early meetings are sought with developers and housing associations to ensure that all relevant facts are known and that housing needs are fully explored prior to the submission of planning applications. One of the past barriers to controlled and sustainable development, especially of affordable housing, has been lack of awareness and poor communications. Housing and Planning officers have therefore recently committed to a programme of exploring housing needs and opportunities at meetings with town and parish councils in light of the Council's 2003 housing needs survey of their communities.

Some new affordable developments are released on rural sites as exceptions to normal planning policy. The homes provided are intended to meet proven local need evidenced by surveys and secondary data sources. The lettings process ensures that priority is given to people who have a specific local connection with the settlement in which the homes are located.

Tackling Homelessness

This is a priority for the Council, as it is for the Southeast Region generally, because homelessness is a product of unbalanced housing markets in which people cannot find, pay for or sustain a decent home where they wish to live. It is therefore subject to a national, regional and local improvement programme.

The Interim Regional Housing Strategy highlighted that, at the end of March 2002, there were 1,147 homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation (B/B) by local authorities in the Southeast. In Lewes district it was 17, reducing to 3 by the end of December 2004. Across the region there had been a 20% increase between 1999 and 2002 in the number of households in B/B. The Regional Housing Board also stated in their interim strategy that in their investment decisions they would **“take into account the performance of local authorities in drawing up and implementing their homelessness strategies to minimise homelessness.”** By 31 March 2005 there were 770 households in B/B in the region, almost 30% fewer than three years ago. The corresponding reduction in Lewes was 41%. Locally, we also reduced the number of families with dependent children or pregnant women living in any temporary accommodation by 3% on the previous year.

2000/01 was exceptional in Lewes, when approximately 300 households were affected by severe flooding. Over the two years ending April 2004 the number of homelessness applications increased by 35% but cases where a full housing duty was accepted rose by only 18% (9% in each year). The lower rate of acceptances had several causes but also indicated effective interventions to prevent homelessness. We adopted our first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003 and in 2004 we reviewed our staffing to strengthen homelessness prevention by earlier interventions and the adoption of a comprehensive housing advice service.

In the year ending 31 March 2005 we reduced homelessness acceptances by 56.7% on the previous year (the corresponding reduction in the region was 18%). However, we emphasise that we are not competing to become the best gatekeeper in the Southeast, we simply intend to prevent homelessness wherever possible and provide suitable accommodation for people with a priority need whose homelessness cannot be prevented.

Homelessness Trends

Total Applications	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Number	729	942	643	868	871	832
Of which, full housing duty accepted by Council	191	208	144	157	171	74

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) drew attention to the fragility of the housing market in a report on the UK economy in January 2004. While praising the performance of the economy as **“among the most resilient during the recent downturn”** the OECD picked out the UK’s over-heated housing market, and the potential for bust to follow boom, as one of the most serious threats to the economy. The report warned: **“There is a risk that the housing market boom unfolds more abruptly than expected with adverse consequences for consumption and economic stability.”** This had not happened by the summer of 2005.

However, a report in 2003 by the Joseph Roundtree Foundation showed that Lewes has the 10th highest house price-to-income ratio of over 350 local authorities in England at 5.86 to 1. There is no doubt that first-time buyers in particular are borrowing at income multiples much higher than the 3 x gross income lending ratio recommended in the South East England Regional Assembly’s Good Practice Guidance. The clear lesson from the former cycle of boom and bust in housing markets is that we need long-term interest rate stability based on present (4.5%, December 2005) historically low rates if first-time buyers’ borrowing is to be sustainable. We must avoid the homelessness caused by wholesale mortgage repossessions that characterised the early 1990s.

The Council’s Homelessness Strategy contains an action plan with 29 targets, which can be accessed on the Council’s website. Many of those targets have been achieved since their adoption in 2003, while others have been carried forward into the Housing Needs & Strategy Service Plan, 2005/06. In summary we have

- reduced by 67% the homelessness caused by parents, relatives or friends no longer providing accommodation (2004/05)
- ensured that no family with dependent children or a pregnant woman spend any longer than 6 weeks in B/B with shared facilities since March 2004
- reviewed our allocations policy to create a level playing field for priority homeless customers and others in severe and enduring housing need
- introduced a comprehensive housing advice service backed by a homelessness prevention fund and a rent deposit scheme
- continue developing better, self-contained temporary accommodation alternatives to B/B (ongoing)

In 2005/06 we will:

- Undertake a mid-term review of our Homelessness Strategy, 2003/08. The review will revise the original strategic targets in light of experience and determine the remainder of our action plan to 2008. It will consider the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.
- Plan a pilot project to promote good tenancy relations and tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector.
- Develop a housing options pack for service users.
- Begin consideration of a choice based lettings system.
- Introduce mediation services as a means of preventing homelessness.
- Subject to funding, develop a Sanctuary Project for people experiencing domestic violence who freely choose to remain in their own homes with support.

In 2002 the Council introduced a private sector leasing scheme as an alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation. This has now grown to 43 homes and is a valuable addition to our stock of decent temporary accommodation, which now stands at 79 homes. In partnership with The Horizon Housing group and the East Sussex Supporting People Commissioning Body, we have also developed a refuge in the district for up to six households leaving domestic violence and this will further reduce reliance on B/B.

We welcome the provision of revenue funding in the form of a grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to help implement the Homelessness Act, 2002, and achieve reductions in homelessness. For 2004/05 the grant of £43,000 was spent in the following ways:

- Management and development of decent alternatives to B/B, especially private sector leasing scheme
- To provide a rent cash deposit scheme to enable people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and in priority need to access the private rented sector
- Providing grant funding for a voluntary agency rent deposit guarantee scheme for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness but without a priority need
- Supporting the development of housing advice and homelessness prevention services and multi-agency partnerships throughout the district

Provision has also been made in the Council's 3-year capital programme for support to housing associations in bringing empty homes back into use for homeless people and others in severe and enduring need. Capital funding has also been identified for the conversion of an existing District Council dwelling to provide housing with support for homeless 16/17 year olds and care leavers from East Sussex County Council's Children's Services Department.

The Council sought the views of its partner organisations in the winter of 2004 when the government consulted on the performance indicator of the number of people sleeping rough in the district. The outcome for 2004/05 was that we submitted an estimate of 0-10 but we will review this decision in 2005/06 in light of ongoing discussions.

Stock Improvement

Decent Homes in the Council-Owned Stock

With 3356 homes owned and in management (excluding leaseholders) in April 2004 the Council is the largest social landlord in the district and, as such, maintenance and improvement is a priority for sustaining the built environment.

The Government has set a national Decent Homes Standard (DHS) for stock-owning Councils to achieve by 2010. The Council plans to achieve as close to 100% decent homes as possible by April 2007, dependent on two principal factors:

- Obtaining the funding to enable plans to be implemented
- The ability to deliver the necessary repairs and improvements.

The local target of 2007 is realistic in relation to the government target of 2010, allowing 3 years of contingency for various obstacles or threats that may lie ahead. Threats include changes in national resource allocation formulas, variations in capital receipts linked to Right to Buy assumptions, reducing rental stream from a diminishing stock, areas of deprivation and other calls on funding all present challenges to the achievement of the standard.

The standard is substantially based around life cycles for major components (eg 20 years for kitchen units). The 10 year plan of works to be undertaken can be adjusted to keep on track and to help determine the number of homes reaching the standard and those falling out of it. Outside of natural disasters, like the floods in Lewes in 2000, the programme is flexible enough to allow for other calls on funding.

Stock Options Appraisal: The Council and stakeholders have previously considered options for the future of the stock but have now carried out a further stock options appraisal that is required by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in guidance issued in 2003. The “sign off” by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) was achieved in August 2005. An Independent Tenants Advisor was appointed in March 2004 and around 50 consultation events with tenants and other stakeholders were undertaken. The options under consideration were:

- stock retention in the Council’s ownership and management
- stock remaining in the Council’s ownership but management devolved to an Arms Length Management Organisation
- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) to a registered social landlord
- The introduction of funding under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

The final option for the Council-owned stock was determined by a Test of Opinion at the end of 2004 when 91% of nearly 2000 responding tenants wished for the retention of their homes in the Council’s ownership and management. On 30 March 2005 the Council’s Cabinet confirmed its support and commitment to retain its housing stock in accordance with tenants’ wishes.

Our ability to deliver the required repairs and improvements is based upon a Council housing stock condition survey in 2000/01. A detailed 10 year plan of key works has been produced. Details of the survey together with records of works completed allow accurate assessment of energy efficiency. It is intended to continue raising the average SAP energy rating of 63 to 66 by 2005/06 and 70 as a future aim. Under our Eco Management & Audit Scheme (EMAS)

policy we have carried out cavity wall and loft insulation to all homes possible and installed energy efficient gas condensing boilers and double glazing in planned replacements.

Summary of 7 Year Programme of Repairs & Improvements Commencing 2004/05

	<u>Homes</u>	<u>Total Cost (£'s)</u>	<u>Of which Lewes Standard (£)</u>	<u>Of which Decent Homes only (£)</u>
Rewiring	1500	2,919,000	1,900,000	1,019,000
Re-roofing	160	524,000	450,000	74,000
Replacement windows	300	1,057,000	200,000	857,000
External door replacement	1750	1,232,000	800,000	432,000
Central heating improvements	1100	3,535,000	1,400,000	2,135,000
Kitchen replacements	1650	3,642,000	2,100,000	1,542,000
Bathroom replacements	1400	2,002,000	1,000,000	1,002,000
Communal digital TV aerials	1500	300,000	300,000	-
Environmental Works	Various	900,000	900,000	-
Structural Works	Various	3,000,000	3,000,000	-
Sound Insulation improvements	Various	600,000	600,000	-
Disabled adaptations	Various	1,700,000	1,700,000	-
Extra Bedrooms	Various	150,000	150,000	-
Eradicating Damp	Various	300,000	300,000	-
Contingency		467,000	467,000	
TOTAL		22,328,000	15,267,000	7,061,000

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan contains a full description of stock improvement and other programmes associated with the Council as landlord. Copies of these documents are available from Mike Keeping, Head of Housing Services, at Lewes District Council, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB. We are also pleased to announce that in September 2004 the Council achieved Charter Mark accreditation for its landlord service.

