

SOUTHEND ON SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT

2003-2006

FOREWORD

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council wants to ensure that there will always be good quality homes that local people can afford.

Housing is a major priority for the Council and we have a good record of enabling the provision of good quality, affordable homes. Achievements this year have been made in preparing for the Government's Decent Homes targets and the Supporting People programme, publishing our Homelessness Strategy and Review, maximising the award of housing assistance to owner-occupiers, private landlords and tenants, and much more.

The Council does not work in isolation and has a number of partners with whom we work to ensure that account is taken of the range, cost, size and location of housing required by our residents. Partly in recognition of the need to involve our partners, we have created a Housing Strategy Working Party to consider the way we respond to the challenges that we face in delivering the housing service. The Working Party includes tenant representatives.

We are currently facing many challenges. Our Housing Needs Study will inform the way in which we will continue to meet local housing needs. Our Homelessness Strategy has highlighted the importance of targeting resources on preventing homelessness occurring rather than crisis management of the consequences. Our Borough Local Plan Review will look even more closely at ways of providing new sites for affordable housing. The Government's Communities Plan sets out a long-term, action plan for delivering sustainable communities. The Government requires all stock-holding local authorities to undertake an Options' Appraisal of the way in which we deliver and manage our housing. Consultation will start shortly. All tenants and leaseholders will have opportunities to express their views on this during the course of the next year.

The Housing Strategy Statement 2003-2006 seeks to build upon our achievements and prepare us for the challenges facing us. It is a completely revised document that reflects the issues that local people face more closely than previous strategies. Its aims and priorities have been developed through independent studies of local issues and through listening to local communities and service providers.

I believe that this Housing Strategy will help shape the future of Housing within the Borough whilst remaining flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. It is an evolving strategy which should enable us and our partners to provide housing for the most vulnerable members of our community.

Councillor Mrs Gwen Horrigan
Executive Councillor for Housing

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INTRODUCTION

This Housing Strategy Statement provides an overarching housing policy guidance for Southend-on-Sea Borough Council. It sets out the Council's housing aims, priorities and targets for the next three years and places these within a wider strategic context.

The Housing Strategy outlines the main housing issues in the Borough and identifies realistic proposals for meeting the housing needs identified. The strategy describes the Council's landlord role with specific emphasis on Decent Homes and long-term maintenance. It presents the results of the recent Housing Needs Study, particularly the need for affordable housing; the needs of homeless people; the care and support needs for households; and the need for private sector housing renewal and improvement. The Housing Strategy also considers the resources and options available for addressing these needs and provides a series of priorities for housing investment. The separate "Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2003-06" addresses the landlord role in more detail. A more extensive analysis of the Borough's current and likely future housing needs is contained within a separate document entitled "Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Housing Needs Report 2003".

The provision of decent and affordable housing for all Southend's residents is one of the central objectives of the Council and this Housing Strategy continues to reflect such importance. The strong corporate ethos and vision, which is based on objectives determined in consultation with local residents and partners, provides a strategic focus to delivering all aspects of the Housing Strategy. The work undertaken with partner agencies and organisations is based on contributing to the achievement of the Council's wider community objectives.

The Council has considerably strengthened its strategic housing focus. The early establishment of a Members' Housing Strategy Working Party allowed the Council to examine how best it could utilise the resources at its disposal. The later establishment of a new Department of Social Care, bringing together Housing and Social Services, provided a more integrated approach and links with Community Health Services. The restructuring of the Council's Housing Services into Housing Strategy, Housing Operations and Housing Resources led to a clearer separation of the Council's strategic role from its landlord responsibilities. Joint working with other Council services, neighbouring local authorities and partner organisations has sharpened the process.

The Housing Strategy is both comprehensive and inclusive but structured in a way that allows housing needs and priorities to be identified in isolation and how they link together. The Action Plans that were first used in the Housing Strategy Statement 2001-2004 and regularly referred to by partners and residents have been updated and monitored through appropriate performance indicators and outcome measures. They have ensured that the Strategy continues to be both a "robust" and "live" document.

This year, the Council has produced a separate, comprehensive "Housing Action Plan 2003-06". This provides more details of the housing priorities, and the links to corporate ambitions and service objectives. The Action Plan also shows progress and plans for the future by individual priorities. The Action Plan will become an increasingly important document against which progress can be demonstrated and plans laid.

The Housing Strategy reinforces the Council's belief that it should inform on housing needs, how these are prioritised and met, and how they are to be addressed. It is a three-year strategy that enables the Council and its partners to apply stability and longer-term thinking to their services. However, it needs to be recognised that the Options' Appraisal that the Council has to undertake may mean that the strategy will have to be reviewed next year. Nonetheless, the Housing Strategy remains a strategic collaboration of all the agencies that contribute towards and deliver the housing service.

DEVELOPING THE HOUSING STRATEGY

- CORPORATE, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS

The vision for the Council is: *“To be a first class Council and lead Southend to become a vibrant coastal town and prosperous regional centre.”*

This section of the Housing Strategy identifies the Housing Service’s strategic priorities, and sets them within the overall context of the Council’s vision and wider community objectives.

The Council recognises that national housing issues, most recently mainly articulated in the Communities Plan, provide the general direction for housing and that the Regional Housing Board and the Regional Housing Strategy are significant factors in determining the future resources for the Region. To reflect this context, this section addresses the way in which Southend-on-Sea will respond to them.

This section then demonstrates diagrammatically the many links that the housing strategy has with other key partners and strategies. This is done because there are so many to mention that a significant amount of description in this section of the report would detract from the general thrust. A summary of these, however, is provided in **Appendices 1 and 2**. The new Community Plan, for example, launched by **Southend Together**, the Local Strategic Partnership, sets out the linkages between the Council and other key partners in driving forward regeneration, growth and prosperity in the borough.

The last part of this section of the strategy concentrates on some of the ways in which the Council works with its partners and provides some practical examples of the benefits of these arrangements.

HOUSING PRIORITIES WITHIN THE COUNCIL STRUCTURE

The Council’s key housing strategic priorities take account of the Council’s strategic priorities, important national and regional policies, the issues of greatest concern to residents, the outcome of housing needs’ and stock condition surveys and the Council’s limited financial resources. They include the following:

- Developing the Council’s housing strategic role following its separation from the landlord role
- Maximising the resources at the Council’s disposal for new affordable housing, the Council’s own stock and private sector housing
- Achieving the Decent Homes targets and longer-term improvement plans for the Council’s housing
- Embracing the Egan Principles through the promotion of long term agreements between the Council and its contractors in housing construction and maintenance
- Promoting “choice” in housing services through a review of the housing allocation and lettings systems
- Addressing the needs of the homeless by developing strategies that are forward thinking, bring innovation to preventing homelessness and seek to achieve best practice
- Ensuring that vulnerable people living in the community receive the support that they require, through the Supporting People initiative, to remain in their own homes
- Ensuring that anti-social behaviour is tackled swiftly and effectively in recognition of the misery and disruption caused by both anti-social residents and non-residents
- Utilising the results of the Housing Option Appraisal Review in conjunction with the Business Planning process to regularly examine the options available for the future management of the Council’s housing stock
- Achieving the convergence of the Council’s rents with the target rents set out in the Government’s new rent reform policy
- Raising standards in private sector housing
- Promoting equality and diversity in meeting housing needs

The relative importance of these priorities is evident in the grouped themes as follows:

- Housing Strategic Priority One:** Provision of new affordable housing is a national, regional and local priority
- Housing Strategic Priority Two:** Improving the quality and making the best use existing housing (ie the Council's own stock and private sector housing) in meeting the Decent Homes standard
- Housing Strategic Priority Three:** Tackling homelessness is a national, regional and local priority
- Housing Strategic Priority Four:** Raising the quality of life through the Supporting People programme, promoting "choice", tackling anti-social behaviour, promoting equality and diversity, etc

The options available for addressing these priorities are outlined later in this Housing Strategy and where appropriate, included in the Housing Action Plan.

The Council's Housing Service is part of the Department of Social Care and the Department supports the Council's vision by:

"Providing high quality social care services to those in greatest need of support or care in a way which maximises personal independence, safety and self-respect; and seeking quality and choice in, and enhanced opportunities for access to, decent homes for all the people of Southend."

The Council overall has the following five key ambitions that flow from its vision mentioned at the start of this section:

- Ambition 1 - Regeneration:** To regenerate the Borough through investment and working with our partners to tackle deprivation and to create the conditions for economic growth
- Ambition 2 - Education:** To provide opportunities for learning for all
- Ambition 3 - Social Care:** To maintain and improve health and well-being and provide better life chances for vulnerable people
- Ambition 4 - Citizen Focused:** To put the citizen at the heart of what we do, including the provision of equal opportunities and the promotion of social inclusion
- Ambition 5 - Effective:** To build the capacity of the organisation and use effective performance management to continuously improve services

The Housing Service's priorities are set out in the Social Care Departmental Delivery Plan. These are then cascaded into Team and Individuals' Plans and the latter are linked to training plans to acquire the necessary skills and competencies. The links with the corporate objectives are also clearly demonstrated. To clarify these links, this year, the Council has produced a separate **Housing Action Plan**. This provides more details of the housing priorities, and the links to corporate ambitions and service objectives. The Action Plan also shows progress and plans for the future by individual priorities. The Action Plan will become an increasingly important document against which progress can be demonstrated and plans laid.

The Council's Housing Strategy should be read side by side with the separate **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2003-06** which addresses the Council's landlord role in more detail. The HRA Business Plan covers the medium and long-term objectives for improving the condition of the Council's housing stock and the services provided. The Plan's strategic priorities are:

Business Plan Strategic Priority One: Optimise the Council's housing stock to meet housing needs

Business Plan Strategic Priority Two: Improve the management and quality of the Council's housing stock

Business Plan Strategic Priority Three: Encourage tenant involvement in housing issues

These strategic priorities are consistent with the Council's Capital Strategy 2003/04 and Asset Management Plan 2003/04, which describe how the Council determines its priorities and approach to utilising capital investment for achieving its vision and ambitions. The Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan are both described in more detail in **Appendix 1**.

HOUSING PRIORITIES AS THEY ADDRESS THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL HOUSING PRIORITIES

The housing and corporate priorities previously mentioned recognise and are mainly developed within a wider national, regional and sub-regional context. Key influences on the strategy are summarised below the following introduction to the main statements on national and regional housing policy.

The Government's objective is to deliver improvements to housing conditions across all sectors in order to contribute to the creation of successful, thriving and inclusive communities that will stand the test of time and in which people want to live. The Government published "Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future", known as the Communities Plan, on 5th February 2003. The Plan sets out a long-term, action plan for delivering sustainable communities. This includes:

- The regeneration of deprived areas
- Increasing housing supply in growth areas
- Providing more affordable housing for low income households and key workers
- Addressing low demand and abandonment
- Bringing council homes up to a "Decent Homes" standard
- Introducing a regional approach to housing policy

The Regional Plan "Sustainable Communities for the East of England" reinforces these issues but places emphasis on increasing housing supply, providing more affordable housing for low income households and key workers and implementing Decent Homes standards.

In response to the last item on the Regional Plan, the East of England Housing Board has been created and has endorsed the Regional Housing Forum's Housing Strategy for 2003-2006. This sets out five Strategic Aims:

- To ensure everyone can live in a decent home at an affordable price
- To contribute effectively to social inclusion within sustainable communities
- To enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality
- To use housing investment to complement sustainable economic development
- To contribute to a sustainable environment

Each local authority is located in a sub-regional group and the Regional Housing Strategy provides overlying themes for investment and recognises the merits of each of the sub regional groupings.

Southend is within the Thames Gateway - South Essex Sub-Region that also includes Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford and Thurrock. In recognition of the Thames Gateway Growth Area, specifically mentioned in the Communities Plan and the Regional Housing Strategy, the local authorities involved are progressing action jointly to achieve delivery in this important area.

Particular examples of the Council's contribution to setting and identifying sub-regional and regional housing priorities include:

- Membership of the Thames Gateway - South Essex Sub-Regional Housing Group, Essex Housing Officers' Group, Essex Environmental Health Officers' Group and other county-wide forums
- Attendance at Regional Housing Forum meetings and other Government Department events
- As a Strategic Planning Authority, playing a key role in developing regional and sub-regional planning policies
- Participation in the Audit Commission / Housing Corporation tenant participation research project
- Sponsorship of various research projects (eg "Housing Market Demand in South Essex", "Facing the Facts - A Baseline Study of the Housing and Related Needs of the BME Community in Essex")
- Response to various consultation documents

In recommending to Ministers the allocation of the Single Housing Capital Pot resources for the next two years, the Regional Housing Board has followed the themes for investment and the sub-regional groupings. The investment themes and the sub regional housing strategy are outlined in **Appendix 2**.

The Council sees the national and regional policy issues as opportunities and challenges. The Housing Action Plan provides the details on all housing priorities and is a self-contained document but, in summary, some key issues are articulated here.

Strategic Role of Local Authorities

The Government believes that local authorities should develop a strong strategic housing role to ensure that landlord functions are considered against strategies for whole housing markets. The Council's restructuring of its Housing Services into Housing Strategy, Housing Resources and Housing Operations has equipped the service to address the corporate and wider priorities facing the Housing Strategy.

Decent Homes

The Government's target is to ensure that all social housing stock is at a "Decent Homes" standard by 2010 with reductions of one-third of all 2001 "non-decent" homes by April 2004 and 45% of all "non-decent" homes by 2006. The Council has established an action plan that sets out the necessary tasks and objectives that need to be accomplished in order to achieve the Decent Homes standard. The Council is also undertaking an Options' Appraisal of the funding for its housing service as required by the Communities Plan. The Council's current plans for expenditure and systems to deliver the management, repair and improvement of its housing stock are set out in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2003-06. The results suggest that on the basis of a reasonable set of assumptions, the Council will be able to meet the Decent Homes standard by year 7 (2009/10), but will be unable to maintain its housing stock at this standard for the remainder of the 30-year period.

Addressing the need for more affordable housing

The Government's proposals seek to tackle the housing shortage, especially in London and the wider South East, by working towards a better balance in the housing market in the longer term.

The implications for closer working between planning and housing services, other Council services and developers, landowners, housing associations, etc on all new developments are apparent. Definitions of affordable housing that distinguish between social housing for rent and "intermediate priced" housing will also require consideration, particularly in the light of the Housing Needs Study 2002. The results of this study will be applied to the preparation and updating of the Replacement Borough Local Plan, and the

Council's housing, community care and other relevant strategies and plans. A clear conclusion is the need to target housing provision on local needs, without which such provision would be likely to be taken up by further in-migration to the Borough.

Preventing Homelessness

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Council to carry out a Homelessness Review and formulate a Homelessness Strategy based on that review. The Council, working in conjunction with other lead agencies in the Borough, has prepared a strategy aimed at preventing homelessness and meeting the Government's requirement of having no families in bed and breakfast accommodation except in an emergency by April 2004. The Council is aware of the links between its activity in private sector housing and the potential impact upon homelessness.

Increasing "Choice" in Housing Services

The Council provides choice to applicants on the Homeseekers Register by asking them to select the area(s) within the Borough where they wish to be rehoused and allowing unlimited offers of accommodation. The Council is keen to promote additional "choice" by conducting an ongoing review of the housing allocations' and lettings' systems involving Council Members, tenants and officers and Registered Social Landlords. Discussions are also underway with local RSLs to establish a common allocations' process.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

The Council welcomes the Government's recognition of the importance of ensuring that social landlords tackle anti-social behaviour swiftly and effectively. The Council together with various RSLs play a major role within the Crime and Disorder Strategic Partnership whose development and implementation of a sustainable strategy for reducing crime and disorder has resulted in some considerable achievements within the Borough. The Council has implemented a Borough Patrol scheme within central Southend and the first Anti-Social Behaviour Order in Southend was granted in April 2002.

In response to the wishes of its tenants, the Council implemented an Introductory Tenancy regime from 1st April 2003.

In addition, a similar concern from tenants led to the introduction of a Tenancy Management Team from 1st September 2003 to work closely with the Southend Tenants' and Residents' Federation to ensure a partnership approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

Rent Restructuring and Convergence

In accordance with the Government's requirements, the Council successfully implemented a restructured rent system with effect from 1st April 2003. Restructured rents reflect a comparable rent for a comparable home. The Council is in line to achieve the convergence of its rents with the target rents set out in the Government's Rent Restructuring Policy and in accordance with the Government's recommendation, a service charge element has been introduced into the gross rent.

Raising Standards in Private Sector Housing

The Council has adopted a brand new policy of helping property owners in the private sector to improve, repair or adapt their homes under the Government's new Housing Assistance regime.

The policy makes available a wide range of housing assistance grants for a variety of works aimed at raising standards in the private sector housing stock across a range of tenures. Grant criteria have been set to enable private sector housing objectives to be progressed. For the first time, the Council has made potential loans available for applicants seeking adaptation works for a household member where a private contribution needs to be paid towards the cost of works.

The Council will be looking to exploit cross-boundary working through, for example, consideration of the establishment of a Home Improvement Agency and the integration of its housing advice services.

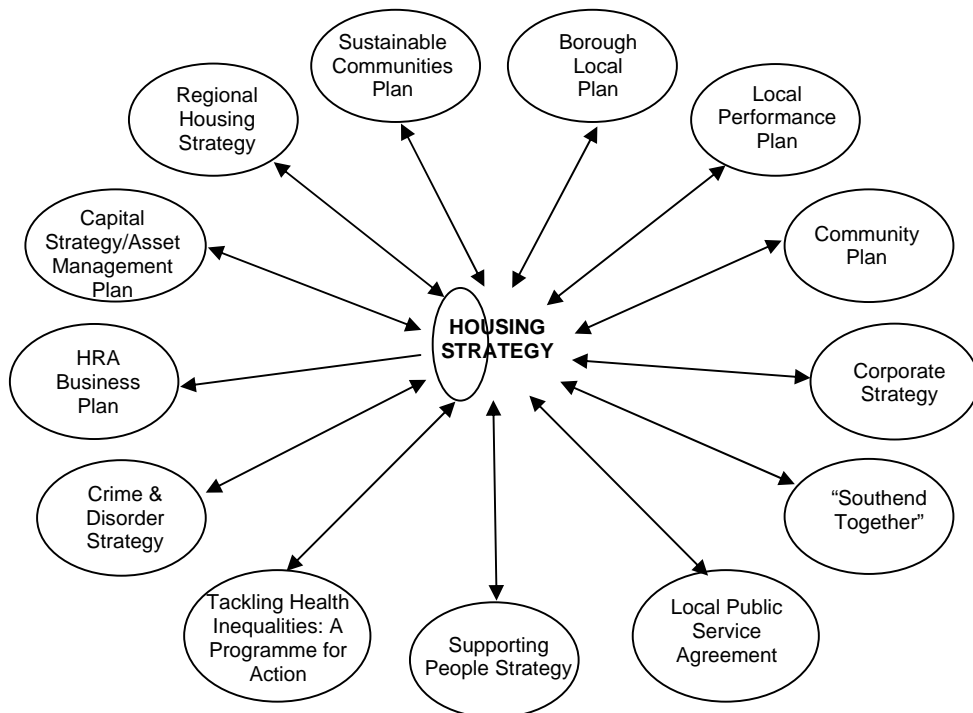
The new Housing Assistance Regime is now an integral part of the Council's Housing Strategy and Asset Management Plan as any grants / loans that improve private sector dwellings will increase the assets of the town by:

- Dealing with unfit dwellings
- Remedying disrepair leading to unfitness
- Improving health and safety standards in private sector accommodation
- Alleviating fuel poverty
- Promoting energy conservation measures
- Promoting sustainable energy use in residential properties
- Refurbishing long-term empty homes for re-occupation

In particular, repairs and improvements to the homes of low income / vulnerable homeowners / tenants, especially older people in private housing to give them the opportunity to live in a decent home will be a prime concern of the Council's strategy.

The following diagram illustrates the links between this Housing Strategy and those strategies and plans which influence the Housing Strategy and, in turn, are influenced by the Housing Strategy.

Strategies and plans influencing and influenced by the Housing Strategy



PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The previous parts of this section of the strategy have concentrated on how housing fits into the corporate agenda and relates to other relevant strategies and plans. This demonstrates that the Council recognises that housing problems do not exist in isolation and neither does the provision of housing services. Lasting solutions can only be developed to the problems that individuals and communities face through close partnership working and a mutual commitment to joint working. The following demonstrates how the Council continues to work with partners to deliver the housing service.

Working with Tenants and Leaseholders

The needs, wishes and aspirations of the Council's tenants are central to the development of the Housing Strategy. The Council has developed a comprehensive structure, in consultation with tenants, that provides opportunity and choice to all those who are interested in participating in the housing service. This has been prescribed within the Council's Tenant Participation Compact and is in line with the guidance in the then DTLR's "*National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts*" (1999).

A Boroughwide Tenant Participation Compact (TPC) was established in April 2000, and reviewed and reprinted in 2002. The compact sets out the means by which the Council and tenants work in partnership to increase tenant involvement in service planning, implementation and decision-making. The TPC was revised to ensure that:

- Local compacts 'fit' effectively with other local partnerships and initiatives to ensure continuity
- The development of a themed TPC concerned with tackling anti-social behaviour
- Black and minority ethnic groups have an appropriate say in the development of the compact
- Tenants participate at a strategic level and within the framework of Best Value

At a local level, the Council supports (financially and through officer support) all Tenants' and Residents' Associations in the Borough. An exciting local development over the last 18 months has been the introduction of a "Street or Block Voice" scheme. A tenant or leaseholder acts as a "sounding board" for an area and provides feedback where no formal structure, such as a tenants' or residents' association, exists.

Similarly, the Southend Tenants' and Residents' Federation has formed a working group called the Tower Block Action Group (T-BAG) to examine specific issues associated with high-rise flats (eg safety, security, and tenancy management).

At a boroughwide level, the Council supports the Southend Tenants' and Residents' Forum that provides a direct opportunity for tenants and residents to discuss boroughwide housing issues with Councillors and senior officers. The Council facilitates Focus Groups for each of the main functions of the Housing Service (eg repairs and maintenance) to aid consultation on wider strategic housing issues. Such groups have provided the forum for consultation on the Housing Strategy.

For the sixth consecutive year, the Council jointly hosted with the Southend Tenants' and Residents' Federation an Information Exchange event, which is an informal and sociable occasion intended to provide an alternative form of participation. Increasing in size every year, this year's "TIE-IN" event held at the Kursaal in Southend on 18th February 2003 attracted over 300 tenants and residents. Throughout the day, opinions were sought on various issues through the use of surveys or simply conversations with officers, which have proved to be invaluable feedback for improving the housing service.

In addition, the focus groups provide a pivotal role for tenants to be part of the decision making process of the housing service, that in turn feeds into service planning, departmental and corporate strategies.

For example, in particular, the development of the Tenant Co-ordinator's role has progressed over the last 12 months. Feedback obtained from exit surveys sent to the Co-ordinators upon the completion of the major works' schemes provides an assessment of the contractor's performance and assists in the management of future schemes. The Audit Commission has named the Council's development of Tenant Co-ordinators as an example of positive practice.

The Allocations' Focus Group has fully involved tenants in its review of the Council's existing Allocations' Policy. The introduction of greater "choice" in the letting of properties and the opportunities for tackling anti-social behaviour are both areas considered important by the focus group. Reference was made earlier in this Strategy to the Council's implementation of an Introductory Tenancy regime from 1st April 2003 and a Tenancy Management Team from 1st September 2003; both initiatives being in response to anti-social behaviour concerns raised by tenants.

In recognition of the tenants' wishes for increased tenant involvement in the delivery of the Council's Housing Services, the Council introduced an expanded Tenant Support Section headed by a Tenant Support Manager. A representative of the Southend Tenants' and Residents' Federation was involved in the appointments' process. The enhanced section has enabled the Council to offer a more widespread and intensive participation, advice and support service to tenants in the borough. Furthermore, locating the section within the Housing Strategy Service has contributed to the Council's tackling of cross-service issues such as regeneration, social exclusion and sustainable development. The formal inclusion of the Southend Tenants' and Residents' Federation in the Housing Strategy Working Party has considerably strengthened the strategic process.

Working with the Housing Corporation / Regional Housing Board and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)

Enabling

The Council is committed to working closely with RSLs to ensure that Southend's residents are provided with a choice of landlords and affordable homes.

In recent years, there has been a strengthening of the relationship between the Council and RSLs operating within the Borough in both delivering the Housing Strategy and meeting housing needs. One of the Council's corporate objectives is to work with, assist and encourage partner organisations to improve and increase the provision of high quality housing, particularly meeting the needs of those who are currently homeless, live in poor or over-crowded conditions and/or are vulnerable. The Council looks forward to supporting and working closely with RSLs that wish to share this key objective.

In December 1996, the RSLs operating in the Borough signed a Social Housing Agreement as a demonstration of their commitment to the principles of partnership with the Council. This agreement spawned nomination agreements and ultimately the Joint Commissioning arrangements. Joint Commissioning does not exclude those RSLs who are not presently preferred partners from working with the Council to develop schemes that offer value-for-money, attract private investment and meet identified housing needs.

Other examples of joint working that have influenced the Council's Housing Strategy include:

- Involvement of RSLs in the Allocations' Focus Group
- Development of a common allocation policy
- Joint working on tackling anti-social behaviour, including the use of anti-social behaviour contracts
- The development of Egan Principles at a local partnership level

The RSL Liaison Group allows further examples of joint working to be developed and the opportunity to share frank exchanges of view. For example, the Council's support of those RSLs wishing to introduce Starter Tenancies from 2003 was consistent with the Council's own approach to Introductory Tenancies and tackling anti-social behaviour.

Looking to the future, the Council recognises the growing importance of the Regional Housing Board and of sub-regional working. It recognises the importance of the investment themes and intends to proactively engage in the future development of these agendas.

Sustainable Development

The Government's main objectives for sustainable development include the need to concentrate development in urban areas and the concept of urban renaissance. To achieve these objectives, there is a need to create sustainable residential environments. The Council as the Local Planning Authority will promote the efficient use of land (including mixed-use development), place a greater emphasis on the quality and design of places for people, and ensure that development is linked to public transport.

Over the period of this Housing Strategy, there will be continuing emphasis on targeting future housing provision to meet local need within good quality housing developments on appropriate sites within the urban area, thereby also contributing to sustainability and urban renaissance. The Borough's limited land supply, the results of the Housing Needs Study 2002, and the strategic policies to restrain population growth and secure economic regeneration all emphasise the need to target new housing development in order to meet identified housing need. The Council's evolving planning policies will reinforce this approach.

Joint Commissioning

The Council works in partnership with the Housing Corporation on a joint commissioning approach. This has enabled a longer-term view to be taken on the use of the Social Housing Grant.

The Joint Commissioning approach involves the Council and the Housing Corporation working with selected Registered Social Landlords to deliver schemes that tackle issues such as meeting the identified need, environmental issues, employment / training, special needs housing, Housing Plus, mixed tenure, innovative techniques in design, and energy efficiency.

Recent changes in housing capital finance arrangements, including the cessation of Local Authority Social Housing Grant and the establishment of a Single Housing Investment Pot, coupled with the development of a new renaissance company to achieve the objectives of the Thames Gateway, provide a good opportunity to review this approach. The Council will conduct a review of the Joint Commissioning approach in partnership with the Housing Corporation, Registered Social Landlords and representatives of the new Thames Gateway renaissance company.

Working with Private Sector Housing

Private sector partners and stakeholders have had a major influence in developing the Council's Housing Strategy:

- The Private Sector Landlords' Forum has been established for a number of years and has proved very effective in developing and maintaining links with local landlords. The Forum is an opportunity to share information such as recent legislation and gain feedback from landlords.
- The Council is part of the Essex Environmental Health Officers' Group that discusses new housing legislation and the improvement of housing standards, for example, in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Council has taken the lead in producing two draft accommodation standards for students and pregnant women/single parent families.
- Closer working with Social Care, the Occupational Therapy team and the Private Housing Sector to promote operational working and benchmark performance standards for the next financial year.
- Actively working with Powergen, (the Government's agents for the implementation of the Warm Front grant scheme) in promoting energy conservation in residential accommodation in the Borough.
- Working with British Gas and TXU Energi in the promotion of grants and other spending on Energy Efficiency Commitments (EEC's) (eg Warm-a-Life scheme).

- Another partner is the Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEAC) in the general promotion of energy conservation measures and in the specific promotion of its own "Easy Energy" scheme.
- Closer ties have been established with RSLs to ensure the promotion of a Private Sector Strategy on energy efficiency, disabled adaptations and empty property management and to develop further operational links.