The 2004 tenants' satisfaction survey obtained an excellent response rate of above 70% and a small but indicative number of respondents indicated that their homes contained more rooms than they needed. This reveals potential for re-examining the incentives already given to tenants to move and to review our allocation policy towards under-occupation. The review was completed in June 2005 when Cabinet adopted a new scheme of incentives to move.

Private Sector Stock

The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy (2004/07) is published in the document, "Healthy Homes in the 21st Century". It is a priority because approximately 91% of the District's 41,000 homes are privately owned and our 2003 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey estimated issues of unfitness, substantial disrepair, hazardous dwellings and fuel poverty in around 9,400 properties. We are also aware of significant problems of older people who have serious difficulty maintaining their homes and a severe shortfall of decent dwellings at costs that young people (aged 16-25) can afford to pay. The following table illustrates the findings of the survey.

Private Sector Deficiencies	Nos of Dwellings	% of Private Sector Stock
Unfitness	980	2.5
Serious Hazards	3,800	9.8
Fuel Poverty	4,270	11.2
Substantial Disrepair	4,100	10.6

(This is primarily a count of deficiencies, not dwellings, since some properties will have a multiple of the problems listed. Overall, an estimated 24.5% of the private stock is affected).

The Council's resources for private sector housing repairs were significantly reduced in 2001/02 and forced us to re-prioritise our intervention to focus more on the most vulnerable people. This led to the introduction of Minor Repairs Grants in 2002 and 25 such grants were awarded in 2002/03 rising to 36 in 2003/04 and 41 in 2004/05. The Council adopted the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy in July 2004 and has since produced a revised financial assistance policy (April 2005). The strategy contains the following key objectives that were determined following extensive consultation with residents and other stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

- Identify and prioritise dwellings for inspection and repair.
- Reduce the number of unfit properties, particularly in Newhaven, by a combination of pro-active measures, encouragement, assistance and enforcement.
- Bring empty properties back into use.
- Address the backlog of aids and adaptations for disabled people by improved partnership working
- Continue to make improvements in energy efficiency, targeting those most vulnerable and in fuel poverty.
- Encourage renewable energy sources.
- Increase the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which are safe, free from serious disrepair and have adequate fire precautions.
- Improve the quality of the private rented sector (i.e., by landlord accreditation and HMO licensing.
- Providing support to elderly and other vulnerable people by closer working with the Home Improvement Agency, Primary Care Trusts and the voluntary sector.
- Improve consultation with service users, landlords, housing agencies and other stakeholders.

The above objectives are supported by the private sector renewal action plan containing 28 targets. In 2005 we also launched our Home Owners Maintenance & Environmental Service, which is free at the point of service delivery. It is summarised on page 41 of this document. We continue to offer Disabled Facilities Grants to disabled and elderly people to enable their homes to be adapted to meet their needs and thereby sustain their choice and independence. 37 such grants were awarded in 2002/03 rising to 52 in 2004/05. The Council works in

partnership with Wealden District Council and a home improvement agency, **Anchor Staying Put**, with whom we promote a range of complementary initiatives, such as the Lewes District Handyperson Scheme which carried out 51 small home maintenance tasks for vulnerable people in 2002/03. **Anchor Staying Put** is the Wealden & Lewes Home Improvement Agency. Their Homestart Scheme focuses on the housing needs of vulnerable people and people with disabilities. They work with the Council and other agencies to provide Disabled Facilities Grants and other services where needed to sustain people's safety and security in their own homes and prevent crises like unplanned hospital admissions.

Promotion of energy efficiency, and reducing fuel poverty, both consistent with the Council's EMAS accreditation, are key objectives in our drive for sustainability. Our activities in this regard, including those in the private sector, are described on page 33 of this document.

Around 340 Houses in Multiple Occupation have been identified in the district These are inspected on a risk assessment basis, covering about 90 each year. We are in process of developing a landlords accreditation scheme in partnership with Wealden District Council, Eastbourne Borough Council and Southern Private Landlords Association. The purpose of this scheme is:

- To support landlords who wish to improve the quality of housing management and sustainable stock condition in the private sector
- To provide Housing Benefit fast tracking and the prevention of possession proceedings by the use of tenancy sustainment methods
- To reduce homelessness and enable people to have more choice between good quality alternatives
- To obtain local authority nomination rights to landlords vacancies
- To encourage expansion in the private rented sector.

In the last 2 years the Council has partnered Brighton & Hove City Council to bring a greater number of empty properties back into use. The partnership returned 65 properties into use in the Lewes district in 2003/05, is on target, and was assisted by the growth of our private sector leasing scheme for priority homeless households.

In 2004/05 capital expenditure on private sector housing grants and other private sector works totalled £642,400 with more than half devoted to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) because they are mandatory. 52 homes were adapted using DFGs in the year

Between 2004/07 we will also meet the challenges of the Housing Act, 2004, in relation to:

- the Housing Health & Safety Rating System that will require changes to the collection of stock condition data and procedures for ensuring compliance
- the introduction of mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation will require a rolling inspection programme and implementation of a licensing system.

Detailed government guidance is awaited.

Supporting Vulnerable People

The commonly accepted definition of housing related support is “those lower levels of practical or emotional support that do not amount to personal care, that allow vulnerable people to obtain or remain in their own home.” The provision of support to vulnerable people is a priority because services promote independence and prevent crises such as unplanned hospital admissions or homelessness. They therefore support the Health Improvement agenda, as does the Council’s Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy described earlier.

Four Primary Care Trusts are represented on the Strategic Forum, the commissioning body for housing related support in East Sussex. It is an inter-agency partnership board that oversees the Supporting People Programme in the County. Lewes District Council is represented on the board, which also comprises representatives from:

East Sussex County Council
Eastbourne Borough Council
Hastings Borough Council
Rother District Council
Wealden District Council
Sussex Probation Area
Bexhill & Rother Primary Care Trust
Eastbourne Downs Primary Care Trust
Hastings & St Leonards Primary Care Trust
Sussex Downs & Weald Primary Care Trust

The government assessed the East Sussex Supporting People Shadow Strategy as “excellent” after it was published in January 2003. It profiled the supply of supported housing for vulnerable people within the Lewes district, as follows:

- Older people, including one scheme providing extra care (83.5%)
- People with mental health needs (7.8%)
- People with Learning Disabilities (3.4%)
- Young People at Risk (3.4%)
- Teenage Parents (1.0%)
- People escaping domestic violence (0.6%)
- People with physical disability (0.2%)- only to those who need personal support.

In November 2003 a refuge for people at risk of domestic violence was opened in the district with revenue support from the Supporting People budget. There are currently no specific supported housing schemes targeted at people living with drugs or alcohol misuse, travellers, homeless families with support needs, offenders or people at risk of offending in the district.

The East Sussex Supporting People Team undertook data collection across the county to measure the need for housing related support. The data collection depended on the responses from agencies working in the field and the results are affected by the varied response rates across the county and district. Nevertheless, the results are thought indicative. The most numerous need in the county, with which Lewes was consistent, was among people with physical disabilities, though the data may be distorted by people needing adaptations to their homes rather than ongoing personal support. However, in 2006 we will begin investigating the establishment of a disability housing register in the district, which was recommended in the 2005 Housing Needs Survey. People with mental health needs and learning disabilities were also significant.

In the Lewes District there is currently no specific provision for people with a mental health need for a high level of support essential to sustain their independence. Their need is most acute when they are homeless and, although their number may be less than for other groups, it is especially difficult to find sustainable solutions. During the lifetime of this housing strategy, and of the East Sussex Supporting People 5 Year Strategy, we must work with partners and providers to meet this need.

Housing related support in East Sussex and in Lewes district is under-developed and it is clear that if we do not provide more supported housing we risk the following consequences:

- Vulnerable people will be unable live safely and independently in the community and some will become avoidably homeless
- Unnecessary and expensive admissions to hospital or residential care will result
- Expensive care services will cost more and provide less value for money.

Revenue funding for supported housing schemes is in the form of a government grant to the County's Supporting People Commissioning Body. We will therefore work with our partners within the district and across the county to develop schemes that address priority needs.

The 5 year Supporting People Strategy for East Sussex was approved by the Lewes District Council Cabinet in February 2005 and by the Cabinets of East Sussex County Council and the 4 other District or Borough Councils in the County between February and March of that year. Given the uncertainties around funding for housing related support services it was difficult to plan a 5 year commissioning strategy for Supporting People. We now have a Government commitment to 3 years funding but the County-wide grant for 2005/06 represented a reduction in real terms of more than 7.5% and currently all new development plans are suspended. However, the partner authorities of the Pan Sussex Housing Needs Survey commissioned specialist reports in 2005 on the housing and support needs of

- Older People
- Young people aged 16+
- Black and Minority Ethnic Households
- People with a Learning Disability
- Gypsies and Travellers

The reports will inform both housing and support strategies in Lewes District and in the County generally. Of course the Supporting People Programme is not the only resource for vulnerable people as the Anchor Staying Put scheme exemplifies, referred to in the last chapter on the Private Sector Stock. The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants also has a vital role. In the Lewes District we are also seeking alternative funding sources for support to homeless 16/17 year olds and care leavers by working with the County Council's Children's Services. Tenancies given to vulnerable young people are often at risk of failing and it is a priority to prevent them going through a revolving door.

The emphasis in the 2002 Homelessness Act on preventing homelessness and the provision of support to prevent recurrence ensured its selection as an over-arching local priority. Now that we have made encouraging progress on this issue we can also focus attention on other priorities, including a review of housing services for older people. This will be wide ranging, incorporating care and support services, with users and stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors being consulted. This has also been targeted by the Council's landlord department, Housing Services, and by March 2006 we will have jointly begun. It was one of the consultant's recommendations in the 2005 Housing Needs Survey.

Developing Partnerships

This is a priority for the Council because partnerships with statutory, voluntary and business agencies can improve the quality of life for our communities.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP): We have established the LSP with 5 supporting area partnerships. They have a shared vision of what they want to achieve on behalf of communities: good health, a safe place to live, prosperity, access to learning for everyone, a valued environment, improved local facilities and a diverse culture. They received our draft Homelessness Strategy in June 2003 and were key consultation partners for the review of allocations and this Housing Strategy. The LSP will receive twice-yearly monitoring reports on our progress towards meeting strategic housing targets and will participate in the mid-term review of the Homelessness Strategy. The LSP has established a number of cross-cutting **Theme Groups** to guide its strategy and drive its action plans. Planning and Affordable Housing is one such and the list comprises:

- Healthy Living (through the Healthy Lewes Partnership)
- Supporting the Local Economy, Learning and Skills
- Affordable Housing & Planning
- The Local Environment
- Crime & Disorder (through the Crime Reduction Partnership)
- Transport
- Youth

All of these themes interact with the issue of helping communities find, pay for and sustain decent, safe and affordable places to live. We shall take the opportunity to invite the participation of the Primary Care Trusts and the new Children's Service of the County Council in the review of the Homelessness Strategy.