Working with Voluntary Agencies

Voluntary sector partners and stakeholders have also played a major part in developing the Council's Housing Strategy. The Council works with the Southend Association for Voluntary Services (SAVS), which is the overarching, support agency for the voluntary sector. The Council promotes Voluntary Sector services to the public to help provide solutions for housing issues. The Council also supports local voluntary organisations that contribute to housing and related services in the Borough. Financial grants have been awarded to groups including: Southend Women's Aid, Southend Vineyard, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Essex Racial Equality Council and HARP, the Housing Action Resource Project formed by the amalgamation of Southend's Centre for the Homeless and Southend Night Shelter for the Homeless.

Working with Contractors

The Council is keen to adopt alternative methods of procuring and managing its planned and cyclical programmes of work. The new form of contractual relationship, through Partnering and Framework Agreements, will require fundamental changes in both Client and Contractor attitudes and working practices. The process of change will require a great deal of training and development for both Client and Contractor if the final relationship is to achieve the gains anticipated. Accordingly, the Council will be working in consultation to explore partnering and framework working and to instruct and train staff.

An important part of the learning process, together with the demonstration of the value of entering into these forms of contractual agreement, will be to let similar work using both traditional contracting and partnering/framework arrangements so that comparisons may be drawn. The Council is considering letting a proportion of the five-year external decoration programme on a Framework basis. This will allow sufficient time for pre-contract procedures to be developed, as well as direct comparisons to be made of both the conventional and partnering/framework contracts. The lessons learnt will then be assessed for their suitability in relation to future contractual arrangements for the day-to-day maintenance and gas servicing contracts from 2006/07 onwards.

Arrangements for Stakeholder Involvement

The following are just some of the formal housing related and key voluntary sector arrangements currently in place and who have contributed to the production of this Housing Strategy:

- Housing / Homelessness Strategy Day, 5th February 2003, involving local voluntary and statutory agencies (eg Essex Police, Health Visitors, NACRO, Probation Service, South East Essex College, Southend District Mental Health Association, etc)
- Tenants Information Exchange Day, 18th February 2003, involving over 300 tenants and residents
- Southend Together Conference, 19th November 2003, involving local businesses, community and voluntary organisations
- Regular Focus Group, Tenant Association, Street / Block Voice, Federation and Forum meetings representing 14 tenant associations and 13 Street / Block Voices
- Tenant Newsletters seeking feedback on consultation issues (eg Introductory Tenancies, repairs)
- Housing Association Liaison Meetings (quarterly)
- Private Sector Landlords' Forum involving private landlords, estate agents, bed and breakfast providers, etc
- Best Value Reviews involving consultation, comparisons and challenges from community and voluntary groups, stakeholders, staff and other service providers

NEEDS ANALYSIS

- ASSESSING CURRENT AND LIKELY FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS

This section of the Housing Strategy is a summary of the housing needs which the Council has to consider addressing. More details are provided in the separate documents, **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Housing Needs Report 2003** and the **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2003-06**.

VIEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE

The needs, wishes and aspirations of the Borough's residents are central to the development of an effective Housing Strategy. Accordingly, the Council undertakes considerable consultation with its tenants and residents to ensure the services provided meet their needs and expectations.

The following priorities for tenants were identified through consultation:

<u>Estate Management Issues</u>	<u>Repairs & Maintenance</u>	<u>Elderly and/or Disabled</u>	<u>Leaseholders</u>
Improvements against anti-social behaviour	Double glazing	Improved bathing facilities (eg walk in showers)	Condition and cleanliness of communal areas
Improvements in the removal of abandoned cars	Improved kitchens and bathrooms New front and back doors	Help with interior decorations	Improvements against anti-social behaviour
Cleanliness of estates and communal areas	Safety issues (eg improved security, lighting, car parking)	Eye or split level cookers	Reporting repairs
Improved parking facilities	More storage space	General repair improvements	Value for money within the service charge Leaseholders' rights
Improved security	Improvements in the time taken to carry out repairs		

A variety of issues were identified in relation to specific groups:

- Tenants would like works carried out over and above those included in the Decent Homes standard
- The black and minority ethnic community's concerns include access to housing and advice services and overcrowding
- Vulnerable groups of residents such as the elderly, single parent families and single persons occupy the majority of unfit private sector dwellings but lack the means to carry out essential repairs and improvements as they are often on low incomes and/or in receipt of some type of benefit
- Elderly and disabled residents need adaptations to dwellings in order for the dwelling to meet their needs
- Among other issues, agencies working with the homeless would like to see more support for 16-18 years olds and mental health service users, and an increase in emergency, temporary, independent and supported housing
- The Private Sector Landlords' Forum believe the accommodation needs of young people require highlighting

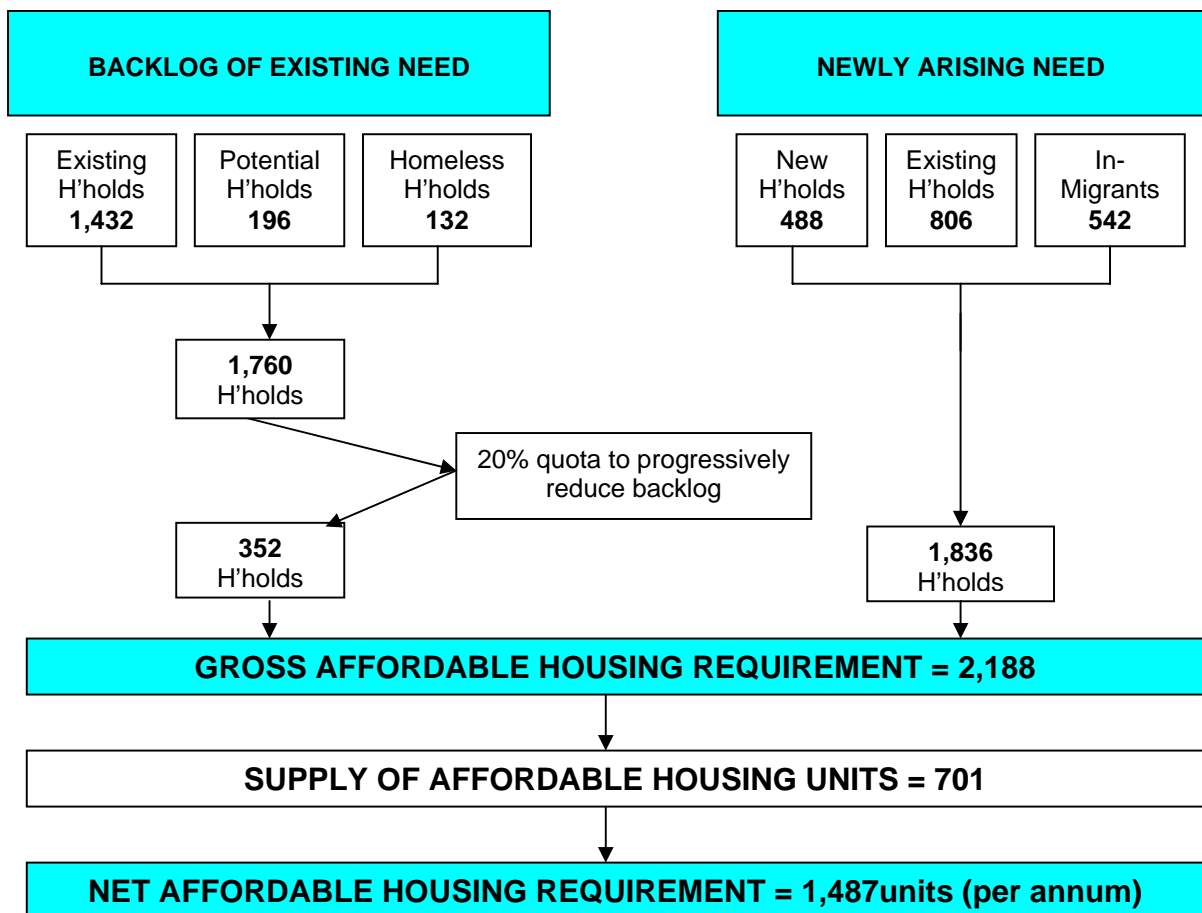
HOUSING NEEDS

In 2002, the Council commissioned Fordham Research Ltd to review housing need and affordability in the Borough until 2007. The study covered all areas and tenure groups and provides a robust indication of the scale and type of housing required to satisfy the identified needs.

The study analysed housing need through the following stages:

- Backlog of existing need
- Newly arising need
- Supply of affordable units
- Overall affordable housing requirement

The diagram below provides an estimate of the total requirement for additional affordable housing to meet housing need within the Borough, as indicated by the Final Report (May 2003):



The need for affordable housing has increased significantly since the 1996 Housing Needs Study, which estimated a requirement for an additional 600 affordable dwellings between 1996 and 2001 (compared with 7,435 affordable dwellings between 2002 and 2007). There also appears to be a higher demand for larger size accommodation than that predicted in the 1996 Study.

The consultants concluded that the Council needed to maximise the availability of affordable housing from all available sources (including newbuild, acquisitions, conversions, etc). On this basis, there is justification for a 50% affordable housing requirement on all eligible sites to help meet the level of housing need identified. This issue will be addressed when the Council's Local Borough Plan undergoes review in 2004.

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

Homelessness - The Statistical Evidence

The buoyancy of the local housing market continues to have a large impact upon the levels of homelessness within the Borough with movement in house sales reducing the availability of private sector accommodation. With the exception of 1998/99 and 2001/02 (where figures were similar to the previous year), Southend has experienced a year-on-year increase in homeless applicants since 1997. The second quarter of 2003/04 has seen an 82% increase in homeless applicants as a whole compared to the same quarter last year.

The statutory duties placed on Local Authorities, most recently by the Homelessness Act 2002, have led to a "silted up" of suitable accommodation within the borough and an increase in the number of single people presenting themselves as homeless, many of whom have mental health issues or are dual diagnosis with drug and/or alcohol problems. Households that are required to leave shorthold tenancies continue to be the main reason for making a homeless application (ie 29% of accepted applicants in 2002/03). It has been necessary to pre-book bed and breakfast accommodation in order for the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities to these people.

Needs of Different Groups

Families

The need for accommodation for homeless families has increased considerably over the last three years with homeless acceptances increasing from 91 in 1999/2000 to 230 in 2002/03. The majority of these families have come from the private rented sector. This is a change from previous years whereby Southend had a large number of applications from young women with babies.

Single People

Evidence from rough sleeper counts undertaken in each local authority area throughout England showed Southend to have had the equal 30th highest concentration of rough sleeping. This evidence established that relatively there was a major problem of insecurely housed people within the Borough. The most recent count undertaken in May 2001 found only 1 person sleeping rough in the Borough ensuring Southend had reached its target to reduce the number of rough sleepers by two-thirds by 2002. However, information gathered by the Contact and Assessment Team (CAT) shows there is still a problem of people who are insecurely housed in the Borough alongside evidence of a continued influx of rough sleepers.

There are difficulties in rehousing people within the private rented sector emanating from the buoyancy of the local housing market and the attitudes of local landlords. Consequently, it is essential that existing relationships with local landlords are built and developed in order to ensure continued support for these groups of people. The CAT Team and the Council operate rent deposit guarantee schemes, and the Council operates a tenancy grant scheme. Both schemes are designed to encourage private sector landlords to house homeless applicants on fixed term Assured Shorthold Tenancies.

THE HOUSING REGISTER

Demand for Council / RSL Accommodation

The Council's various Homeseekers Registers are the most significant and direct method of assessing housing need in the Borough. They provide clear quantitative evidence of the level of housing need for those who cannot afford to buy or rent housing on the open market.

The following tables detail the numbers on the Homeseekers Registers, and the demand for various sizes of accommodation as at 31st March 2003.

Register	As at 31/3/02	As at 31/3/03	Percent change
Housing Register	1,977	2,272	+ 14.92%
SBC Transfer Register	466	522	+ 12.02%
HA Transfer Register	99	136	+ 37.37%
Incoming HOMES	23	15	- 34.78%
TOTAL	2,565	2,945	+ 14.81%

Property Type	Housing Register	Transfer Register	HA Transfer Register	Incoming HOMES	Total
Sheltered studio flat	146	77	8	7	238
Sheltered 1 bed	31	38	2	5	76
Gen needs studio flat	668	73	10	1	752
Gen needs 1 bed	157	33	7	0	197
Gen needs 2 bed	659	121	36	1	817
Gen needs 3 bed	416	92	42	0	550
Gen needs 3 bed parlour / 4 bed	116	50	24	1	191
Unclassified	79	38	7	0	124
TOTAL	2,272	522	136	15	2,945

The numbers of applications received decreased in 2002/03 whilst the numbers on each Register increased significantly compared with the previous year. Overall, the number of applicants on the Registers has increased by 79.75% since 31st March 2000 despite there being no changes to the eligibility criteria for acceptance onto the Registers.

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND SOCIAL CARE

The Council's establishment of a Department of Social Care has brought about a greater understanding of the housing related needs of the local community. A "joined up" perspective allows more attention to be paid to the support arrangements appropriate for people to enable them to lead better lives where they wish. The failure to meet these needs can result in expensive placements having to be found within or outside of the borough.

Physical Disabilities: There is an increasing requirement for accommodation to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities. The major priorities include:

- Supported housing for young people (under 30 years)
- People given "leave to remain" (eg illegal immigrants having a serious medical condition)
- Long term residential care for adults
- Adapted accommodation (eg wheelchair adapted housing, specialist lighting, etc)

Learning Disabilities: An increasing number of young people with learning disabilities will choose supported accommodation rather than the traditional residential care model. The Council aims to enable people and their families to have greater choice and control over where and how they live with supported living being provided at the expense of further reliance on residential care.

Mental Health: Good housing and adequate support are significant factors in the improvement of mental health and the Council is keen to explore opportunities in partnership with local voluntary agencies. The major priorities include:

- “Move on” accommodation
- Crisis accommodation (eg to offer a “retreat” for people who are undergoing a crisis or cannot return home)
- A long-term scheme for chronically, mentally-ill people requiring 24 hour support
- Detox schemes providing a staged programme of treatment, managed by nursing staff
- Housing for dementia sufferers

Children and Young People: The housing needs of young people are often complex and solutions need to take account of mobility, occasional homelessness and drug/alcohol misuse. The major priorities include:

- Emergency and assessment accommodation for vulnerable, young homeless people
- Teenage pregnancy hostel
- Housing for young substance misusers
- Young people given “leave to remain”
- Housing for vulnerable young people (eg homeless 16/17 year olds and young people upto the age of 21 leaving care)
- “Move on” accommodation for young people currently placed in supported schemes

The Council is a member of the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board which meets regularly to review progress and develop new work. In partnership with Ashley Homes, supported housing for pregnant teenagers and mothers has been developed. The scheme prepares mothers for move-on accommodation by concentrating on the following areas:

- Parenting skills
- Tenancy sustainment (including budgeting and cooking skills)
- Access to further education or training or assistance in maintaining school attendance

Older People: Recent progress in services through the Supporting People programme has improved the opportunity for older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Two priority areas of need have been identified:

- Support for certain daily activities for people felt to be socially isolated or having a need outside of their current home care package
- Establishment of a local Home Improvement Agency to provide advice and practical help on aspects of improvements and adaptations

Black and Minority Ethnic Community: The Essex Equality and Diversity Project, "Facing the Facts (2003), sponsored by the Essex Housing Officers' Group and the Housing Corporation identified the following housing priorities for the borough:

- Across Essex as a whole, 21% of the BME residents stated that they were aware of the services provided by local authorities and housing associations. The figure among the Southend-on-Sea sample was just 10%.

- Across the county, 10% of the BME residents stated that they found access to housing problematic. This compares with a much higher figure among the Southend-on-Sea residents of 31%. The main barriers to accessing housing were believed to be a lack of knowledge about how to register for housing (31%), a lack of appreciation of the services provided by the housing association sector (31%), an inability to get advice on other types of housing within the area (18%) and a general lack of awareness of the process involved if an individual or household found themselves homeless (12%).

CONDITION OF THE HOUSING STOCK

Local Authority Housing

The Council commissioned a firm of independent, expert consultants to undertake a full stock condition survey of its own housing stock to inform both the Housing Strategy and the HRA Business Plan. The fieldwork was undertaken by Countrywide Surveyors in 2000 with a representative sample of 15% of the stock being surveyed internally and externally. The remaining 85% of the stock was "cloned" to ensure a complete analysis of the stock.

The results of the 2000 stock condition survey were enhanced through the Council's own database. The database records the life expectancies of the key components of all the Council's housing stock in terms of the "expiry date" of the component. The survey also included the renewal costs of each of the key components thus enabling the total component replacement costs to be determined on a year-by-year basis up to 2033. In addition, the yearly costs will be refined as information from annual surveys undertaken internally on 20% of the stock is accrued. These surveys will also highlight those components that might require replacement ahead of the theoretical life expiry date.

A firm of Consultant Surveyors, Ridge and Partners, is currently reviewing the Council's existing stock condition data in preparation for the Housing Options' Appraisal analysis in 2003/04 and will be commenting on the robustness of the data.

Generally, the Council's housing stock is in good condition compared with that of the private sector. 70% of the local authority's housing stock met the Decent Homes Standard at 1st April 2003 and the Council is on course to meet the Decent Homes targets of 2004, 2006 and 2010.

A total investment of £165.1m is required over the next 30 years - an average of £5.5m per annum - to meet the projected expenditure on responsive maintenance, cyclical maintenance and capitalised repairs and improvements. This will be financed from the Major Repairs Allowance, which amounted to £4.082m in 2002/03 and £4.051m in 2003/04.

The following conclusions arise from the Council's database records on stock condition:

- The stock has benefited from the Council's past maintenance activity and is in good order compared to other local authority owned stock
- 8 dwellings currently fail the statutory fitness standard if strictly applied though only 3 of these are within the Housing Revenue Account (ie 0.05% of the HRA stock)
- A further 29% of the stock, whilst fit, is considered to fail the Decent Homes standard in terms of condition, amenity or fuel poverty
- 1,828 dwellings are considered to be in a state of disrepair
- 367 dwellings have poor facilities
- 188 dwellings have poor energy efficiency ratings

(NB: Some dwellings fall into more than one of the above categories and hence the total exceeds the number of properties)

It is estimated that a further £24.9m will be required over the next 7 years to bring the stock up to the Decent Homes standard.

Further information on the condition of the Council's housing stock is contained within the HRA Business Plan and Housing Needs Report.

Energy Efficiency

The Council has continued to raise the average NHER rating of its own stock by specific insulation works (including energy efficiency measures as part of refurbishment), an ongoing programme of gas fired central heating and hot water installations and the replacement of obsolete partial warm air systems with radiator systems. Following a NHER Level `0` survey of the whole stock in 1995, it was revealed that the average NHER was 5.3, SAP 48.6 and CO2 emissions of 6.86 tonnes pa. The latest calculated average ratings are NHER 7.3, SAP 64.5 and CO2 emissions of 4.9 tonne pa.

Private Sector Housing

The worst housing conditions in Southend are to be found in the private sector. The last local house condition survey of private dwellings in 1997 found 9,600 dwellings unfit for human habitation¹. About two thirds of all the other (fit) properties needed repairs, with an average repair cost of £745. The overall costs of bringing the private sector stock into a fit condition was estimated to be £38m, with another £42m needed to tackle the backlog of repairs and maintenance. It is notable that there were more unfit private sector properties than all the social housing sector stock put together.

The sector also comprises a small number of HMOs and empty homes. The former is particularly subject to housing stress – mostly through lack of bedroom space and sharing of amenities whilst the latter are important in relation to the critical supply of accommodation in a Borough that is fully developed geographically and short of accommodation in relation to demand.

The Council will be undertaking a further local house condition survey of the private rented sector in 2003/04 to include an assessment of:

- Unfitness and disrepair
- Energy efficiency audit
- Fuel Poverty
- Non-decent dwellings
- Social survey on access/take up of potential 'housing assistance' options

LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

Southend's proximity to London, attractive coastal environment, good transport links and lower house prices than in London mean local and sub-regional housing markets continue to remain very buoyant. Many people moving into the area have high incomes that exert an upward pressure on house prices.

¹ That is dwellings not reasonably suitable for occupation by reference to the statutory minimum housing fitness standard found within the Housing Act 1985.

House prices in London increased by 5.9% in the 12 months ending June 2003 whilst the average price of a property in Southend has risen by a staggering 27.2% over the same period². The prediction of a slow down in the rise of property prices has not materialised in the London Region although future concerns may force the current interest rate to increase to depress the buoyancy of the housing market. The Council recognises that the local housing market does not stop at the boundaries of the Borough, but is part of the wider sub region of the area.

For example, a recent analysis of the housing market demand in South Essex conducted by ATIS REAL Weatheralls for the Housing Corporation and the five local authorities comprising the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (draft report 2003) documented the following future projections of housing need:

Affordable Housing Needs in South Essex				
Planning Authority	2003	2004	2005	2006
Basildon	881	881	881	881
Castle Point	444	444	444	444
Rochford	338	338	N/A	N/A
Southend	1,487	1,487	1,487	1,487
Thurrock	578	578	N/A	N/A
South Essex	3,728	3,728	> 2,812	> 2,812

Source: Latest Housing Needs Survey or Housing Strategy from the above authorities

High house prices also have an impact on the private rented and social housing sectors within the Borough. Southend has a large private rented sector, but it is expensive. This makes home ownership even more attractive, particularly as it is often more cost effective to own a property than to rent one in either the RSL sector or the private rented sector. These various factors exert pressure on house prices to continually rise.

Consequently, there is a great demand for other sources of housing such as the Council's own stock. This is evidenced by a significant increase in demand for social housing in the last four years and a number of unmet housing needs in the social housing sector of Southend.

Trends for the Future

The local housing market is likely to remain buoyant for the foreseeable future and the rise in property prices is likely to continue in the coming months. As wage rises have not kept pace with the increase in property prices, the issues regarding the affordability of homes will still remain in the long term. The issue of affordability is further compounded by the future household projections³:

LOCAL DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Population Profile

In 2001, Southend-on-Sea had a population of 160,400. The borough forms a major part of the largest urban conurbation in the East of England. At 38 persons per hectare, it is nearly 10 times the average population density of Essex, East of England region and England overall.

² HM Land Registry, Residential Property Price Report – Comparison of average price of residential property sales completed between April to June 2002 and April to June 2003.

³ 1996 Based Unpublished Household Projections. Source: Anglia Polytechnic University / CPHM run based on DETR projections.

The pre-Census government population projections indicated that, if historical trends continued, Southend's population would grow by another 2.4% between 2001 and 2006. The projections also indicated a continuation in the reduction of older (65 and above) age groups. The highest growth, both in terms of numbers and the percentage growth, was projected for the 45-64 year olds with an increase of 6,700 people in the age group amounting to an 18% growth between 1996 and 2006. These projections are heavily dependent upon assumptions based on estimates relating to past experiences, which were made before the 2001 Census. New projections at local authority levels are not expected to be released by the ONS until 2004.

Household characteristics

In 2001, the mid-year estimate provided 74,310 households in the Borough giving an average household size of 2.3 persons. The total number of households in 1991 comprised 3.4% lone parent households, 31.1% single person households and 30.3% pensioner only households (these categories are not mutually exclusive).

Ethnic Profile

The 2001 Census estimated that 6,774 people belong to ethnic communities other than white. This is a significant increase on the estimate of 4,000 in the 1991 Census. The Indian community continues to be the largest ethnic minority group, with 1,223 people (a two-fold increase since the 1991 Census). There is a diverse ethnic community, with the Indian (0.76% of resident population), Chinese (0.5%), African (0.64%) and Pakistani (0.43%) groups being the largest minority groups.

Unemployment Rates

The Southend economy is yet to complete its recovery from the recession in early 1990's. The Borough's unemployment rate at 2.9% (June 2003) is significantly above that of Essex (1.6%) and the UK (2.6%). The number of claimants is falling at a slow but a steadier manner than that experienced by Basildon and Thurrock.

Indices of Deprivation

Southend is ranked amongst the most deprived 24% of districts in England by the income and employment measures of deprivation. Nearly 39,000 of Southend's residents are deprived or on an inadequate income (receiving means-tested benefits) while almost 10,500 residents are excluded from the employment market through unemployment, ill-health or disability.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

It is important that the Housing Strategy is informed by the current performance of the authority in managing, maintaining and improving the condition of the Council's own housing stock and in meeting the wider housing needs identified.

The Corporate Planning and Performance Management Framework is the Council's approach to determining priorities, directing resources, setting targets and reviewing progress and performance. The Council has enhanced the framework so that it now focuses on ensuring that the right information is reported to the right people, in the right way at the right time. The "Southend Healthcheck" is reported to Council Members on a quarterly basis and outlines progress against key performance areas.

Best Value Reviews

The Council has conducted a series of Best Value Reviews which **challenge** why, how and by whom a service is being delivered; **compare** its own performance with others across a range of indicators; **consult** local residents, users and businesses in the setting of performance targets; and use fair and open **competition** in securing efficient and effective services.

Housing related service reviews to date include:

- Housing repairs and maintenance
- Environmental Health
- Procurement
- Customer Care
- Social Inclusion (Autumn 2003)
- Community Housing (March 2004)

The implementation of the findings of the completed reviews is resulting in:

- Significant improvements in the repairs service, including a new appointments system, improved response times, updated Tenants Handbook and improved performance
- A corporate approach to procurement and contract procedures
- Review of "Street-Life" and Borough patrol enforcement activities
- Improved customer care practices and processes

Performance Measurement

The Corporate Planning and Performance Framework ensures that trend analysis, evaluation and reporting can be carried out on key functions.

The key performance indicators are collected on a quarterly basis for both corporate and departmental purposes (ie "Southend Healthcheck"). The indicators are reported to Council Members, tenants, residents and other stakeholders through regular corporate and departmental publications such as the Local Performance Plan, Civic News and Home News, public meetings, working parties and focus groups to ensure that services are accountable. The Council has embraced the modernisation of local government agenda and has established scrutiny panels to continue to examine performance.

The Council has established the weekly monitoring of all the important areas that affect the housing service, such as rent arrears, repairs, voids and lettings. The figures are discussed at weekly departmental meetings of senior managers to ensure that any significant changes can be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Similarly, monthly meetings review progress on the capital and revenue expenditure, the Best Value Repairs and Maintenance Improvement Plan and the Decent Homes Action Plan.

The statistics in the **Housing Action Plan 2003-06** document provide details of performance across key areas within the Council's housing service. The Plan is monitored and updated on a quarterly basis and shows performance on:

- Urgent repairs completed within Government time limits
- Responsive repairs for which appointments were both made and kept
- Proportion of non-decent homes
- Average SAP ratings
- Average relet times
- Empty dwellings available for letting
- Tenants owing more than 13 weeks' rent
- Homelessness acceptances
- Homeless households in temporary accommodation
- Satisfaction of tenants with the overall housing service and the opportunities for participation

Ongoing improvements in performance have been achieved in the areas of Housing Repairs and Housing Management, although the targets set for average relet times in 2002/03 proved to be a little too ambitious. For example, the percentage of urgent repairs completed within Government time limits increased from 86% in 2000/01 to 91% in 2002/03 and the percentage of responsive repairs for which an appointment was both made and kept increased from 23% in 2000/01 to 49% in 2002/03.

The Homelessness performance indicators reflect the underlying trends. The number of applications to the Council's Homeless Section has increased over the last year, particularly the proportion of applications from families (to whom the Council has a statutory duty). This means that the Council has a duty to temporarily rehouse these applicants whilst their applications are being investigated. The investigations are often complex and lengthy. This has led to a silting up of all sources of temporary accommodation and increased pressure on performance.

The Council is aware of the need to critically review future performance targets in light of actual performance, revised guidance and comparisons with other authorities (eg average relet times, rent collection, repairs and maintenance delivery, value for money in the capital programme, etc). The various initiatives underway to improve performance are outlined in the Housing Action Plan 2003-06 and improvements are already being seen in a number of key areas, particularly homeless acceptance and reletting times. Many of these have been explored with tenants as part of the Council's communications and tenant support strategies in order to ensure that they are properly examined as part of the business planning process.