Supporting People: Research undertaken for the East Sussex Supporting People Commissioning Body identified that the client groups with the highest priority (unmet need) for new housing-related support services across East Sussex (not in priority order) are:

- Older people
- People with learning disabilities
- People with physical disabilities
- Single homeless people with complex needs.

We were involved in these disciplines as we took a leading role in the preparation of a housing sub-strategy for people with learning disabilities and we were involved in a research project examining the provision of mental health support services, entitled "Raising the Roof". The Council published its first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003 and led on the production of a County-wide homelessness strategy published in 2004.

We work closely with other district Councils and the County Children's Services in relation to supported accommodation for teenage parents and the Lewes District Foyer, both in Newhaven, on issues of referral and resettlement.

We are perhaps fortunate in that the Council's own sheltered accommodation contains no schemes with shared facilities. In one scheme in Peacehaven there is a partnership with the Social Services authority which provides the staffing for "extra care" services. There is a clear trend in favour of more provision of sheltered housing with extra care. Research

undertaken by the County Council has revealed that the greatest need in the district is along the coastal strip, with particular emphasis on Telscombe, Peacehaven and Newhaven.

We are working with Social Services and Health to identify where sheltered housing with extra care can be developed in order to reduce reliance on residential care, which is inappropriate for many older people who want to maintain their independence. We are also jointly working to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and to resolve some of the difficulties around hospital discharge and bed blocking.

We are active participants in a number of cross-boundary initiatives.

Domestic Violence : With Eastbourne Borough Council, Wealden District Council and Refuge we introduced an outreach service. This was initially funded by a grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. A refuge was opened in the district in 2003 by a partnership between the Council, Horizon Housing Group, Refuge (who provide the support service) and the County's Supporting People Team (providing revenue support).

Accreditation Scheme: Again, with both Eastbourne and Wealden Councils, we are developing an accreditation scheme with Southern Private Landlords Association. This will improve the quality and, we hope, the quantity of private rented accommodation. With close cooperation between all agencies, including Housing Benefit, Environmental Health colleagues and landlords we aim to achieve a reduction in homelessness through prevention and tenancy sustainment methods.

East Sussex Housing Officers Group (ESHOG): Comprising senior managers from all district councils in the county plus Brighton & Hove City Council, this group meets bi-monthly to monitor cross-cutting issues of policy, strategy and investment. Representatives from the Government Office for the South East, The Housing Corporation and the Chartered Institute of Housing also attend. The issues examined include the potential to jointly commission housing associations to deliver new affordable homes throughout the districts in the county on the basis that the resultant economies of scale may produce more dwellings for a given amount of investment from the Regional Housing Board. This prospect may be facilitated by the report of the Sub-Regional Housing Needs Survey that we obtained in 2005.

The group cannot make policy but members may make recommendations to their respective Cabinets . ESHOG has also overseen another group for **Housing Policy & Development Officers** and this is currently examining the prospects for recommending the provision of a key worker scheme for rented accommodation in contrast to the Government's Starter Homes Initiative or, latterly, Key Worker Homebuy, which is exclusively for home ownership.

East Sussex County Council: In partnership with the County Council's Children's Services we have a robust joint protocol for determining the needs of homeless 16/17 year olds and young people leaving care and at risk.

East Sussex Planning & Affordable Housing Forum: The forum, which needs reinvigorating, comprises officers from Planning, Legal Services and Housing from the five district councils in the county, plus East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council. It can develop and disseminate good shared practice for the delivery of affordable housing from the planning process.

Multi-Agency Public Protection: The Council plays an active role in the strategic management of public protection and is represented at all levels in the process. Housing officers attend the Strategic Management Board, which covers East and West Sussex, sits on the East Sussex Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel and also the Risk Assessment Board for Lewes, Eastbourne & Wealden.

Lewes District Federation of Tenants & Residents Associations: There is a strong partnership between tenants and the Council as landlord. This includes quarterly Housing Consultative Panel meetings, compact working groups for housing repairs, anti-social behaviour and customer care, tenant and Councillor shadowing of housing staff and tenant representation on Cabinet. Tenants have a budget set aside for their chosen environmental improvements in addition to those identified by the Council. More information is contained in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the Housing Services Annual Service Plan. As the largest social landlord in the district the Council and tenants set the standard for tenant participation and partnership.

Promoting Equality & Valuing Diversity:

The Equality Standard for local government was published in 2002. It recognises the importance of fair treatment and equal access to services and employment and is a tool to enable local authorities to mainstream gender, race and disability into council policy and practice at all levels.

The Council is currently working towards the achievement of Level 2 of the equality standard. This is the level that goes beyond a commitment to a comprehensive equality policy and adopts consultation and assessment models. Our corporate Equalities Working Group is overseeing equality assessments of all service areas to enable the Council to meet the standard.

The draft Disability Bill was published in December 2003. It proposes to extend the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to cover most public sector activities and a positive duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. If enacted it would enable disabled people to challenge discrimination when renting property and in their dealings with landlords and managers of rented accommodation.

The Council published its Race Equality Scheme in 2002, which sets out a three year programme of implementation. Historically, we have adopted the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in Rented Housing. To reinforce our existing compliance with the statutory duty to provide:

- equality of opportunity and,
- prevent unlawful discrimination and,
- promote good race relations,

The Council's newly revised housing allocations policy comprehensively commits us to ensure equality of opportunity in regard to access to and allocation of housing. We therefore continuously monitor ethnic origin, gender and disability of people on the Housing Register and those who are rehoused.

The Lewes district has a relatively small population from ethnic minorities (2.1%) and there is therefore a danger that random surveys might understate minority groups. It was therefore encouraging to note that around 3% of respondents to our 2003 and 2005 housing needs survey were from ethnic minorities. Both our Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and our Housing Best Value Improvement Plan identified a need to ensure that our services are accessible to all members of the community. In 2006 we will reinforce our relationship with Sompriti, a black and minority ethnic advocacy group, and jointly review the accessibility of our services.

We are in process of consulting representatives of Gypsies and Travellers on the recent survey of their accommodation needs. We and the other four District and Borough Councils of East Sussex plus Brighton & Hove City Council commissioned a survey and report from consultants DCA on the needs and preferences of this community for places to live. The survey was carried out in the autumn of 2005 with the report before the end of the same calendar year.

In December 2003 a Travellers Working Group was established comprising Lewes District Councillors supported by officers with contributions from statutory and voluntary sector agencies. The working group's recommendations have been accepted by the Council's Cabinet. In summary they are:

- Council policy relating to Travellers needs to respect the right of Gypsies and Travellers to pursue a nomadic way of life. The Council needs to balance these rights with the rights of the settled community. All members of the community have the right to be protected from nuisance, harassment, discrimination and harm from others and this right applies equally to Gypsies, Travellers and the settled community. In this context the Working Group takes the view that the Council needs to adopt a positive, pro-active role in fulfilment of its responsibility to promote good race relations between the Travelling and settled communities.
- A county-wide strategy for Travellers should be developed. This should relate to the numbers of Travellers in the county and their patterns of employment and movement. It should in due course lead to an action plan for the adequate provision of both long-term and transit Traveller sites.
- Conditions should be improved at the official transit site within the district and consideration should be given to the introduction of a rental system commensurate with the facilities provided.
- Within the context of a county-wide strategy Lewes District Council should take a positive approach towards the provision of private sites by identifying suitable locations and encouraging appropriate planning applications
- Housing and Homelessness Strategies should take account of the needs of Travellers.
- There should be a consistent inter-agency policy for responding to unauthorised sites across the county.
- The East Sussex Travellers Forum should be re-established as a means of liaison and consultation. Lewes District Council should offer to organise and provide the secretariat.

The survey of Gypsies and Travellers will inform both the development of this Housing Strategy to 2009 and the mid-term review of the Homelessness Strategy (by June 2006), that will revise the latter strategy's action plan to 2008. The survey will also inform the emerging Core Strategy of our Local Development Framework.

Developing Sustainable Communities

This is a national, regional and local priority because it reduces social exclusion and crime, promotes equality, reduces homelessness, produces affordable housing solutions and contributes to a culture of well-being. As such it is consistent with our Community Strategy, the aims of the Local Strategic Partnership and runs like a thread throughout this strategy.

The regional economic strategy identified Sussex coastal towns as part of a “priority area for economic regeneration.” Like the rest of East Sussex, there is a relatively high proportion of low waged and seasonal jobs, especially in the service sector. With our local and strategic partners we work to promote economic prosperity, particularly in Newhaven where social, environmental and economic regeneration is particularly important. The Newhaven Community Development Association, representing the voluntary and community sector in the town, has been one of several valued partners. The Council was a key player in the Newhaven Economic Partnership, which led to a £6.47M Single Regeneration Budget programme from 1996-2003.

In the Local Plan, over 40% of dwellings (open market as well as social housing) allocated for development up to 2006 are within Newhaven. The town is a very sustainable settlement with good transport links by road, rail and sea, opportunities for employment and previously used land available for development. Yet Newhaven also has acute needs, with one ward containing substantial indicators of deprivation in the district. Poor housing conditions are a significant issue in Newhaven. The report of the Council’s Private Sector Stock Condition Survey was completed in January 2004. Its Executive Summary concluded:

“The highest rate of unfitness (in the district) found during the survey was for Newhaven where 290 (6.3%) dwellings are unfit and Newhaven also has the highest proportion of substantial disrepair dwellings at 860 (18.9%). Newhaven has the highest proportion of dwellings with a serious hazard at 960 (19.4%). It is clear that any future strategy to tackle poor housing conditions within the Lewes District will have to concentrate on Newhaven in particular.”

We welcomed the reference in the Interim Regional Housing Strategy to developing affordable housing to support the economic regeneration of Sussex coastal towns. Since 1998, 66 affordable dwellings for rent have been developed or acquired in Newhaven. There is the potential to achieve a further 100 homes in the town on presently identified sites in the Local Plan. We will seek to enable the development of a substantial proportion of these by supporting housing association bids for funding to the Housing Corporation, where appropriate, and obtaining contributions from developers under the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance. However, we will seek to achieve a balanced programme that also addresses the needs of the other towns of Seaford, Peacehaven, Telscombe and Lewes as well as the 23 rural parishes in the district.

However important, economic regeneration is only one aspect of encouraging the development of sustainable communities. The Council’s position as the largest social landlord in the District has enabled us to achieve a strong relationship with tenants, leaseholders and other residents. Achievements include

- The adoption of three Local Neighbourhood Agreements setting out how the Council and other agencies will work with the community to improve the area or service.

- Working with the Crime Reduction Partnership to produce a new policy and procedure for tackling anti-social behaviour on housing estates, including a written guide for residents on how to respond.
- Further joint working with Police and other agencies using powers under the Crime & Disorder Act.
- Using our assets to support community facilities. Council-owned shops generate an income to the Housing Revenue Account that is returned to residents in the form of services. Formerly redundant commercial units have been converted into a Tenants Resource Centre and a Community Centre.
- Introducing introductory tenancies to reduce anti-social behaviour
- A tenant-controlled budget set aside for their chosen environmental improvements as well as those identified by the Council.

We welcome the Housing Corporation's announcement that in the Affordable Housing Programmes from 2006, investment of publicly funded subsidy would only be made in schemes achieving an Eco-Homes rating of "very good." This will encourage sustainable development of the built environment and help to further reduce fuel poverty.

One of the questions posed during the consultation period of this document was whether an anti-poverty strategy would be of value to the dispersed communities in the district. This was thought relevant because of the evidence of a low-income local economy and some significant indicators of deprivation not only along the coastal strip of towns but also in other settlements. While there was no consensus among respondents there was interest shown by several agencies working in or having an investment in the district. By January 2007 we will therefore examine the feasibility of developing an anti-poverty strategy with selected partners.

Providing For Key Workers

The Interim South East Regional Housing Strategy placed significant emphasis on housing solutions for key workers and this was reflected again in the Regional Housing Green Paper that was published in March 2004. House price inflation in the region, county and district has led to the emergence of a group of people who "can work, can't buy." Many people such as nurses and other health workers, teachers, and others fall into that category yet their work is essential to the health, education, safety and well-being of our communities.

The interim regional housing strategy defined a key worker as "an individual in housing need who is unable to afford to meet their needs without some support and whose employment is of particular importance to their local community."

If we do not enable key workers to gain access to affordable housing we risk the following:

- We will fail (or continue to fail) to recruit competent people for essential jobs
- Existing key workers will leave their jobs and move to other areas where housing is affordable for them
- The provision of essential public services may suffer, with consequences for the community
- The district could become less attractive to businesses and other investors.

We welcome the indication in the Draft Regional Housing Strategy, 2006-2009, that the Regional Housing Board intends to broaden the definition of key workers to better meet the needs of the region. In doing so, they wish to work with each of the sub-regions to develop a

definition that meets local needs. The intention is to ensure that key worker housing is targeted to the needs of all essential workers and provided in areas where the need is greatest. We are concerned that many essential workers in our communities cannot afford subsidised home ownership because of low salary levels. Since 2004 significant funding for affordable housing in the region has been allocated to key workers and this may have reduced allocations to other groups. The East Sussex Housing Policy & Development Officers Group is considering developing a draft county-wide key workers policy and examining the feasibility of a key worker rented scheme for those who are still unable to buy. Lewes District is represented in these discussions and we will leave open the possibility of developing a local scheme subject to Council approval after stakeholder consultation, including employers. If the Regional Housing Board is indeed able to work with us sub-regionally, all the District and Borough Councils in East Sussex (plus Brighton & Hove) will be informed by our 2005 sub-regional housing needs survey. This showed for the Lewes District that

- Access to owner-occupation for entry-level 1-bed flats requires a current income of at least £24,700. The proportion of existing households in key public sector employment who could not afford to enter the lowest market segment were –
- 50.9% of Health staff
- 22.8% of Local Authority staff
- 18.3% of Police
- 14.8% of Education staff.
- The sample of concealed households (those living with a host household) was very small so the data must be treated with caution but all reported annual household incomes of below £15000.

Sussex Enterprise (Chamber of Commerce and Business Link) undertook a recent survey of 1479 employers in East and West Sussex. 48% of those attempting to recruit staff experienced difficulty. Half of those who reported difficulty in the Lewes district attributed the cause to a lack of affordable housing. Throughout both counties employers found problems recruiting skilled technicians and tradespeople, customer-facing staff and unskilled staff. The survey also measured whether a lack of affordable housing was a constraint on businesses ability to improve effectiveness. In East Sussex 13% of respondents said it was a constraint but in the Lewes district it was 21%, more than half as many again.

The Council began a Best Value Review of Promoting the Local Economy in 2004 and the review is ongoing. It will include a consideration of the extent to which key worker housing can promote local economic well-being and on the extent to which housing impacts on workforce recruitment and retention. It will work with these and other stakeholders to examine the barriers that prevent people from gaining and sustaining employment. It will take account of the varying and specific needs of different parts of the district, including those with higher levels of deprivation, and it will examine the contribution that might be made by the Local Strategic Partnership.

In East Sussex the district councils bid jointly and successfully, together with Moat Housing Group, for £2.1M to help key workers across the county up to March 2004. The Southern Housing Group also obtained another £346,500 to assist 17 Police officers in East and West Sussex over the same period. The outcome of the bidding round for 2004/05 and 2005/06 was that the Moat Housing Group obtained funding for 270 housing solutions in East & West Sussex, including Brighton & Hove, under the Key Worker Living Scheme programme. Indicatively, 50% is likely to be targeted to NHS workers, 40% to education and 10% to those

working in the crime & disorder sector. Key Worker Living has since been replaced with Key Worker Homebuy.

Saving Energy & Tackling Fuel Poverty

If we do not adopt an energy saving strategy we will invite the following consequences:

- Fuel poverty will increase
- Health will suffer and vulnerable people will be at risk
- We will waste precious natural resources and degrade our environment

We will tackle fuel poverty as a key issue. In doing so we will target actions on dwellings with older heads of household, dwellings occupied by benefit recipients and on low incomes and dwellings in the private rented sector. We will also work to encourage landlords to improve energy efficiency in the private rented sector and we have good working relationships with the Southern Private Landlords Association.

Since 1997 we have worked hard to increase the energy efficiency rating of dwellings throughout the district. By 2003 we had raised the average SAP rating from the 1996 level of 47 to 54. The Council's target is to achieve a 30% increase in energy efficiency by 2007 and to achieve this we must continue to promote, advise and assist householders to achieve further improvements. Newhaven and many dispersed rural areas share the lowest mean SAP and we will focus our Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy on energy efficiency improvements in those areas.

In regard to saving energy and tackling fuel poverty among older or vulnerable people we will be assisted, as with many of our activities in the private housing sector, by Anchor Staying Put, the home improvement agency in the district.

The following energy efficiency grants are available:

Warmfront Scheme. This is for people on various state benefits and over 60 years old on benefit. It is for loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, and (in some cases) heating systems.

Keep Warm in Winter campaign. Run by Lewes District Council the scheme is for people over 60 on a Council Tax Band between A and D. It covers loft, cavity wall and hot water tank insulation along with low energy lightbulbs. It is a 100% grant.

The Energycare Network. Grants for loft and cavity wall insulation. Open to anyone.

Heat and Sun. Grants for insulation of £275 towards loft and cavity wall insulation and £600 for solar water heating. We have therefore extended our grant system to include renewable energy sources.

We have a positive and improving record in our role as the largest social landlord in the District. The average SAP rating of the Council-owned stock by the end of 2002/03 was 63. We aspire to an average 70 SAP rating but this is ambitious given our largely aging housing stock. But we intend raising the average to 66 by 2005/06.

Using our Resources

Background

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) explains our approach to strategic financial management in the period through to 2008/2009. It defines the financial constraints within which we determine priorities for spending, having regard to:

- the needs of our communities as described in our Community Strategy and other strategies and plans
- determining a Council Tax which people are willing to pay
- prudent management of capital finance and other assets
- relative priority of service areas
- achieving a balance between revenue expenditure and capital investment.

Spending on housing, both revenue and capital, has represented a substantial proportion of the Council's annual revenue and capital expenditure in recent years, as can be seen in Table 1.

With one of the Council's three key aims being to support 'the housing, health and social needs of everyone in our communities', this pattern of spending is likely to continue in future years.

Table 1 – Revenue and capital expenditure in recent years

	2003/2004 Actual £'000	2004/2005 Actual £'000
Net Revenue expenditure – Housing services	8,409	8,327
Net Revenue expenditure – all services	18,395	20,107
% on Housing services	45.7	41.4
Capital expenditure – Housing investment programme	3,777	3,900
Capital expenditure – total investment programme	6,247	5,806
% on Housing investment programme	60.5	67.2

Capital investment 2005/2006 and beyond

The Local Government Act 2003 introduced from April 2004, a new framework for local authority capital finance. Its key feature is that authorities may borrow to finance capital expenditure provided that it is prudent for them to do so. This means that the authority must be able to service the resultant debt. The 'Prudential Code for Capital Finance' issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) is the guidance which authorities are obliged to follow when determining the affordability of their capital spending plans.

Of crucial importance to the Council is the level of new borrowing in respect of which the Government is prepared to provide support in terms of meeting the associated costs of principal and interest. This is known as 'Supported Capital Expenditure' (SCE). Prior to the start of each financial year, the Government announces how much SCE will be taken into account in the calculation of the Council's Housing Subsidy and Revenue Support Grant entitlements. The Council is free to finance capital expenditure above the level of SCE. However, the revenue resources available to both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account are constrained, and our MTFS indicates that it is not prudent to borrow to do so.

The Council's 3 year housing investment capital programme is targeted at priority needs and is shown in Table 2. The programme for 2005/2006 has been approved by Cabinet and includes variations in the year to date. It should be noted that the amounts shown for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 are indicative only and are our best estimates at the time of writing. We review and update our projections, as necessary, throughout the financial year. The level of investment in each year is shown as being equal to the resources which are projected to be available. Further information is given in the notes which follow.