Key areas examined include:

- Savings in management costs over the period of the Business Plan in order to provide an additional sum for stock investment
- Improved performance on voids and bad debts
- Possible savings from changes to work practices such as procurement and increased partnership working
- Possible sources of additional income

Benchmarking

The Council is committed to sharing information with other Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) for comparison and good practice purposes. Indeed, Best Value requires the robust comparisons of the Council's performance against high performing organisations. To aid these comparisons, the Council joined the Housing Quality Network's benchmarking service for landlords with less than 7,000 properties. For many indicators, there were not too many differences between authorities though the performances noted below show the Council to have:

- Amongst the highest proportion of sheltered dwellings (ie 27% against an average of 14%)
- Few repairs per dwelling though a high proportion of emergency repairs (ie 2.77 repairs per dwelling of which 1.42 are emergencies against an average of 3.45 repairs and 0.91 emergencies)
- One of the highest percentage of repairs' appointments actually kept (ie 100% against an average of 86%)
- The highest rent collected as a proportion of the rent due (105% against 99%)
- One of the highest reported relet times (ie 61 days against 32 days)

The Council is aware of the importance of sharing good practice with regards to tenant participation to ensure that tenants are fully involved in the decision making process. Tenant Participation Officers from the London Boroughs and Home Counties meet to discuss best practice and form benchmarking groups.

RESOURCES FOR HOUSING

A BASIS FOR MEETING NEEDS AND DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The previous section of this Housing Strategy summarised the extent of housing need that the Council has to consider. The Council has to maintain and improve its own housing stock, to provide for additional social housing, to address renewal in private sector housing and to pay for adaptations for housing facilities for the disabled.

This section covers the financial and other resources that are available to address that need. The next section prioritises those areas for action based on the needs identified and the resources available.

The financial resources available to address housing need come from the Council, from central Government, and from the Housing Corporation. Financial resources are either capital or revenue. Other resources can also be provided through land assets owned by the Council and by contributions of land / houses or finance for affordable housing secured from developers through the planning system.

In setting its capital and revenue budgets, the Council's key priorities are designed to reflect national, regional and local concerns and to meet local needs. They are informed by the evaluation of needs and are the result of extensive consultation with stakeholders, partners and residents. They contribute to the Council's corporate aims and objectives as set out in the Local Performance Plan 2003/04. The decision-making process is explained in the next section.

CAPITAL RESOURCES

Capital expenditure, for instance the cost of major improvements to the Council's housing stock or of building new homes, has to be considered against the other competing demands for other such expenditure (eg school buildings or leisure centres) faced by the Council. The Council has a Capital Strategy, which sets out how the Council prioritises its capital expenditure on a two-year rolling programme basis across all services. The Capital Strategy is linked to the Council's Asset Management Plan. The Council's original budget for capital schemes in 2003/04 was £37.8m, of which £7.3m related to repairs and improvements to its housing stock, £0.9m in assistance for private sector housing improvements and £0.4m for disabled facilities grants. The Capital Strategy 2003/04 and the Asset Management Plan 2003/04 have informed both the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan.

Capital expenditure on housing covers improvements and modernisation to the Council's housing stock, renovation of private sector stock and funding additional social housing provision. The Council's housing capital investment programme has traditionally been based on planned improvement works (eg central heating, kitchen and bathroom renewals, etc). Many of these works contribute to the meeting of the Decent Homes standard.

The capital investment programme for 2003/04 is as follows:

Key Elements of the Housing Capital Programme 2003/04		
Proposed Works	Budget (£000s)	Decent Homes Implications
Rewiring programme	1,576	Contributes to Decent Homes priority
Central heating	1,241	Contributes to Decent Homes priority
Works for disabled	69	Statutory responsibility
External refurbishments	2,113	Prevents non-decency
Energy conservation	660	Raising insulation above Decent Homes
Kitchen and bathroom renewal	980	Prevents non-decency
Sheltered schemes	378	Safety related work and improvements
Other schemes	265	
Total	£7,282	

The table below sets out a summary of the anticipated expenditure required to meet the Decent Homes standard and the Council's 30 years' works programme. They are closely linked.

Time Period	Years	Decent Homes Programme £m	Capital Programme £m	Catch Up Repairs £m	Total Expenditure £m
1 – 5	2003 - 2008	16.6	16.3	3.3	36.2
6 – 10	2008 - 2013	8.3	26.4		34.7
11 – 15	2013 - 2018		23.3		23.3
16 – 20	2018 - 2023		28.6		28.6
21 – 25	2023 - 2028		31.8		31.8
26 – 30	2028 - 2033		35.4		35.4
Total		£24.9	£161.8	£3.3	£190.0

Source of funding

Time Period	Years	Credit Approvals £m	MRA £m	Use of MRA Fund Balance £m	Revenue Contributions to Capital £m	Total Funding Available £m	Deficit in Funding £m
1 – 5	2003 - 2008	1.1	20.8	4.7	9.6	36.2	
6 – 10	2008 - 2013		22.5		1.8	24.3	(10.4)
11 – 15	2013 - 2018		24.6	(1.3)		23.3	
16 – 20	2018 - 2023		27.3	1.3		28.6	
21 – 25	2023 - 2028		30.4	0.4		30.8	(1.0)
26 – 30	2028 - 2033		34.0			34.0	(1.4)
Total		£1.1	£159.6	£5.1	£11.4	£177.2	(£12.8)

A total investment of £165.1m over 30 years will require an average investment of £5.5m per annum. This will be funded from the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) which amounted to £4.082m in 2002/03 and £4.051m in 2003/04 and which will be assumed to increase by 2.5% per annum inflation. The Council is not dependent on capital receipts within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as the policy to date has been to allocate such receipts to housing projects within the General Fund (eg support for RSL developments as part of the Council's enabling role). The Decent Homes programme is to be completed by 2009/10 and will require a further average investment of £3.6m per annum, which will have to be funded from the current funding balance and surpluses on the HRA. The HRA working balance is anticipated to decrease to a deficit in year 8 and the Council will be reviewing this situation as part of its Options' Appraisal exercise that is discussed in more detail in the HRA Business Plan.

REVENUE RESOURCES

Revenue resources are intended to cover the day-to-day costs of providing the Council's housing services. The expenditure can come from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) or from the Council's General Fund. The Housing Revenue Account is for the Council's own stock and the General Fund for all non-Housing and non-HRA Housing revenue expenditure.

The actual and forecast expenditure from the Council's Housing Revenue Account for 2002/03 and 2003/04 respectively are as follows:

Housing Revenue Account Expenditure		
	Actual 2002/03 (£000s)	Forecast Expenditure 2003/04 (£000s)
Rent rebates	12409	11534
Repairs	4410	4447
Cost of capital	6707	6257
Sheltered schemes	1149	1337
Careline	370	398
Housing operations	2573	2897
Advice and needs	255	264
Homelessness	504	541
Policy and management	2116	2086
Grounds maintenance	249	271
Total	£30742	£30032

Note: The above table is expressed on the basis of the statutory accounts prepared for the HRA whereas the operating account for the HRA Business Plan differs in the treatment of some of the costs and income. Overall, the net operating surplus reconciles between the two statements.

Housing revenue expenditure from the General Fund over the last two years is:

	2002/03 £m	2003/04 £m
Private Sector Renewal	0.4	0.4
Homeless	0.4	0.4
Other	0.1	0.1

PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL

The private sector has the largest contribution (91%) in relation to the supply of accommodation to meet local residents' needs. The private sector has a significant proportion of older dwellings as reflected in the overall condition of the stock. As such, its condition is important not only in relation to the availability of housing, but also to the wider considerations of residents' health, welfare and safety, and also to local social, economic and environmental needs.

Demand for assistance in the private sector continues with 269 formal enquiries for grants for essential repairs and improvement received in 2002/03 from private sector householders with limited financial means. In the same year, 186 formal offers of grant were made to owner-occupiers.

Grant funding remains a fundamental mechanism for achieving significant renewal in the private sector. Some limited loans are also available to applicants for disabled adaptations under the new Housing Assistance regime. Grants are closely targeted to those in most need, in terms of both property condition and the financial ability of householders to remedy those conditions (ie vulnerable households in mainly non-decent accommodation).

The housing assistance grant programme supports fundamental areas of the private sector housing strategy, as follows:

- Renovation of owner-occupied properties
- Renovation of the worst private rented sector lettings (high proportion of unfit dwellings)
- The maintenance of standards / improvement in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

- Bringing long-term empty homes back into use
- Energy conservation measures
- Renewable energy measures (solar heating)
- Partner initiatives such as Community Safety

The consequence of reactive and pro-active renovation work across private sector housing policy areas has been a significant financial demand on the limited renewal grants budget. A significant waiting list continues for renewal grants for owner-occupiers (119 enquiries at 31st March 2003). If the private sector, housing strategy objectives to meet these needs are to be fully pursued in 2003/04 then significant capital resources will need to be maintained for housing assistance. The level of resources available for 2003/04 is estimated at £0.9m capital expenditure and £0.4m revenue expenditure.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION

Much of the previous part of this section of the Housing Strategy is devoted to maintaining and improving the Council's housing stock and delivery of the Council's private sector housing strategy.

However, the need for additional affordable housing is a high priority for the Council. The need is summarised later in this strategy.

The Council has a variety of opportunities to secure lettings. They can come from its own stock through natural turnover, from Registered Social Landlords' (RSLs) existing stock and through the provision of additional units through RSLs. The latter can be provided through grant funding from the Housing Corporation, by grant funding from the Council and through negotiations with developers through the planning process (Section 106 agreements). However, the provision of all housing (including affordable housing) has to accord with stated planning policy. These are now dealt with in turn.

Lettings of existing Council / RSL Accommodation

In 2002/03, the number of new Council voids (houses becoming vacant) available for letting decreased to 532 from 653 in 2001/02, reflecting lower numbers of evictions, a decrease in the number of lettings via the Transfer Register, and resulting in lower numbers of properties becoming void.

In 2002/03, the Council let a total of 539 properties, across all Registers, excluding mutual exchanges and temporary licences. By comparison, in 2001/02, the Council let 633 properties across all Registers and areas representing a decrease of 94 properties (14.85%) in 2002/03.

The Council works closely with Registered Social Landlords to allocate properties within the Borough, and the RSLs request nominations from the Council for a proportion of their void properties. In 2002/03, RSLs allocated 354 properties, (the same as in 2001/02), of which 140 were as a result of Council nominations (compared with 175 in 2001/02).

Hence, both new Council voids and RSL lettings via Council nominations have reduced over the last year, which coupled with the overall increase in applications and consequent rise in the numbers on the Housing Registers, has significantly increased the pressure on affordable social housing.

Furthermore, in 2002/03, the Council housed 137 households accepted as homeless in Council or RSL properties (ie 59.57% of the 230 homeless acceptances in the year). This compares with 131 homeless households housed in 2001/02 (ie 83.44% of homeless acceptances in 2001/02). The percentage of homeless households housed via the Housing Register as a proportion of total lettings via the Housing Register increased for the third year running (9.93% in 1999/2000, 13.42% in 2000/01, 21.80% in 2001/02 and 26.86% in 2002/03) reflecting the Council's continuing commitment to both reducing the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation and reducing the average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation. However, this does reduce the opportunities for housing for households who are not homeless. Currently, 50% of all family sized accommodation is allocated to statutorily homeless households, 25% to applicants on the Private Sector Group (ie in private rented or owner occupied accommodation), and 25% to transfer applicants.

New affordable housing

Private developers are the main suppliers of additional housing and RSLs of additional affordable housing. However the provision of all housing has to comply with local planning arrangements. These are summarised as follows and demonstrate the difficulty of providing additional houses within Southend-on-Sea.

Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan

This Plan prepared jointly by Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council was adopted in April 2001. Its housing provision for Southend for the period 1996-2011 is 2250 dwellings, an annual provision rate of 150. The Plan recognises that Southend and the majority of South Essex now forms part of the Thames Gateway, the regeneration of which is a regional and national priority. In particular, the sub-region has structural employment problems, and the number of resident workers far exceeds the availability of local jobs. It also suffers the worst transport and movement problems within the Structure Plan area. The key priority is new employment creation in order to achieve a move sustainable balance between local jobs and workers. However, while these considerations remain highly relevant, in light of the findings of the Housing Needs Study, this level of provision will need to be re-evaluated through the preparation of the Replacement Borough Local Plan and the Replacement Structure Plan Review, both of which are now in progress.

In addition, the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region is already a heavily urbanised area close to London. Strong emphasis must therefore continue to be given to safeguarding the stated purposes of the Green Belt and protecting the natural and built environment. Development provision should primarily be concentrated within the existing larger urban areas through increases in their urban capacity, by re-development and land use change.

In view of these strategic considerations, further long-term housing provision up to 2011 will be strongly restrained. Although parts of the sub-region have high locally generated housing requirements, it is not feasible to accommodate these entirely within the sub-region. However, Urban Capacity Studies are well advanced throughout the sub-region, including Southend, to enable appropriate development opportunities to be identified and brought forward.

The limited Structure Plan provision for Southend is therefore to be achieved and developed through making the best use of existing dwellings and under-utilised urban areas. This is in line with the Government's policy for sustainable development, which requires existing urban areas to be the focus for residential development. Virtually 100% of new housing development within the Borough takes place on previously developed land. The Residential Land Availability Survey at 1st April 2001 identified 1684 dwellings already completed since 1996, leaving a residual requirement of 566 dwellings. The Survey at 1st April 2001 also identified approximately 1297 potential dwelling units, with 54% of these having planning permission. Research has indicated that in the future new "windfall" sites could provide up to about 100 additional dwellings per year in the short term (ie those sites not already identified through outstanding planning permissions or local plan allocations).

However, these considerations do mean that the great majority of housing development opportunities within Southend are on small sites (mainly conversions, infill and small redevelopment sites) that are not suitable or appropriate for achieving an element of affordable (ie subsidised or non-market) housing through the planning process. In addition, where sites have an existing planning permission, they can be openly marketed and subject to high land valuations for which RSLs are unable to compete.

In light of all the above, the site opportunities for providing additional affordable housing within the Borough, particularly through the planning process, are extremely limited.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Local Plan (1994)

The affordable housing policy of the Borough Local Plan (Policy H2 – Future Housing Needs) has been able to secure just two sites where affordable housing has been or is being provided (Windermere Road and Shoeburyness Old Ranges), with a further two possible sites in the pipeline (Lifstan Way and Fairfax Drive). In addition, the policy does not set an overall target for affordable housing over the plan period.

The Government's Communities Plan (2003) identified the Thames Gateway as a Growth Area. The strategic priority for the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) Area is "jobs-led" regeneration requiring any future change in housing delivery to be balanced by job creation to ensure the development of sustainable communities.