Table 2 – 3 year Capital investment programme to 2007/08

Item		2005/06 £'000	2006/07 £'000	2007/08 £'000	Total £'000
	Investment				
1	Council stock				
2	- Decent homes	1741	2,595	2,595	8,698
3	- Maintenance/repair	1767			
4	New Affordable Housing	380	50	50	480
5	Private Sector Renewal	575	380	380	1,335
6	Homelessness	100	0	0	100
7	Other (energy efficiency, etc)	123	68	68	259
8	Total	4,686	3,093	3,093	10,872
	Resources				
9	Supported Capital Expenditure	807	259	259	1,325
10	Useable capital receipts	936	300	300	1,536
11	Major Repairs Allowance	2,395	2,224	2,224	6,843
12	Specified Capital Grant	242	198	198	638
13	Revenue Contributions	260	112	112	484
14	Contributions from 3 rd parties	46	0	0	46
15	Total	4,686	3,093	3,093	10,872

Explanatory Notes - Investment

Item 2 - The Council is on track to meet the Government's target for all local authority housing to meet its 'Decent Homes Standard' by 2010. This is the essential element of the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and its Housing Options Appraisal which received sign-off from the Government Office of the South East in summer 2005.

Item 3 - In addition to works needed to achieve the Decent Homes Standard, the Council has an ongoing programme of major repairs and maintenance in respect of its housing stock. The planning of these works is informed by a stock condition survey, which is to be updated in spring 2006.

Item 4 – The major element is to be funded from the regional Affordable Housing Programme determined by the Regional Housing Board, managed by the Housing Corporation and delivered by Housing Associations and developers. The Council's capital input reflects its slender resources, which must be apportioned between programmes for the Council-owned stock, private sector renewal and new affordable housing.

Item 5 – The report of the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey was received in January 2004. It identified key objectives:

- reduce the number of unfit properties

- bring empty properties back into use
- tackle the backlog of housing aids and adaptations for elderly and disabled people by improved partnership working
- continue to make improvements in energy efficiency, targeting people who are vulnerable and in fuel poverty
- encourage renewable energy sources
- increase the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) that are safe, without serious disrepair and have adequate fire precautions
- Improve quality in the private rented sector (Landlord Accreditation and HMO Licensing)
- Supporting vulnerable people via close working with the Home Improvement Agency, Primary Care Trusts and the voluntary sector
- Improved consultation

This item includes Disabled Facilities Grants.

Item 6 – The capital programme supports this priority in 2005/06 with provision for a scheme to convert an existing property to provide accommodation with support for priority homeless young people.

Explanatory Notes - Resources

Item 9 – At the beginning of 2005/2006, the Council expected the level of SCE to remain consistent over this 3-year period, basing its assumption on consultation information published by the Government. However, it has been necessary to revise this assumption following the publication by the Regional Housing Board of indicative figures showing the likely outcome of its allocation of funding across all of its strategic housing responsibilities. Although the reduction in SCE clearly has a significant impact on the coverage of the overall investment programme, it will not prevent the Council achieving the Decent Homes Standard.

Item 10 – The Council's policy is that capital receipts generated by the sale of Council houses will be used for General Fund housing schemes, for which there is no viable significant alternative source of funding. Based on experience in 2005/2006 to date, we are now projecting 16 Right To Buy sales in each financial year: the useable capital receipts generated from these sales comprise the amount shown in the table.

Item 11 – the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA), which forms part of the Housing Subsidy allocation from the Government, is essential to the financing of our housing investment programme. The Council uses the MRA in accordance with the appropriate guidance. A small balance of MRA received in previous years was available for use at 1 April 2005.

Item 12 – Specified Capital Grant is received from the Government to fund 60% of the cost of Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants which the Council makes available in respect of private sector dwellings. The balance is currently funded from capital receipts (see Item 10 above), although this may need to be reviewed if the level of receipts generated from council house sales continues to fall.

Item 13 – There is limited capacity within the Housing Revenue account to make contributions to support the investment programme. The amount shown excludes any potential use of the HRA working balance.

Item 14 – In any year there will be contributions from 3rd parties (for example the Council's insurer) to offset the cost of work carried out in specific circumstances. The amount shown includes contributions from developers generated through the planning process (known as s106 contributions).

Revenue Spending 2005/2006 and beyond

Starting in the autumn, we develop detailed estimates for the following financial year, which are formally approved by the Council in February. We have sound budget monitoring procedures in place (the Audit Commission gave our financial management arrangements the best possible rating in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment exercise) to identify variances in the year and factors which may affect our financial position in the two years ahead.

All income and expenditure relating to the day to day operational management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock is accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account and there is no subsidy to or from the General Fund. Potential levels of income and expenditure have been modelled over a 30 year timescale, as part of the Housing Business Plan, reflecting the long term nature of the business. A summary of the HRA budget for 2005/2006 is given in Table 3.

Table 3 – HRA budget summary 2005/06

	£'000
Income	
- Rental income	10,514
- Charges for services	827
- other	489
	11,830
Expenditure	
- Supervision and management	1,630
- Special services	1,211
- Repairs and maintenance	2,972
- Cost of capital	8,428
- Depreciation	2,412
- Government Negative Housing Subsidy	1,277
- other	352
	18,282
Net cost of services	6,458
Less: Capital Financing transactions	(7,178)
Net operating expenditure	(726)
Revenue Contribution to Capital Programme	163
Rent rebate costs	459
Transfers from Reserves	(122)
Net surplus	(226)
Balance at 1 April 2005	1,625
Plus surplus in year	226
Balance at 31 March 2006	1,851

The cost of housing activities which are not directly in respect of the Council's own stock forms part of the General Fund account and is funded from the Council Tax and Government grants. We are expecting the resources available to the General Fund in total to be heavily constrained in future years: The Government is likely to increase its grant by the rate of

inflation only, while limiting annual council tax rises to 5% at most. With spending needs set to grow as a result of factors beyond the Council's control (as a result of new legislative requirements, etc), the Council has put in place a 'Review of Priorities and Resources' exercise to identify reductions in the General Fund budget of £660,000 between April 2006 and March 2008. The reductions will be made in service areas which do not fall within the Council's priorities, although value for money is sought in all activities. To date, we have achieved the first stage objective of identifying more than £300,000 of the target in readiness for the financial year beginning 1 April 2006 and are on course to complete the process. None of the reductions identified will have any impact on the General Fund housing services.

The General Fund Housing Services are shown in Table 4, along with a brief explanation.

Table 4 – Housing Services in the General Fund 2005/06

	Expenditure £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
Strategic Housing Services <i>Includes preparation of the Housing Strategy, operating Housing Register, matching housing need to availability, etc.</i>	345	-	345
Homelessness <i>Includes temporary bed and breakfast provision and the Private Sector Leased Property scheme. The income includes £43,000 grant received under the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) legislation. This is used to fund initiatives which do not impact on the base budget.</i>	732	417	315
Renovation Grants <i>As well as the management costs associated with the grant programme, this service reflects the capital expenditure and income in respect of the grants, in line with accounting requirements</i>	653	202	451
Housing Advances <i>In line with accounting requirements, grants to Housing Associations made as part of the capital programme are charged to this service.</i>	77	4	73
Rent Allowances <i>This constitutes the cost of managing and paying rent allowances to private sector tenants. The Government pays the Council subsidy towards the cost of the allowances and the associated administration.</i>	11,451	11,252	199
Rent Rebates <i>As for rent allowances, but in respect of rebates awarded to Council tenants.</i>	6,472	6,461	11
Lifeline Services <i>This is a telephone alarm system which provides security and peace of mind to subscribers, their families and friends. The service is available to disabled, elderly and vulnerable residents across the District and is financed by charges paid by the subscribers.</i>	163	163	0
Total	19,893	18,499	1,394

8

Consulting & Empowering Communities

A high priority is attached to consultation in accordance with the Council's commitment to working with communities. Consultation with residents and stakeholders on housing issues in the public, private and voluntary sectors includes:

- Private Sector Landlords Forum
- District Accommodation Forum
- Private Sector Housing Forum
- Private Sector Focus Groups
- Homelessness Users Focus Groups
- Citizens Survey 2002
- Housing Needs Survey
- Questionnaires for Housing Applicants
- Housing Consultative Panel
- Tenant Compact Working Groups
- Planning User Groups
- Local Strategic Partnership & 5 Area Partnerships
- Registered Social Landlords Forum

Three stakeholder conferences were convened in 2003 on the issues of Homelessness Strategy, Allocations Policy Review and Housing Strategy. On each occasion the conferences were held before draft strategies, plans or policies were written. This prevented the discussion from being constrained within the limits of predetermined options. Draft documents were subsequently produced on the Homelessness Strategy and the Allocations policy and were approved by the Council's Cabinet as the basis for public consultation.

This was followed by the written consultation stage when draft documents were sent to approximately 100 stakeholder agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Their responses were invited both generally and in relation to specific issues.

19 responses were received on the Homelessness Strategy and these influenced the document that was adopted by Cabinet on 9th July 2003. A total of 21 responses were received on the Allocations Policy and the redrafted document was adopted by Cabinet on 18th February 2004.

In 2005/06 we jointly convened public consultation events with East Sussex County Council on the housing element in the draft South East Plan. We held a seminar including affordable housing for Town and Parish Councils in the District and another seminar for Housing Associations on the theme of working together to prevent homelessness.

Summary of Achievements in 2003/05

A) Addressing Homelessness, Housing Needs & Housing Advice Services

- Increased the supply of superior alternatives to temporary bed and breakfast accommodation for priority homeless people and expanded the Private Sector Leasing Scheme from 10 dwellings to 43 by Autumn 2005.
- Consulted customers, RSLs and other stakeholders and introduced a new housing allocations scheme in 2004. The scheme was fine-tuned in 2005 in the light of one year's experience.
- Developed and promoted the Housing Advice Service, introduced advice surgeries in dispersed locations and established an advice line in 2004.
- Reviewed and improved the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme in 2005 with funding secured.
- Achieved and maintained since March 2004 the statutory target of ensuring that no homeless household with dependent children or a pregnant woman remains in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than 6 weeks.
- Published our Homelessness Strategy in July 2003.
- Obtained agreement in 2005 from RSLs in the District to develop more effective co-operation in tackling homelessness and other acute housing needs.
- Commissioned a mediation service from Relate in 2005 to help prevent homelessness.
- Reduced by over 50% the number of households for whom a full homelessness duty was accepted in 2004/05. Between April/June 2005 187 households had their actual or potential homelessness prevented by the Council's housing advice services.
- Completed a District-wide housing needs survey in 2003 and a sub-regional housing needs survey in 2005, the latter including a survey sample of 4,400 households in the Lewes District and interviews with samples of older people, younger people, those with learning disabilities and black and minority ethnic communities. Interviews with a sample of gypsies and travellers have been commissioned with completion for September 2005.