The emerging sub-regional strategy for the TGSE Area within the Regional Planning Guidance for the East of England is likely to put forward challenging housing provision targets for the districts within the area over the period 2001–2021. The likely housing provision for Southend-on-Sea has been taken into account in estimating the future yields of affordable housing within the Borough. There will be a need within the Borough Local Plan Review to ensure that future policies recognise the meeting of housing need as a priority and the justification for both lowering the size of qualifying sites and increasing the percentage requirement for affordable housing on such sites.

The Council has recently published for consultation a Draft Local Development Scheme (ahead of the Government's proposed reforms to the Development Plan System) that sets out the content and timetable for the Borough Local Plan Review. This is available on the Council's website.

NEED TO IMPROVE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Because of the considerations outlined above, the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme has been able to supply just 214 dwellings during 1996-2001.

Without a target in the Local Plan, RSLs and the planning authority may find it more difficult to argue the case for affordable housing provision in development in the years ahead.

The Council is well aware of the need to address the issue in order to secure additional provision through Section 106 negotiations and with funding from the Housing Corporation on behalf of the Regional Housing Board. A step towards this has been taken through the Housing Needs Study, Urban Capacity Study and Replacement Local Plan.

The 2002 Housing Needs Study, Urban Capacity Study and Replacement Southend-on-Sea Borough Local Plan

During 2001, the Borough Council commenced the process of replacing the Borough Local Plan. Key issues identified from the outset and supported in public consultation are:

- How should the Local Plan target as much as possible of the 2250 new housing provision for affordable housing?
- Should the Local Plan seek the lower site size threshold for requiring affordable housing?
- At what level should the Local Plan target be set for affordable housing?
- Should this target be applied to each development proposal / site or for the total provision in the Borough?
- How can the Local Plan help to meet particular housing needs, including special needs?

To inform the preparation of the Replacement Borough Local Plan and appropriate solutions to these questions, together with its housing and community care strategies and action plans, the Council commissioned two major studies in early 2002:

- A comprehensive Housing Needs Study, undertaken in accordance with Government guidance and providing a thorough and comprehensive local needs assessment (including needs for key worker and special needs housing).
- A comprehensive Urban Capacity Study, to inform not only the future capacity of the Borough to make appropriate housing and other development provision, and to spearhead urban renaissance, but also, when analysed in relation to housing needs, to inform the setting of an appropriate threshold for affordable housing requirements.

The results of these studies will be applied to the preparation and updating of the Replacement Borough Local Plan, and the Council's housing, community care and other relevant strategies and plans. Initial outputs from the Housing Needs Study 2002 estimate that between 2002 and 2007, 7,435 additional homes would be required, based on the backlog of existing need and newly arising need minus the supply of affordable units. A clear conclusion of the study is the need to target housing provision on local needs, without which such provision would be likely to be taken up by further in-migration to the Borough.

The Council is aware of statements made by Ministers on proposals for new planning guidance under which councils will be allowed to earmark sites for social housing. Under new guidance, which will form part of an updated PPG3, councils will be able to insist that developers provide affordable housing or a cash sum instead on plots as small as half an acre. Local authorities will set their own thresholds based on housing needs assessments and will be able to reject developments that fail to widen local housing choice. This will be a step forward allowing local authorities to be more proactive in delivering sustainable and mixed housing. The Council will review whether or not it can implement any changes but this may depend on the timing of the revised PPG and the stage of the local planning process.

Whether all of the issues described above will be enough to address the shortfall will only be known later in the processes when there is more clarity on the issues.

The Council accepts that the provision of affordable housing involves a variety of tenures and will be seeking to achieve this variety on the larger sites (over 25 dwellings) it is proposing to develop with RSLs. In particular, the Council will actively seek schemes that address the identified housing needs in the Borough and also offer innovation: for example, the majority of a scheme being funded with private finance thereby, requiring a lower level of public subsidy.

The development of new rented social housing, in partnership with RSLs, and increasing the supply of available lettings remain key investment priorities in the Borough. The Council will continue to look at and encourage initiatives that maximise resources and value for money to secure the maximum number of high quality, affordable homes for both rent and, where appropriate, sale. Wherever possible, the Council will seek to facilitate this process by reviewing the new arrangements for housing capital finance, continuing to make available free or discounted land and exploring innovative and modern methods of construction.

The Housing Corporation is moving away from allocating financial resources under the Housing Needs Indicator (HNI) process to a more strategic approach. In future, Local Authorities and RSLs must address the regional priority themes that are appropriate for their area. The priority themes are: areas of growth, supported housing, rural housing, regeneration and black and minority ethnic communities. Clearly some priority themes will not apply to Southend, though where they do; it is essential that RSL bids should be based on the applicable priority. This will ensure that a robust and relevant application for resources can be maximised.

DELIVERY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Through negotiation, planning conditions and legal agreements, the Council will continue to use its planning powers to secure affordable housing on suitable new sites. To date, the Council has secured the provision of affordable housing using Section 106 agreements on the following sites:

- Fairfax Drive, Southend
- Horseshoe Barracks, Shoeburyness
- Gas Works Site, Eastern Esplanade
- Lifstan Way, Southend

In addition, the Council will receive a commuted sum on The Queen Hotel site that will be set aside to provide additional social housing.

The Council is currently working with private developers, the Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords to deliver more social housing through planning gain on the following sites:

- Burnaby Road, Southend
- Carnarvon Road, Southend
- Garrison Site, Shoeburyness
- London Road, Southend
- Maitland House
- Southchurch Road, Southend
- Station Road, Southend

In order to maximise opportunities to secure affordable accommodation on new housing developments, the Council is working with other councils in the county to promote a more cohesive approach to Section 106 agreements as well as exploring the following options:

- Reducing the size of new sites where the Council require affordable housing from 25 homes to 10
- Increasing the proportion of affordable housing required on these sites from 20% to 50%
- Working with colleagues in the Department of Technical and Environmental Services to ensure revisions to the local plan and planning guidance secure the appropriate level and mix of affordable housing

The Council will continue to work with Registered Social Landlords to develop schemes that support the five priorities themes outlined in the Regional Housing Strategy. These include:

- Growth
- Regeneration
- Rural
- Supported Housing
- Black and Minority Ethnic Housing

KEY WORKERS

The Government has stressed the importance of local authorities addressing housing for key workers. The Housing Corporation has made specific provision for this requirement.

The housing of key workers within the Borough has received some degree of success. The nationally operated "HOME" programme enables workers to obtain accommodation through local authority housing registers and the Council has supported a scheme funded by the Housing Corporation at Westcliff Hospital where rented accommodation is offered to NHS staff.

Both Police Officers and Teachers now have access to a countywide scheme under the Starter Home Initiative. Police Officers can apply to Moat Home Ownership and Teachers to Boleyn and Forest HA, both of whom operate an equity loan version of the initiative. Take-up of these schemes in the borough has been slow to date with just one assisted purchase in the borough.

ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- ADDRESSING THE PRIORITIES

As the major provider of social housing within Southend, the Council recognises the need to ensure a long-term solution to meeting all its housing needs, as well as to develop its enabling and partnership initiatives.

This approach has enabled the Council to consider alternative ways of addressing the priority areas for action, which takes full account of the full contributions able to be made by local partners. The following options have been considered and, where appropriate, included in the Housing Action Plan. The Action Plan is now the principal document that details the Council's housing aims and objectives and records progress and future targets and milestones.

Affordable Housing

- Increase the supply of housing
- Provide support to RSLs
- Offer an appropriate range of housing types and tenures (eg affordable rented housing, shared ownership, homes for key workers, etc)
- Ensure new homes meet a range of needs (eg supported housing)
- Review site thresholds and the numbers of affordable homes produced under Section 106 agreements

Achieving Decent Homes

- Bring all Council homes up to the Decent Homes standard
- Improve unpopular Council housing (eg sheltered bedsits)
- Target resources on planned preventative maintenance
- Target assistance to owner occupiers and private landlords to improve their accommodation
- Consider a home maintenance service for homeowners, private tenants and landlords
- Promote energy efficiency and sustainability
- Ensure delivery of investment programmes

Promoting "Choice"

- Review the Council's allocations policy to increase choice in lettings
- Consider a Common Housing Register with RSL partners
- Develop housing and support services for vulnerable people in conjunction with the Supporting People Programme
- Improve the match between housing needs and existing homes
- Improve resident involvement in decision-making

Addressing Homelessness

- Implement the findings of the Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy
- Reduce the number of empty homes in all tenures
- Provide more temporary accommodation as an alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation in conjunction with RSL partners
- Increase the number of larger properties (eg under-occupation initiatives)
- Reduce the time taken to re-let Council properties

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

- Respond appropriately to anti-social behaviour (eg use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, etc)
- Develop community safety initiatives at a local level
- Target additional staffing resources to tackling anti-social behaviour
- Develop an Anti-Social Behaviour Compact

As was the case with determining the Council's priority areas for action, account was taken of national, regional and corporate objectives, evaluation of housing needs and issues of greatest concern to stakeholders, partners and residents in deciding which of the options listed above would be pursued. However, a much more fundamental approach came about from a consideration of the Council's ability to pursue these options from its limited resources. This approach required an Options' Appraisal analysis.

Options' Appraisal Analysis

The Council's earlier concern about its ability to maintain its housing stock and with the support of tenants, led to the appointment of HACAS Chapman Hendy in December 1998 to analyse the key options for the future of the Council's housing stock. The outcome of the option appraisal process was a recommendation to the Council that tenants should be consulted on the possibility of a Stock Transfer to a newly created Registered Social Landlord.

The result of the Tenants' Ballot in March 2001 was 49.2% (2628 votes) in favour of the transfer of the Council's housing stock to Southend Housing Partnership and 50.8% (2710 votes) not in favour. The result meant that the proposed transfer did not proceed.

Immediately following the ballot, the Council established a Members' Housing Strategy Working Party to examine how best it could maximise the resources at its disposal. The consultation and participation procedures developed through the option appraisal process, the greater certainty about future resources provided by the introduction of the Major Repairs Allowance, the establishment of a medium / long-term framework provided by the HRA Business Plan and the more effective tackling of the cross-cutting issues through the Single Capital Pot were vital components of the process.

The Housing Strategy Working Party recommended that HACAS Chapman Hendy carry out a further appraisal of the options available for the future management of the Council's housing stock. This was undertaken in 2002 and the following options were considered:

Stock Retention

The consultants concluded that the Council would be able to meet the Decent Homes standard target set by the Government for April 2010, but would ultimately be unable to afford to maintain the stock at the Decent Homes standard. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was estimated to move into a deficit position between years 6 and 15, based on a reasonably conservative set of assumptions.

It was noted that whilst the Decent Homes standard might be able to be achieved for the Council's homes, tenants would see significantly less investment being able to be put into maintaining their homes and the general environment than would have been the case under the guarantees able to be given by Southend Housing Partnership. Not only would tenants see fewer improvements but, because the Decent Homes standard is a very formulaic driven process, they would have much less say in how the work programmes to their homes would be organised (ie tenants' choice would be limited).

Stock Retention – Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Option

Under this option, the Council would retain ownership of the stock. A number of benefits would accrue from this option, such as:

- Possible access to additional funds to assist in accelerating the progress of the Decent Homes programme
- An even clearer separation of the strategic and operational aspects of the Housing Service
- A greater role for tenants in the running of the service through the establishment of a board of management of which they would form part

There were, however, potential difficulties associated with the operation of an ALMO including the need to obtain and maintain a "good" or "excellent" rating from the Audit Commission and additional revenue costs in maintaining a separate company. The option presented an alternative which would allow the Council to separate out the day-to-day operation of the housing service without depriving tenants of the "comfort" of their security of tenure or the knowledge that the Council remained the owner of their homes. The consultants concluded that a further in-depth analysis would be needed if the Council wished to choose this option to ensure its viability.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

There were some concerns arising from experiences to date about the practicability of the HRA Pathfinder schemes, the value for money they represented and their capacity to comply with the PFI risk transfer principles. Based on the then current PFI models, the consultants concluded that such schemes were unlikely to provide the Council with a viable whole stock solution.

Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)

The consultants concluded that LSVT still remained an option for the Council as it did following the original option appraisal. The valuation of the housing stock, however, would change as a result of:

- The Government's developing rent policy meaning that a lower level of rent income would be able to be produced
- Continuing sales of Council houses under the Right to Buy process, so that a lower number of dwellings would obviously result in a lower valuation
- A revised repairs' schedule cost resulting from a higher level of revenue repairs would be necessary because planned maintenance would be undertaken more slowly than would previously have been estimated

In conclusion, the position facing the Council in 2002 was one whereby in the short to medium term, its Housing Revenue Account was likely to enable the stock to be retained and the 2010 Decent Homes target to be achieved. However, this would mean a significantly reduced level of improvements being able to be provided to tenants than would have been the case under LSVT.

The Council agreed to keep the options under review for a further two to three years and then carry out a further detailed options' appraisal analysis.

Current Position

The Government published "**Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future**", known as the Communities Plan, on 5th February 2003. The Plan sets out a long-term, action programme for delivering sustainable communities. This includes:

- The regeneration of deprived areas
- Increasing housing supply in growth areas

- Providing more affordable housing for low income households and key workers
- Addressing low demand and abandonment
- Bringing council homes up to a "Decent Homes" standard
- Introducing a regional approach to housing policy

The Government's target is to ensure that all social housing stock is at a "Decent Homes" standard by 2010 with reductions of one-third of all 2001 "non-decent" homes by April 2004 and 45% of all "non-decent" homes by 2006. If investment through the Housing Investment Programme is insufficient to meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010 then local authorities will be required to choose between stock transfer, arms length management organisations (ALMO) or the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Authorities will be required to produce viable stock options' appraisals for Government sign-off by July 2005 and will be subject to intervention if they fail to do so.

Fortuitously, the Government's plans coincide with the Council's intention to carry out a detailed, options' appraisal analysis within two to three years of its earlier review.

The Council's options' appraisal process will be concerned with finding out which option is the best for Southend-on-Sea. The various options will be examined to establish:

- The one that best delivers the objectives identified
- The one that fits in with a long-term vision of the future
- The one that fits with tenants' / leaseholders' wishes and aspirations

The assessment should cover the impact of the various options on the Council's wider housing objectives beyond the Decent Homes standard; for example, the contribution that stock transfer can provide to addressing shortages of affordable housing through the capital receipt as well as on the services provided to tenants (ODPM, "Delivering Decent Homes - Option Appraisal", June 2003). Without this longer-term assessment, Decent Homes will simply become a "bricks and mortar" based investment programme and the achievement of sustainable communities demanded by the Government's Communities Plan will not become a reality.

The Council has agreed that:

- The Housing Strategy Working Party be responsible for overseeing the options' appraisal process
- An external Project Manager be appointed to assist in facilitating the Council to take the process forward
- An Independent Tenants Advisor be appointed by tenants to assist them in understanding and playing a full part in the process

Accordingly, the Council has set up a Housing Options Appraisal Sub-Group (to be known as **Housing Moves Forward**) with the following terms of reference:

- To consider all aspects of the options available to the Council in respect of its housing responsibilities in accordance with the ODPM Option Appraisal Guidance
- To report with recommendations to the Housing Strategy Working Party

The Sub-Group will consider each of the options for both increasing investment to deliver the Decent Homes standard and improving performance on housing management.

The HRA Business Plan 2003-06, underpinned by key strategic priorities, robust and up to date data on stock condition and the costs of renovation / improvement works, will be a crucial part of the Council's Housing Options' Appraisal analysis. Furthermore, this Housing Strategy 2003-06 will inform the process through information on current and likely future demand for council housing in the area of Southend-on-Sea.

DEVELOPING, REVIEWING AND DELIVERING THE

HOUSING STRATEGY 2003-2006

Strategic Process

The Council is committed to a forward thinking strategic process. Starting and finishing with consultation with stakeholders and the community, the strategic process flows as follows:

<i>October - December:</i>	Consulting with stakeholders and the local community to develop knowledge and understanding
<i>January - February:</i>	Setting the strategic framework by establishing boundaries, timescales, aims and priorities
<i>March - April:</i>	Appraising options and developing proposals for action
<i>May - July:</i>	Developing detailed plans and setting targets from the information gathered
<i>August - September:</i>	Drafting the Housing Strategy for further consultation and Member consideration
<i>Ongoing:</i>	Implementing the strategy
<i>Quarterly</i>	Monitoring and evaluating the proposals for action
<i>Ongoing:</i>	Feedback and consultation with stakeholders and the community to ensure ongoing involvement and consistency

This strategic process ensures that the Council's Housing Strategy becomes a "live" document, fulfilling the Council's corporate target: *"To ensure the provision of well-managed, decent affordable housing"*.

Strategic Housing Focus

The Council adopted a new strategic housing focus following the result of the Tenants' Ballot in March 2001 not to transfer the Council's housing stock to a newly created, Registered Social Landlord. Immediately following the ballot, the Council established a Housing Strategy Working Party to examine how best it could utilise the resources at its disposal. The establishment of a new Department of Social Care, bringing together Housing, Health and Social Services, provided a more integrated approach to service provision. The restructuring of the Council's Housing Services into Housing Strategy, Housing Operations and Housing Resources led to a clearer separation of the Council's strategic role from its landlord responsibilities. Joint working with other Council services, neighbouring local authorities and partner organisations strengthened the process. The development of a Corporate Housing Group co-ordinated service objectives and delivery.

Housing Strategy Working Party

The Housing Strategy Working Party, chaired by the Executive Councillor for Housing, has the following terms of reference:

- To manage the process of a reducing housing expenditure (ie following the result of the tenants' ballot in March 2001)
- To review the Housing Capital Programme
- To look at all options available in connection with the Housing Strategy

Having cross-party membership and tenant representation, the Housing Strategy Working Party is responsible for considering the Housing Strategy, HRA Business Plan and the Stock Options' Appraisal.

Corporate Housing Group

The Council's Corporate Housing Group, comprising senior representatives from various departments, was set up to:

- Deliver an effective process of learning about local housing needs and the operation of local housing markets
- Build genuine consensus on strategic direction
- Widen the perspectives on housing to promote innovation, co-ordinate activity and maximise impacts

The Corporate Housing Group enables the Council to develop housing strategies that set out its long-term objectives and targets and how these will be achieved and linking them to other related corporate objectives, such as regeneration, education, social care, citizen focused and effectiveness.

High Quality Information

The new strategic housing focus has been considerably sharpened in the light of new policy developments - nationally, regionally and local - and reflects the new information now available. The Stock Condition Survey of the Council's housing stock undertaken in 2000 provided an action plan for meeting the Decent Homes targets of 2004 and 2010. The Housing Needs Study 2002 provided a thorough and comprehensive local needs assessment. The independent Option Appraisal Analysis 2002 confirmed that the Council's housing stock was likely to achieve the Decent Homes targets though the level of improvements to the stock would be at a significantly reduced level than would have been the case had the stock transferred to a newly, created Registered Social Landlord.

Continuing up to date and high quality information will be provided through:

- Development of a Regional Housing Strategy and sub-regional housing market assessments
- Commissioning of private sector stock condition survey
- Completion of a Homelessness Review and Strategy
- Best Value Reviews of Community Housing and Social Inclusion
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2003
- Updating the HRA Business Plan Model
- Rolling 20% inspections of Council housing stock each year
- Quarterly Healthchecks

Involvement of Partners in Strategy Development

Lasting solutions can only be developed to the problems that individuals and communities face through close partnership working and a mutual commitment to joint working. The Council's long history of effective partnership working will continue to be developed through:

- Development of the Housing Association Liaison Group and Private Landlords' Forum
- Increasing involvement of tenants in strategic planning, setting service standards and monitoring performance
- Tenants Information Exchange (TIE -IN) events
- Development of Tenant Co-ordinator's role and "Street or Block Voice"
- Publication of Tenant Participation Strategy
- Boroughwide Nuisance Group
- Allocations Review
- Asset management and contractor monitoring
- Development of Empty Homes Initiative

Maximisation of Resources for Housing

The Council seeks to ensure that resources are focused on service priorities by:

- Submitting bids to ODPM for bed and breakfast alternatives and tackling homelessness
- Maximising Supporting People funding
- Maximising bids for crime prevention and youth empowerment projects
- Submitting bids for community development initiatives (eg Doorstep Green)
- Reviewing the Housing Assistance regime

Updating / Developing the Housing Strategy

To ensure that the Housing Strategy takes account of new policy developments, the Housing Strategy Working Party and Corporate Housing Group will:

- Regularly review the implications of new legislation, changing national, regional and local priorities and any other relevant initiatives
- Review, on a quarterly basis, progress on the Action Plan contained in the Housing Strategy Statement
- Incorporate the results of regular surveys and consultation into the Housing Strategy
- Incorporate the targets contained within the Action Plan into the Council's performance management framework so that progress is reported to Council Members on an ongoing basis
- In addition, the Council is committed to publishing in the Local Performance Plan an annual review of the highlights of the past year in terms of realising its five corporate ambitions and setting the direction for the year ahead.

This ensures that the Housing Strategy is a "living" document which is committed to building upon achievements and preparing Southend-on-Sea for future challenges.

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARIES OF STRATEGIES THAT INFORM (OR ARE INFORMED BY) THE HOUSING STRATEGY

The Council's Housing Strategy has links with a number of other plans and strategies that direct the provision of public services within Southend.

Local Performance Plan 2003/04 - This plan sets out the Council's achievements in the previous year and the plans for future improvements. The management of responsive repairs, voids maintenance, planned and cyclical maintenance and capital programme functions was the subject of the first fundamental service review (2000/01) within housing. A review of Community Housing Services (ie homelessness and housing advice, housing needs and allocations and private sector functions) is currently underway.

Local Public Service Agreement 2003 - This agreement includes twelve stretching targets to improve performance in key services provided by the Council, Primary Care Trust and the Police. The aim is to move forward more quickly on the challenging social inclusion agenda by focusing on improving skills, improving health and the environment, tackling crime and improving cost effectiveness. Progress towards meeting these targets will be assessed and reported each year.

The Borough Local Plan – This was adopted in 1994. Work is currently proceeding with the Review. In the interim period, pending the deposit of the Plan Review, the Council's statement of planning policy remains the Adopted Borough Local Plan (including its subsequent Alterations and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance) and the adopted Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan. These set out the policies that will control development in the Borough, including policies that will influence the level of affordable housing development and other housing improvements.

Capital Strategy 2003/04 / Asset Management Plan 2003/04 – Council-owned property is a major resource which needs to be used efficiently and effectively to assist the delivery of all the Council's services. Southend-on-Sea is part of the Thames Gateway and regeneration of the town, especially the town centre, may involve Council-owned premises. These need to be managed effectively to enable regeneration projects to proceed.

The Capital Strategy describes how the Council determines its priorities and approach to utilising capital investment for achieving its vision and ambitions. The Strategy sets the direction for the broad range of capital issues affecting the community, the town and the Council, such as regenerating the town, keeping transport flowing and ensuring high quality leisure facilities.

The Asset Management Plan sets out in more detail how the Council manages its capital assets. The Council's corporate approach to capital investment is reflected in the establishment of a Capital Programme Working Party, partnership working with the Police, Primary Care Trust and voluntary organisations, consultation with stakeholders and client satisfaction surveys. The Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan inform both the Housing Strategy and the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2003-06 - The HRA Business Plan sets out the Council's plans for expenditure and systems to deliver the management, repair and improvement of the Council's housing stock. The provision of decent and affordable housing is a key target within the Corporate Plan.

The Crime & Disorder Strategy 2002-05 – This strategy, managed through annual plans, seeks to improve the quality of life of all residents in the Borough and the environment in which businesses operate to ensure

that the town remains an exciting and safe place to live and visit. As a social landlord, the Council has a major role to play in tackling empty properties, dealing effectively with tenants causing nuisance and anti-social behaviour, and working to incorporate anti-crime designs in new developments.

"Tackling Health Inequalities: A Programme for Action" - The Government is putting together a cross-Government Delivery Plan for tackling health inequalities. Good housing is a central component of good health through links between homelessness and health problems, poor housing conditions and the incidence of disease and the connections between housing costs, poverty and poor housing.

The bringing together of the Council's Housing and Social Services into a new Department of Social Care in 2001 has provided a more integrated approach and links into Community Health Services. The Southend Health Improvement and Partnership Network has been set up to address health inequalities in Southend, co-ordinate those existing agencies currently addressing such inequalities, ensure that any gaps in service provision are tackled and monitor the implementation of service plans.

The Supporting People Strategy – The Supporting People programme is committed to funding housing-related, support services to a wide range of vulnerable people. New contractual relationships between the Council and support providers enables service users to live independently in their own homes, either through specifically designated, support accommodation or newly developed, floating support schemes. A key aspect of the Supporting People programme is to monitor and review the provision of all contracted support services so that service delivery across the sector is improved and service user consultation and involvement is encouraged.

The Housing Strategy also supports and feeds into the development of the Council's wider community objectives.

In March 2003, **Southend Together**, the Local Strategic Partnership, launched the new **Community Plan**. This new Plan sets out the vision for Southend over the next ten years and how the Council and other key partners will help to improve the quality of life of those living in, working and visiting the town. The Community Plan is the overarching plan and brings all the existing plans and strategies together, so that there is one joined-up approach. For example, "Crossbow", "Working Communities" and "Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership" are all top-level, regeneration partnerships supported by a range of other forums in which individuals and groups from the community play an active part.

Southend Together operates at three levels: a steering committee, key strategic partnerships (and their sub-groups) and the community conference. Everyone who lives or works in Southend-on-Sea can contribute and representatives include the police, the health service, the college, community and voluntary sector and local businesses. Membership of a local residents' forum, for example, will help to contribute to achieving the vision for Southend. A second Community Conference was held in November 2003.

The **Corporate Plan 2003-06** sets out the vision and ambitions for the Council over the next 3 years to deliver aspects of the Community Plan and the improvements required following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment carried out by the Audit Commission in 2002.

The Housing Strategy's interaction with these key strategies and plans helps ensure that the best use of housing resources will be made in order to achieve both corporate and service aims. For example, the provision of well managed, decent affordable housing and tackling homelessness are both key targets within the Corporate Plan 2003-06 (targets 13 and 14 respectively) though their achievement impacts directly on a number of other targets within the Corporate Plan by:

- Improving the infrastructure of the town (target 1)
- Developing strong local communities (target 2)
- Helping to reduce crime and disorder and the fear of crime (target 5)
- Providing more support for independent living (target 10)
- Working dynamically with partners to meet client needs (target 12)
- Improving customer care and making services more customer focused (targets 15-19)

- Delivering value for money in asset management and procurement practice (target 23)
- Ensuring effective performance management (target 24)
- Ensuring good financial management (target 25)

In the Housing Action Plan, these corporate targets are linked to each of the Council's key housing priorities set out in this Housing Strategy.