B) Maximising the Provision of Affordable Housing: Enabling & Development

- Enabled the completion of 63 new affordable homes in 2003/05.
- Enabled the provision of a refuge in the District for people experiencing domestic violence
- Brought 66 empty homes back into occupation in 2003/05
- Achieved an average time of 19 days to relet vacant Council homes

C) Private Sector

- Arranged two private housing sector focus groups in 2004 to consult and obtain feedback.
- Completed a private sector stock condition survey in 2004.

- Adopted a new Private Sector Renewal Strategy in 2004.
- Exceeded our target of the proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a result of the Council's intervention in 2004/05.
- Introduced a new financial assistance policy to our Private Sector Renewal Strategy and improved the take-up and administration of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) in 2004/05. We have fast-tracked the processing of DFGs to reduce the time customers wait between initial contact and completion of works.
- Joint working with Wealden District Council and Anchor Staying Put led to an improved range of services, including extension of the Handyperson Scheme.
- Extended our energy efficiency grant scheme to include renewable sources like solar power.
- Preparing joint working with other local authorities in the Sussex sub-region on the introduction of a common approach to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- Launched our Home Owners Maintenance & Environmental Service which is free at the point of service delivery. It comprises a visiting check on people's homes and professional advice and assistance on their options for sustainable improvement in conditions. It also includes a comprehensive options pack of information and other sources of help.

D) The Council as Landlord

- Achieved our targets in 2004/05 for average relet times for empty homes in the Council-owned stock, the proportion of rent collected, the percentage of urgent repairs completed within government time limits and the percentage of repair completions described as good or satisfactory by tenants.
- The Council's Housing Services Department was awarded Charter Mark for excellence in customer services in 2004.
- The Housing Stock Options Appraisal was completed in 2005 with 91% of tenants choosing to remain with the Council as landlord.
- Initiated Introductory Tenancies for all new tenants in 2004/05.
- Improved 253 Council homes by fitting double glazing and 286 homes by installing new kitchens in 2004/05.
- Provided 151 homes with digital TV points in readiness for the national switch to digital reception.
- Provided disability access and WC facilities to the Housing Services reception area in 2005.
- Achieved an average energy efficiency (SAP) rating of 64 in Council-owned homes.
- Supported a review of the Crime Reduction Partnership to ensure its responsiveness to the needs of local communities.

Across the social housing sector (including RSL homes in the District) and the private rented sector, we achieved an average time of 33.3 days for processing new Housing & Council Tax Benefit claims in 2004/05. This exceeded not only our local target but also the national target of 36 days.

Government is expecting Councils to achieve a 30% improvement in energy efficiency in all homes in the district by 2011. We are currently on target to exceed this.

10

Key Performance Information

Performance Indicator	Outcome 2003/04	Outcome 2004/05	Target
New affordable homes completed	61	2	300 by 2010
Private sector empty homes returned to occupation or demolished as a direct result of Council action (BV64)	34	31	150 by 2010
Average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation for households with dependent children or a pregnant woman (BV183a)	8 weeks	5.35 weeks	3.5 weeks in 2005/06 reducing to 1 week by 2010
Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation	68 on 31/12/2004	87 on 30/9/2005	Indicatively to reduce by 50% by 2010
Proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished by the Council's action (BV62)	1.72%	5.2%	5% in 2006/07
Number of unfit private sector dwellings inspected	62	59	Indicatively, 90 per annum for the next 3 years but there will be an impact from the new Housing Health & Safety Rating System
Total value of Disabled Facilities Grants awarded	£331,994	£336,664 (52 grants)	£403,000 in 2006/07 (60 proposed grants)
Total value of Minor Repairs Grants awarded	£41,731	£56,532 (41 grants)	Indicative £40,000 per annum for 3 years
Average relet times for Council-owned homes (BV212)	20 days	19 days	18 days to 2008
Proportion of rent collected (BV66a)	98.4%	98.5%	98.5% to 2008

The proportion of Council homes that are non-decent (BV184a)	17.2%	14.2%	1% by 2007/08
Percentage of urgent repairs completed within government time limits	96.5%	98%	98% to 2007/08
Percentage of all repairs requested by tenants completed within local time limits	97.3%	97.8%	98% to 2007/08
Planned repairs compared to responsive maintenance (BV 211a)	Not introduced	73%	80% by 2007/08
Percentage of repairs noted as good or satisfactory by tenants	97.3%	98%	98% to 2007/08

Monitoring & Review 2006/09

In Appendix 1 we have published a 53 point action plan across the Council's 8 strategic housing objectives. The actions summarise the resources required, delivery milestones, performance outcomes and responsible officers. These will be monitored in terms of their performance and reviewed in the light of experience throughout the period to 2009/10. There are 9 facets to the process of monitoring and review:

- The **Housing Strategy Working Group** of officers meets quarterly and includes managers from all the disciplines that contribute to the strategy within the Council's service. Meetings include consideration of progress against action plans, performance indicators and capital programmes.
- Monitoring of the affordable housing programme is undertaken regularly and individually with **Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners and developers**. This includes representation from Planning Services and other stakeholders as necessary. Collective meetings with RSLs also occur on specific issues, most recently (October 2005) on the theme of working together to reduce homelessness.
- The Council's **Cabinet** receives quarterly monitoring reports of key performance indicators and its **Scrutiny Committee** has the opportunity to examine key areas of housing plans, policy and performance (currently in December 2005 examining Council owned assets with intent to identify land suitable for disposal for affordable housing).
- Annual **Housing Strategy Stakeholders Forums** are convened on an all-inclusive basis for representatives of the statutory, voluntary and business sectors. These will review progress to date, including a gap analyses if necessary, and invite discussion of the next steps within and beyond the strategic period to 2009/10. All "backbench" members of the Council are included in the invitation.
- See Item 1.3 of the Housing Strategy Action Plan in Appendix 1. The meetings with **Town and Parish Councils** (to which District Councillors from relevant wards will be invited) will assist the process of monitoring and review by examining the needs, outcomes and benefits of developing affordable homes for their communities.
- Service user consultation and involvement is promoted by separate newsletters, one published for Council tenants and the other for prospective tenants on our Housing Register. The strong partnership between the Council and its tenants is summarised on page 28 of this document and includes quarterly **Housing Consultative Panels** as well as joint working groups and tenant representation at Cabinet. More information is contained within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. The next edition of our newsletter for people who are not current Council tenants will invite them to express their evidential support for, and comment on, the target for developing new affordable homes through the capital funding process and the **Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework**. This is consistent with Item 1.4 in the action plan of Appendix 1. The same edition will give them the opportunity to influence the forthcoming review of service standards in the Housing Needs & Strategy Division as itemised in 8.7 of the action plan.

- More routinely, user satisfaction is also monitored by **exit questionnaires** issued at the point of rehousing. These have made a difference, for example we ceased to use a particular bed and breakfast establishment in 2004 following homelessness user comments and item 3.11 in our action plan about letters was adopted following customer feedback.
- Two **focus groups** of service users were helpful in developing the Homelessness Strategy that Cabinet adopted in 2003. Opportunities for participating in further groups will be offered via the newsletter, "Move Ahead."
- The **Local Strategic Partnership** will receive twice yearly monitoring reports on progress towards meeting strategic housing target

HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Council's Housing Strategy is underpinned by the following objectives. The Action Plan shows the Strategic Objective linked to each task. They are linked to our source documents, including the Council's Community Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, Local Plan, Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the 5-Year Supporting People Strategy for East Sussex.

1. To maximise the provision of safe, energy-efficient and affordable housing.
2. To improve the condition of the housing stock
3. To reduce homelessness
4. To support the needs of vulnerable people
5. To encourage and maintain the development of sustainable communities
6. To foster tenant empowerment and partnership with all stakeholders
7. To ensure good and continually improving environmental performance in the Council's housing and related activities
8. To promote equality and to provide good quality housing services that meet the chosen needs of the community.

Key

PDO=Housing Policy & Development Officer
PHNO=Principal Housing Needs Officer
HstM= Housing Strategy Manager
HHS= Head of Housing Services

EPO=Empty Property Officer
HoEH= Head of Environment & Health
DoFCS=Director of Finance & Community Services
SNHO=Special Needs Housing officer

Item	Key Objective 1: maximising safe, energy efficient and affordable housing	Priority High Medium Low	Resources Required	Milestones for Delivery	Performance outcome	Officer Responsible
1.1	Review all Council-owned land assets & determine opportunities for disposal to Housing Associations for affordable homes.	H	Within existing resources	Beginning September 2005	Council-owned sites identified for housing by 2006/07	Chief Executive HStM PDO
1.2	Work with our RSL partners and private developers to complete affordable housing without public subsidy	M	Within existing resources	Ongoing to 2009 Set target by Sept 2006	Increase number delivered by S106 agreements without public subsidy	PDO
1.3	Strengthen relationships with Town and Parish Councils by meeting with them individually to discuss the need for and benefits of affordable housing.	M	Within existing resources.	Ongoing through 2005/09.	Meet all 23 Town and Parish Councils by April 2009	HStM PDO
1.4	Secure sites, capital funding and planning permission for programme of new affordable homes consistent with the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework	H	Funding from developers, Housing Corporation, RSLs & Council's capital programme	Ongoing through 2005/10	300 affordable homes completed by 2010	PDO HstM
1.5	Return empty homes to occupation and review Empty Homes Strategy	H	Within existing resources	Review Empty Homes Strategy by January 2007.	Best Value Performance Indicator 64	HStM PDO PHNO
1.6	Encourage a reduction in under-occupation of Council & RSL homes and set a target for transfers to reduce under-occupation	M	Within existing resources	Ongoing through 2005/09. Set annual target by July 2006.	Number of transfers to reduce under-occupation	HHS PHNO

Item	Key Objective 2: Improving the housing stock	Priority HML	Resources Required	Milestones for Delivery	Performance Measures	Officer Responsible
2.1	Continue to prioritise action to tackle unfitness in the private sector in light of new Housing Health & Safety Rating System	H	To be determined	Ongoing through 2005/09	New housing health & safety rating standards	HoEH
2.2	Promote Private Sector Renewal Strategy, including new Houses in Multiple Occupation licensing system.	H	To be determined	Ongoing through 2005/09	Action Plan containing 28 targets	HoEH
2.3	To meet the Decent Homes Standard In the Council-owned stock	H	In Housing Services Dept Business Plan	By 2007	100% compliance by 2007	HHS
2.4	Promote planned maintenance of the Council-owned stock	H	£22,328,000	7-year programme from 2004/05	75%-80% ratio of planned maintenance to response repairs by 2007/08	HHS
Item	Key Objective 3: To reduce Homelessness	Priority HML	Resources Required	Milestones for Delivery	Performance outcome	Officer Responsible
3.1	Review Homelessness Strategy 2003/08	H	Within existing resources	By July 2006	Action Plan to be revised & improved -	HStM/PDO/ PHNO
3.2	Introduce mediation services	M	£5000 indicatively per annum	Begin by January 2006	To be determined after pilot scheme	PHNO/PDO
3.3	Investigate Sanctuary Project to support people experiencing domestic violence	M	To be determined	By June 2006	The number of people supported	PHNO/PDO
3.4	Develop a Housing Options pack for service users	M	Within existing resources	By Sept 2006	To enable users to make informed choices	PHNO
3.5	Begin a pilot project to promote good tenancy relations in the private sector	M	Within existing resources	By July 2006	Prevention of homelessness	HStM/PDO/ PHNO
3.6	Review Private Sector Leasing Scheme	M	Within existing resources	By March 2007	Determine optimum number	HStM/PDO/PHNO
3.7	Develop supported housing scheme for	M	From General Fund	By Dec 2006	Scheme of 4 units to be	HStM/PDO/

	homeless 16/17 year-olds & care leavers		housing capital programme		fully taken up	PHNO
3.8	To develop agreement with RSLs to improve co-operation in tackling homelessness and other acute needs	M	Within existing resources	By September 2006	Prevention of RSL evictions and promotion of lettings	PHNO/PDO
3.9	Review consideration of rough sleeping	M	To be determined	By July 2006	Decide whether to undertake a count in 2006/07	HStM
3.10	Review homelessness decision letters to ensure that they are easily understood by customers.	M	Within existing resources	By September 2006	Measured by a market test of customers	PDO/PHNO
Item	Key Objective 4: To support vulnerable people	Priority HML	Resources Required	Milestones for Delivery	Performance outcome	Officer Responsible
4.1	To represent the Council on the Supporting People Commissioning Body & ensure that the contract meets service users and providers needs	H	Within existing resources	Ongoing to 2009	That the contract meets the needs of service users	HStM
4.2	See 3.1 and 3.7 above					
4.3	To ensure funding and delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants	H	£403,000 in 2006/07 and annually	Ongoing to 2009	60 DFGs in 2006/07 and annually	HoEH
4.4	To ensure funding and delivery of Minor Repairs Grants	M	Target of £40,000 per annum to 2008	Ongoing to 2009	The most vulnerable residents whose homes are in urgent need of repair (approx 40 grants per annum)	HoEH
4.5	Develop an older persons strategy to address current and anticipated needs, including care and support	H	To be determined but will include contributions from partner agencies	To begin by March 2006	To be determined by March 2008	HStM/PDO/HH
4.6	Investigate the provision of a disability housing register	M	Within existing resources	Begin by December 2006	Improve lettings matching	PDO/PHNO/SNHO
4.7	Investigate higher levels of support for	M	To be determined	Begin by January	Reduce repeat	PDO/PHNO

	people with complex needs.			2007	homelessness	
Item	Key Objective 5: Encouraging Sustainable Communities	Priority HML	Resources Required	Milestones for Delivery	Performance outcome	Officer Responsible
5.1	To strengthen participation of the Housing Needs & Strategy Division in the Crime Reduction Partnership	M	Within existing resources	By September 2006	To support a reduction in crime & disorder	HStM/PHNO
5.2	Targeting energy efficiency grants at older or vulnerable people in order to reduce fuel poverty	H	Within existing resources.	Ongoing to 2009	Increasing SAP ratings to 70	HoEH
5.3	Promoting affordable housing developments that support social inclusion and economic regeneration of our communities	M	From the Housing Corporation's Affordable Housing Programme	Ongoing to 2009	Housing completions to Ecohomes Very Good standard	HStM/PDO
5.4	Continue to support affordable housing initiatives for key workers	M	Through Key Worker Homebuy or similar initiatives	Ongoing to 2009	Number of transactions completed	PDO
5.5	Consider feasibility of an anti-poverty strategy with selected partners		To be determined	Determined by January 2007	To be agreed with partners	HStM/PDO/PHNO
Item	Key Objective 6: Foster Tenant Empowerment & Partnerships with Stakeholders	Priority HML	Resources Required	Milestones for Delivery	Performance outcome	Officer Responsible
6.1	The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan identifies 6 items in its Action Plan for tenant empowerment	M/H	Approximately £7000	2005/07	See Priority 3 of HRA Business Plan	Housing Services Dept Management Team
6.2	Include consideration of affordable housing and the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) into the revised Community Strategy and the Local Strategic Partnership	H	Within existing resources	For inclusion in Community Strategy by January 2006 & the Core Strategy of the LDF by 2007	To be determined in 2006/07	HStM/PDO

6.3	To investigate sub-regional commissioning of affordable housing .	M	To be determined	Investigate by June 2006	To be agreed County-wide	HStM/PDO
6.4	Revisit “in principle” agreement for Landlords Accreditation Scheme with Eastbourne & Wealden Councils and Southern Private Landlords Association	M	Within existing resources	Agreement to be reached by September 2006	Accreditation to be linked to good landlord management services	PDO/HoEH
6.5	Continue supporting public protection through representation at Multi Agency Public Protection Panel & Risk Assessment & Management Group with Police, Probation & other statutory agencies in East Sussex	M	Within existing resources	Ongoing to 2009	Minimising risk to public by managing those at risk of offending	PDO/PHNO
6.6	Continue supporting the County-wide Homelessness Strategy with the County Council and the other District & Borough Councils	M	Within existing resources	County-wide strategy developed in 2004 and ongoing to 2009.	Development of joint protocols for inter-agency and partnership working	PDO/PHNO
6.7	Continue links to the Supporting People Commissioning Body to reinforce the County-wide Accessible Housing Group, Housing Strategic Group for Learning Disability, Mental Health Liaison and Older Persons.	M	Within existing resources	Ongoing to 2009	To be determined	HStM/PDO
Item	Key Objective 7: To improve environmental performance	Priority HML	Resources Required	Milestones for Delivery	Performance outcome	Officer Responsible
7.1	Work with the Housing Corporation, RSLs and developers to procure affordable homes that achieve an Ecohomes rating of “very good.”	H	From the Affordable Housing Programme	By 2006/07 and 2008/09	Ecohomes Standard	HStM/PDO & Planning Services
7.2	Set up a private sector landlords forum to encourage environmental good practice	M	Within existing resources	December 2006	To be determined	HStM/PDO

7.3	Investigate energy & water consumption levels in temporary accommodation for homeless persons	M	Within existing resources	By September 2006	Reduce waste and fuel poverty	PHNO
7.4	Complete a sustainability appraisal of Housing and Homelessness Strategies	M	Within existing resources	By March 2006	To be determined	HStM/PDO
7.5	Reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Housing Revenue Account homes to increase energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty	M	£1022,000 identified in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	By 2007	Target SAP rating of 66 by 2007 but 70 is long-term aim	Housing Services Management team
7.6	Support the Council in retaining EMAS accreditation	H	£1K	Ongoing to 2009	Target SAP ratings as above	All managers
Item	Key Objective 8: To promote equality and provide services that meet the chosen needs of the community	Priority HML	Resources Required	Milestones for Delivery	Performance outcome	Officer Responsible
8.1	To assist the Council in achieving the Equality Standard for Local Government	H	Within existing resources	Initially by March 2006 and then by March 2008	Level 2 by March 2006: Level 3 by March 2008	All
8.2	Ensure that the Council's access & equalities policies are integrated into Housing Revenue Account service delivery and establish a monitoring and reporting system in accordance with corporate & government requirements	H	£1K	By December 2005	Monthly reporting	Housing Services Management Team
8.3	In relation to the Housing Revenue Account stock, comply with the ODPM Code of Practice for Social Landlords on tackling racial harassment	H	Within existing resources	By July 2005	As identified in guidance	Housing Services Management Team
8.4	Jointly with Sompriti, a race equality	H	Within existing	Between December	To be determined with	HStM/PDO/

	group, review the accessibility of all housing services to members of black & Minority Ethnic communities		resources	2005 and July 2006	Sompriti	PHNO & Housing Projects Officer
8.5	To complete a survey of Gypsies & Travellers in the District & County and include their needs in Housing & Homelessness Strategies and in the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework (LDF).	H	£2500 from Lewes District Council. The total cost to be shared among 6 commissioning authorities	Interviews completed y September 2005. Report due by December 2005. Insert in Housing Strategy by February 2006 & amend Homelessness Strategy by June 2006. Include in LDF in 2006/07	Outcomes to be included in Housing & Homelessness strategies & planning policy	HStM/PDO
8.6	To consult all stakeholders, including minority groups, on Choice Based Lettings Systems (CBL). Subject to Council approval, to consider adoption of a sub-regional CBL model	H	Within existing resources initially but there are substantial later resource implications for information and communications technology	To begin by March 2006. Plan introduction of CBL by 2009/2010	To be determined but must include easy access for vulnerable people on or before 2010	HStM/PDO/PH NO
8.7	To review published service standards with users and stakeholders.	H	Within existing resources	To publish new customer leaflet by June 2006	Comprehensive service standards clearly defined	HStM/PDO/PH NO