Finally, the Council produces or contributes to a range of other key strategies and plans. These include:

Ambition	Strategy/Plan	Statutory (S) or Non Statutory (NS)	Contact	Telephone Number
Regeneration	Bio Diversity Action Plan	NS	Paul Terry	(01702) 215602
	Contaminated Land Strategy	S	Mike Pregnall	(01702) 215325
	Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002 – 2005	S	Robert Thackeray	(01702) 215185
	Cultural Strategy	NS	Andrew Lewis	(01702) 215894
	Enforcement Concordat	NS	Colin Gabell	(01702) 215052
	Food Control Service Plan	NS	Steve Ramm	(01702) 215820
	Fuel Poverty Strategy	NS	Martin Turner	(01702) 215804
	Local Air Quality Strategy	S	Simon Griffiths	(01702) 215864
	Local Plan	S	Terry Bond	(01702) 215387
	Local Transport Plan	S	Bob Preston Paul Mathieson	(01702) 215708 (01702) 215321
	Minerals Local Plan	S	Terry Bond	(01702) 215387
	Municipal Waste Management Strategy	S	John Whiddon	(01702) 215309
	Objective 2 Local Area Framework	NS	Mark Murphy	(01702) 215660
	Objective 2 Single Programming Document (SPD)	NS	Mark Murphy	(01702) 215660
	Parks Strategy	NS	Sybille Wintermann	(01702) 215923
	Quality of Life Plan (LA 21)	NS	David Murray	(01702) 215021
	South East Essex: Economic Strategy (1999 – 2009)	NS	Mark Murphy	(01702) 215660
	Southeast-on-Sea Gateway Town Centre Strategy 2002 – 2012	NS	Mark Murphy	(01702) 215660
	SRB 3, 4, 5 and 6 Delivery Plans	NS	Mark Murphy	(01702) 215660
	SSHAPE Objective 2 Proposals	NS	Mark Murphy	(01702) 215660
Structure Plan	S	Terry Bond	(01702) 215387	
Waste Local Plan	S	Terry Bond	(01702) 215387	
Waste Strategy	S	John Whiddon	(01702) 215309	
Education	Adult Learning Plan	NS	Jill Warnes	(01702) 445700
	Annual Library Plan	S	Simon May	(01702) 612621
	Behaviour Support Plan	S	Graham Pratt	(01702) 215968
	Connexions Service Plan	NS	Michael Bracey	(01702) 332066
	Early Years Development and Child Care Plan	S	Terry Reynolds	(01702) 215949
	Educational Development Plan	S	Terry Reynolds	(01702) 215949
	Local Education Strategic Plan	NS	Terry Reynolds	(01702) 215949
	Ofsted Action Plan	S	Lorraine O'Reilly	(01702) 215890
	Promoting high attendance in schools	NS	Terry Reynolds	(01702) 215949

Ambition	Strategy/Plan	Statutory (S) or Non Statutory (NS)	Contact	Telephone Number
	SEN Strategy	NS	Lynda Ingham	(01702) 215902
	Southend Education Action Zone Plan	NS	Sandra Roberts	(01702) 476111
	Strategy for Social Inclusion for children and young people	NS	Terry Reynolds	(01702) 215949
Social Care	Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) Business Plan	NS	Chris Munday	(01702) 534407
	Better Care, Higher Standards	NS	Brian Garner	(01702) 534545
	Carers Strategy	S	Penny Martin	(01702) 534631
	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Plan	NS	Mick Hamblion	(01702) 534406
	Community Legal Service Partnership Strategy	NS	Legal Services Commission	(01223) 417943
	Decent Home Action Plan	NS	Graham Hollingdale	(01702) 214233
	Drugs Action Plan	NS	Ray Gorin	(01702) 345348
	Empty Homes Strategy	NS	Martin Turner	(01702) 215804
	Home Energy Conservation Strategy	S	Martin Turner	(01702) 215804
	Homeless Strategy and Review	S	Sue Pearson	(01702) 215223
	Housing Assistance Policy	S	Martin Turner	(01702) 215804
	HRA Business Plan	S	Keith Morcombe	(01702) 215419
	Housing Strategy Statement	S	Keith Morcombe	(01702) 215419
	Intermediate Care Strategy	S	Penny Furness Smith	(01702) 224647
	Local Preventative Strategy	NS	Paul Greenhalgh Meera Spillet	(01702) 215916 (01702) 534610
	Mental Health Strategy	NS	Daphne MacCambridge South Essex Partnership Trust	(01375) 364650
	Quality Protects Management Action Plan	S	Chris Munday	(01702) 534407
	Southend Primary Care Trust Local Development Plan	N/A	Penny Furness Smith	(01702) 224647
	Supporting People Strategy	S	Suzanna Edey	(01702) 534407
	Teenage Pregnancy Strategy	NS	Teenage Pregnancy Co ordinator	(01702) 224600
	Training/Human Resources Plan	S	Jim Gray	(01702) 534625
	Young People's Substance Misuse Plan	NS	Mary Wilkinson	(01702) 534403
	Youth Justice Plan	S	Derek Eyre	(01702) 608508
Citizen Focused	Communication and Consultation Strategy	NS	Emma Thomas	(01702) 215939
	Implementing E-Government Statement	NS	Sarah Bryant	(01702) 215180
	Race Equality and Diversity Strategy	NS	Kimberley Hall	(01702) 534810

Ambition	Strategy/Plan	Statutory (S) or Non Statutory (NS)	Contact	Telephone Number
Effective	Asset Management Plan	NS	Graham Swan	(01702) 215536
	Business Continuity Plan	S	Richard Prior	(01702) 215111
	Code of Corporate Governance	S	Tracy Brown	(01702) 215167
	Community Plan	S	Ceridwen Pettit	(01702) 215590
	Corporate Plan	NS	Tracy Brown	(01702) 215167
	Corporate Procurement Strategy	NS	Ceridwen Pettit	(01702) 215590
	Departmental Delivery Plans	NS	Irene Ferguson	(01702) 215187
	Local Performance Plan	S	Tracy Brown	(01702) 215167
	Risk Management Strategy	NS	Irene Ferguson	(01702) 215197

EXTRACT FROM THE REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY
2003-06**Thematic and Geographical Approach**

Theme	Proportion of Investment	Geography
Growth	40%	3 Growth Areas in Sustainable Communities Plan: London/Stansted/Cambridge, Milton Keynes South Midlands (Beds.), Thames Gateway South Essex The Housing Sub Regions of Cambridge, London Commuter Belt, Ipswich/Colchester, Greater Norwich
Regeneration	30%	Areas with high deprivation scores. Coastal areas, market towns, Thames Gateway South Essex, former New Towns
Rural	15%	Market towns, villages with under 3,000 population, other sustainable villages in need of affordable housing
Supported Housing	10%	All region for these client groups: mental health, learning difficulties, physical difficulties, alcohol and drug related problems, frail older people, vulnerable young people, people with HIV/Aids, homeless people including refugees, ex offenders, people fleeing domestic violence, vulnerable lone parents with babies including teenage parents
Black and Minority Ethnic Housing	5%	All region, focused on areas with relatively high BME populations

Extract from the Regional Housing Strategy 2003 - 2006

The Regional Action Plan "**Sustainable Communities in the East of England**" (ODPM 2003) sets out the housing challenges for the region:

- Providing for the East of England's growing population, which increased by some 6% in the last decade and is projected to increase by over half a million over the period 1996 to 2021

- Addressing the imbalance in the demand for and supply of housing, with household numbers increasing by 5.4% over 1996-2001 and the dwelling stock increasing by just 4.6%
- Increasing numbers of those people on modest incomes, including key public sector workers and others essential to the local economy, who cannot afford to purchase their own home
- Closing the gap between the need for and provision of affordable housing in rural districts
- Achieving the Government's ambitious target to ensure all social housing meets the Decent Homes standard by 2010

The East of England's "**Regional Housing Strategy 2003-2006**" sets out five Strategic Aims:

- To ensure everyone can live in a decent home at an affordable price
- To contribute effectively to social inclusion within sustainable communities
- To enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality
- To use housing investment to complement sustainable economic development
- To contribute to a sustainable environment

Furthermore, the following Priorities for Action are set out for the **Thames Gateway - South Essex Sub Region** (ie Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock):

Providing enough affordable homes

- Aiming to produce 400 new affordable homes in the first year of the strategy
- Achieving rent compliance by 2010
- Increasing the number of cross-boundary housing schemes

Contributing to social inclusion

- Reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and the average length of stay
- Designing out crime in existing housing
- Increasing the number of construction and training projects

Creating sustainable communities

- Identifying the need for rural housing schemes
- Completing the existing research into the housing needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and identify investment needs
- Promoting mixed housing schemes within local plans

Contributing to good health and promoting health equality

- Improving the range of housing options and other services for vulnerable people
- Improving SAP levels across all tenures
- Investing to support health improvement plans

Using housing investment to complement sustainable economic development

- Maximising investment in new housing to meet existing as well as future growth needs
- Delivering key worker and intermediate housing schemes as determined in housing needs surveys
- Improving inter-agency working, particularly with transport, planning and economic development
- Contributing to meeting the region's need for affordable housing

Contributing to a sustainable environment

- Promoting a more cohesive County approach to Section 106 agreements
- Maximising investment in regeneration schemes
- Minimising the environmental impact of new housing schemes and exploring opportunities for "green" housing schemes

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affordable Housing	Rented, shared ownership or low cost market housing developed and preserved for people who are otherwise unable to purchase on the open market.
Anti-Social Behaviour Order	An order awarded by the courts to stop an offender(s) committing anti-social behaviour within a particular area and timescale.
Anti-Social Behaviour Contract	A contract agreed by the Council and the alleged offender(s) to stop anti-social behaviour from reoccurring. The contract is put in place before court action is considered.
Approved Development Programme	The Housing Corporation's annual cash limit for capital expenditure on housing association projects. The ADP is distributed among registered social landlords through the allocation of Social Housing Grant for approved developments.
Arms Length Management Organisation	An alternative management system which would allow the Council to separate out the day-to-day landlord operations of the housing service from the strategic function without depriving tenants of the "comfort" of their security of tenure or the knowledge that the Council remained the owner of their homes.
Basic Credit Approval	Amount of money Central Government allows each local authority to borrow for capital expenditure as part of its Housing Investment Programme.
Benchmarking	Comparing the relative performance of different agencies on comparable activities.
Best Value	A duty for Local Authorities to review all the services they provide for local people and improve them by the best means possible. This must be done in consultation with the people who use the services and the wider local community.
Capital Receipts Initiative	Local Authorities have borrowing power to use finances mainly gained from the sale of Council houses.
Capital Strategy	This sets the framework within which the Council will award capital investment to ensure the best use of capital resources.
Catch-up Repairs	The level of repairs currently outstanding on Council stock necessary to bring the stock up to a good standard and to meet landlord obligations.

Compulsory Purchase Order	Ability of Local Authority to acquire private property in certain instances.
Decent Homes Standard	A requirement set by the Government for all social housing providers to meet specified minimum standards by 2010.
DTLR / ODPM	Department of Transport, Local Government & the Regions - Central Government department with responsibility for Local Government housing, urban regeneration, planning, and transport in England. The Department has changed to ODPM – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – with the responsibility for the majority of local government functions.
Egan Principles	In <i>Rethinking Construction</i> (1998) Sir John Egan, in his capacity as head of the Construction Industry Task Force, challenged the UK Construction Industry with the assertion that its methods and workings were inefficient. The task force has set the following principles with the aim of improving standards: sustainability, prefabrication, supply chain management, customer satisfaction, information and communications technology, respect for people.
Enabling Role	Facilitating the provision of new or improved housing through the activities of others. The Local Authority sets a framework for and promoting the activities of registered social landlords and private developers.
Essex Strategic Reserve	Funding allocated by the Housing Corporation from total resources available through the Approved Development Programme. This money is set aside to fund special needs housing initiatives.
"Fit for Purpose"	In 2002, the Government stipulated that the Housing Strategy Statement and HRA Business Plan must be "fit for purpose", effective and forward looking. The Government will assess the documents against: supporting the Council's wider objectives, demonstrating effective consultation with stakeholders and partners, meeting current and likely housing needs in all tenures and identifying resources for the future from a variety of sources.
Home Energy Efficiency Scheme	Grant scheme originally funded by the Department of the Environment. The scheme provides grants for loft insulation, draught proofing and advice on energy saving in homes of people on low-incomes and aged 60 or over.
Housing Association / RSL	A non-profit making organisation which provides affordable housing for those who cannot afford to buy a home. Most housing associations are Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).
Home Energy Efficiency Scheme	Grant scheme originally funded by the Department of the Environment. The scheme provides grants for loft insulation, draught proofing and advice on energy saving in homes of people on low-incomes and aged 60 or over.

Homeless Umbrella Group	A working group of voluntary and statutory organisations that meet to discuss homelessness issues.
House in Multiple Occupation	Premises occupied by a number of people where one or more of the facilities are shared. May also apply to bed and breakfast hotels in which a number of occupants are long term and have no other address.
Housing Assistance Regime	A new Government initiative to replace the Housing Renewal Grant. It will provide the Council with more flexible powers to ensure that private sector housing stock is made fit.
Housing Investment Programme	DTLR / ODPM approvals to local authorities to meet the capital expenditure in their housing investment strategy. Local Authorities bid for this on an annual basis.
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Local Authorities are required to maintain a separate account that sets out the expenditure and income arising from the provision of housing.
HRA Business Plan	A Plan detailing how the Council will manage, maintain and improve its housing stock over a period of 30 years.
Index of Deprivation 2000	An index of all Local Authorities wards in England and Wales and their levels of deprivation. Deprivation in each ward is graded on levels of, e.g. income, health and education.
Introductory Tenancies	Introductory Tenancies were created by Part V of the Housing Act 1996 and are tenancies which can be granted by a Local Authority or Housing Action Trust. The purpose of the legislation is to make it easier for landlords to evict tenants who are responsible for nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Tenants are granted an introductory tenancy, which lasts for 12 months and then becomes a secure tenancy.
Large Scale Voluntary Transfer	The process of Local Authorities transferring their housing stock to either a newly created or existing RSL.
Local Authority Social Housing Grant	Subsidy funding for registered social landlord through grant payments that is initiated by a Local Authority.
Major Repairs Allowance	A source of Government funding allocated to each Local Authority to help finance all major repairs
National Home Energy Rating	A standard form of measuring the energy rating of a property on a scale of 0 (very inefficient) - 10 (very efficient).
Private Finance Initiatives	An initiative introduced in 1992 to enable the private sector to be used to finance public sector projects.
Registered Social Landlord	A landlord that is registered with the Housing Corporation. The term was introduced by the Housing Act 1996 to reflect the expanded role of the Housing Corporation as funders and regulators of new social landlords.

Right To Buy	Government initiative that allows Council tenants to buy their home at a discounted rate
Section 106 Agreement	A legal planning obligation of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 placed on a private developer to secure additional requirements of the Local Authority in relation to a given site, such as the provision of affordable housing or open space.
‘Single Pot’	A new single funding regime that brings together Government permission for Local Authorities to borrow for spending on capital works with any capital receipts held by authorities from the sale of assets and money allocated to authorities to improve privately owned housing into a single pot.
Social Housing Grant	Main public subsidy funding paid to registered social landlords, allocated by the Housing Corporation, to finance new homes for rent, low cost home ownership and the rehabilitation of properties.
Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS)	This association ensures that all the voluntary services in Southend are represented and accountable.
Special Needs Index	The aim of this index is to register all relevant people, assess their housing needs and identify the gaps in provision.
Street/Block Voice	A tenant or leaseholder that is willing to act as a sounding board for an area without being part of a formal committee.
Supporting People	This programme will improve and reorganise the ways of helping vulnerable people living in the community.
Tenant Co-ordinator	The co-ordinator will act as a link between tenants, the Council and the contractors informing all parties with regards to difficulties and progress
Tenant Participation Compacts	Written agreements between Local Authorities and their tenants that set out the tenant participation policy, the role of tenants in decision-making and communication with tenants.

APPENDIX 4

HOUSING STATISTICAL APPENDIX

Further Enquiries

For all enquires about the Housing Strategy Statement, please contact:

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