Glossary of Terms

Appendix 2

Affordable housing	That which is provided, with subsidy, for people who are unable to resolve their housing requirements in the general housing market because of the relationship between local housing costs and incomes.
B & B	Privately owned bed and breakfast accommodation used as short-term emergency accommodation for homeless households
Best Value (BV)	The process of promoting the continuous improvement of public services through comprehensive service reviews and inspection.
Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups	Groups of people within local communities whose race is either black, or another race that is in a minority.
Brownfield sites	Development sites on land that has been previously developed.
Capital receipt	Money paid to the Council for the sale of a capital asset.
Choice Based Lettings System (CBL)	A new concept of letting affordable housing. It is based upon people in housing need taking the initiative in asking for the allocation of vacant homes that have been advertised by Local Authority or Housing Association landlords. This contrasts with the traditional lettings model in which no advertising was done and where the lettings process was much less transparent.
Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)	An inspection and assessment process undertaken by the Audit Commission which examines how effectively local authorities are managed and their services delivered.
Concealed Households	Households who want their own home but cannot afford one and are forced to live within a host household. Concealed households exist among all age groups but most are young.
Decent Homes Standard	The standard introduced by government setting out the minimum requirements for housing in terms of fitness, freedom from disrepair, thermal comfort and reasonably modern fixtures and fittings
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	A monetary grant for building works that enable a disabled person live independently in his/her home. It is means tested to the extent that some recipients must make a financial contribution. DFGs are mandatory and are funded 60% from central government and 40% from Lewes District Council.
Eco-Management & Audit Scheme (EMAS)	A standard for monitoring the environmental impact of our activities. The Council has achieved and maintained its registration and accreditation under the scheme.
Cabinet	The central policy and decision making group of elected members of the Council
Extra-Care Housing	Specialised housing for frail, usually (but not exclusively) elderly people which provides care and support in excess of that provided in conventional sheltered housing
English Partnerships	A government agency that co-ordinates development land and regeneration opportunities in the regions of England

Floating support	Practical support that is not restricted to a specific address but is attached to people who need visiting support to maintain their independence.
Fuel Poverty	Where households are forced to spend a disproportionately large amount of their income to achieve an acceptable level of warmth at home.
Homebuy	A scheme that assists people who cannot afford conventional home ownership by providing an equity loan equivalent to a percentage share of the market value of the property. This is returnable when the purchaser eventually sells the property and can be recycled to help other people access the scheme.
Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA)	Legislation that tasks Local Authorities with promoting the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from domestic fuel use.
Homelessness Acceptances	The number of applications from people who are homeless or inescapably threatened with homelessness and for whom the Council has accepted a full housing duty under the Housing Act, 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act, 2002. These do not include people whose homelessness was prevented by the Council's intervention.
Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	Properties that are occupied by people who do not form a single household. More stringent standards are applied to rented HMOs than to homes occupied by one household and the Housing Act, 2004, is introducing a new licensing system.
Housing Association	See Registered Social Landlord
Housing Corporation	The government agency that registers, regulates and provides funding for Registered Social Landlords
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	The Council's group of financial accounts that describe the income streams and expenditure arising from the management and maintenance of the Council-owned housing stock
Housing Register	The Council's register of households who have applied for affordable housing provided by the Council or Housing Associations. Previously known as the Housing Waiting List.
Key Worker	Although difficult to define, Key Workers are commonly referred to as people providing essential services (usually in the public sector) where severe recruitment and retention difficulties exist due to the relationship between local housing costs and incomes.
Key Worker Homebuy	See Homebuy. The variant of Homebuy that is targeted at Key Workers.
LDC	Lewes District Council
Local Development Framework (LDF)	The LDF replaces the previous local planning system and sets out the Council's spatial vision of land use for the whole District, including that for affordable housing.
Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	A network of 5 inter-agency area partnerships grouped together for developing a multi-agency community strategy for the District.

MTFS	Medium Term Financial Strategy. Explains our approach to financial management through to 2008/09 and defines the constraints within which we determine spending priorities.
National Affordable Housing Programme	The programmed investment in new affordable homes that is set and allocated to the regions by Government Ministers. The current programme is for 2006/08. At regional level it is overseen by the South East Regional Housing Board and distributed by the Housing Corporation in the form of Social Housing Grant to Housing Associations, after consultation with local Housing Authorities.
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)	The government department with over-arching national responsibility for housing and communities, including affordable housing.
Primary Care Trust (PCT)	A National Health Service Trust which provides primary and community health services and commissions secondary care through hospitals
Regional Housing Board (RHB)	Created in 2003 the South East Regional Housing Board oversees the development of affordable housing for the region from programmes funded via the Housing Corporation. It published the regional housing strategy to 2009
Registered Social Landlord	A not-for-profit Housing Association that is registered with and regulated by the Housing Corporation.
Regulatory Reform Order (RRO)	Government used its delegated powers to enact the RRO in 2002. It replaced previously prescriptive legislation on housing renovation grants and replaced it with wide-ranging powers to provide assistance with housing renewal.
Right to Buy	Introduced by the Housing Act, 1980 (later consolidated into the 1985 Act), it enables secure Council tenants to purchase their homes after a qualifying period and with variable discounts (subject to a maximum) depending on how long they have held a tenancy.
Rural Exception Sites	Affordable housing developments built in village locations as an exception to normal planning policy in order to meet a particular local rural housing need. Lettings are restricted to people in housing need who have a local connection with the village in which the homes are built. Local connections usually arise from residence, employment or family associations.
SAP Rating	This is a Standard Assessment Procedure – a measure of how energy efficient a property is on a rising scale of 1 to 120 based on annual energy costs for space and water heating.
Section 106 (S106) Agreements	Arise from Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act, 1990. It describes a housing site which is large enough for a developer to be required to contribute affordable housing within the development scheme. S106 allows local planning authorities to negotiate planning obligations as part of a development.
Shared Ownership	A form of low cost home ownership in which the purchaser buys a proportion of a home (usually between 33% and 50% and pays rent to a Registered Social Landlord for the

	remainder of the equity. The forerunner of Homebuy.
Sheltered Housing	Homes provided for elderly people in which their independence with security is promoted by support from a scheme manager and an emergency call system. Usually includes other on site social and community facilities for residents and their guests.
South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA)	A government funded agency which is responsible for promoting economic and social development in South East England
South East England Regional Assembly	The regional representative body for the South East that oversees the work of SEEDA and other regional development agencies
Social Exclusion	Exists where individuals or groups in the community do not have the means to participate in social, economic or cultural development and frequently endure poor housing and health conditions.
Social Inclusion	A process which removes the barriers that reinforce social exclusion
Social Housing	Usually refers to affordable rented housing provided by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Rent levels are regulated by government or (in the case of RSLs) by the Housing Corporation. Social Housing is allocated on the basis of need.
Social Housing Grant (SHG)	Capital funding provided to RSLs by the Housing Corporation and (to a lesser extent) Local Housing Authorities for the development or acquisition of affordable housing.
Stakeholders	Individuals and groups with an interest in housing who usually comprise tenants, prospective tenants, leaseholders, elected Councillors and staff. Also include Registered Social Landlords, contractors, voluntary agencies, the business sector and neighbouring local authorities
Stock Options Appraisal	The process of examining the most appropriate future ownership and management of the Council-owned housing stock
Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	Found within the Local Plan adopted by the Council in 2003. One of the Council's planning policies that developers have to take into account, the SPG includes the target that 25% of all homes from newbuild and conversions should be affordable according to thresholds set for different settlements within the District.
Supported Housing	Housing in which residents (usually tenants) receive practical or emotional support services that enable vulnerable people to remain in their own home. Services aim to promote independence and prevent crises such as unplanned hospital admissions or homelessness. Examples of support services include the work of Sheltered Housing Scheme Managers (previously called Wardens) and Support Workers in schemes for people with mental health needs or learning disabilities.

Supporting People Programme	A government led initiative that went live in April 2003. It replaced previous diverse revenue funding streams for housing related support services with a single annual grant paid by the ODPM to administering authorities, who are County Councils and Unitary authorities. Administering authorities distribute the grant by letting contracts to providers of supported housing services.
Supporting People Team	The team of officers in East Sussex County Council responsible for managing the contracts and administering the grant for Supporting People Services in the County
Supporting People Commissioning Body	The inter-agency partnership board that oversees the commissioning of housing related support services funded from the Supporting People Grant. In East Sussex it is called the Strategic Forum and comprises representatives from 4 Primary Care Trusts, Sussex Probation, 5 District Councils and East Sussex County Council.
Unfit Property	A residential property is deemed unfit if it fails one or more of the fitness criteria defined in legislation. These are many and varied, including a source of clean water, heating and freedom from damp. A property is also unfit if it is structurally unsound. The Housing Act, 2004, has replaced the traditional fitness regime with a Housing Health & Safety Rating System
Void Property	The usual technical and accounting term for empty or vacant homes, most often used in connection with affordable rented housing.

Appendix 3

Contact Details

For more information on specific issues of housing strategy, policy, development or service delivery please contact the following:

Subject	Name	Designation	Telephone	email
Housing Strategy	Laurie Priebe	Housing Strategy Manager	01273 484019	laurie.priebe@lewes.gov.uk
Housing Policy & Development	Roger Moore	Housing Policy & Development Officer	01273 484016	roger.moore@lewes.gov.uk
Homelessness Strategy	Laurie Priebe	Housing Strategy Manager	01273 484019	laurie.priebe@lewes.gov.uk
Allocations Policy	Jo Jacks	Principal Housing Needs Officer	01273 484095	jo.jacks@lewes.gov.uk
Private Sector Renewal Strategy	Rebecca Grewcock	Principal Environmental Health Officer	01273 484353	rebecca.wynn@lewes.gov.uk
Local Plan & Local Development Framework	Sue Moffatt	Assistant Director of Planning (Policy & Projects)	01273 484436	sue.moffatt@lewes.gov.uk
Supplementary Planning Guidance	Sue Moffatt	Assistant Director of Planning (Policy & Projects)	01273 484436	sue.moffatt@lewes.gov.uk
Community Strategy	Owen Clifford	Community Services Manager	01273 484404	owen.clifford@lewes.gov.uk
Supporting People Strategy	Karen Sedgwick	Head of Supporting People	01273 482805	karen.sedgwick@eastsussex.gov.uk
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	Mike Keeping	Head of Housing Services	01273 484380	mike.keeping@lewes.gov.uk
Comprehensive Equality Policy	Jackie Gavigan	Equalities Co-ordinator	01273 484145	jackie.gavigan@lewes.gov.uk
Eco-Management & Audit Scheme	Ian Kedge	Environment & Health Manager	01273 484353	ian.kedge@lewes.gov.uk