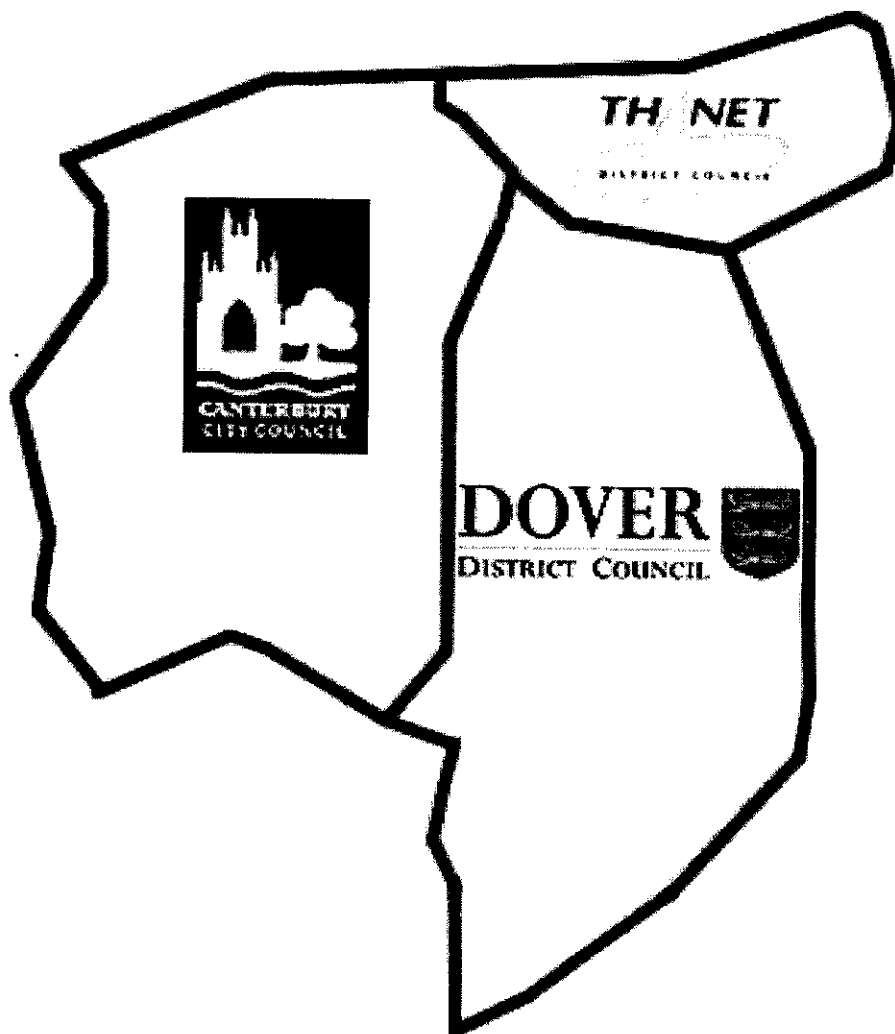


draft

**DOVER**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



# **EAST KENT TRIANGLE**



# **JOINT HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The commitment by Canterbury City Council, Dover and Thanet District Councils to produce a thematic Joint Housing Strategy for the East Kent Triangle has evolved from a long and successful history of partnership working. While each Local Authority will continue to produce a specific local strategy, the Joint Strategy will prioritise the following areas of mutual concern :-

- Private Rented Sector
- Homelessness
- Supported Housing
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Issues

## **LINKS**

The three local authorities have forged strong links together and with other agencies, for example :-

- Sharing of information, protocols and procedures

- Policy Partnerships

- Single Agency Assessment (Kent County Council (KCC) Social Services Department, Health and Housing) of housing need

- KCC/Local Authority Help Desks

- Young Persons Homeless Strategy.

- East Kent Triangle Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Forum

- Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing) with East Kent Health Authority, Social Services, Probation Service, Primary Care Groups, Ashford, Shepway and Swale Borough Councils

- Better Care, Higher Standards Charter under development, with Health, Social Services and other Kent Local Authorities

- Commissioning Forum for Supporting People, with Social Services, Health, Probation, Medway Unitary and all other Local Authority Housing Departments in Kent

- Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP)

- Joint Management Group for Physical Disabilities with Social Services And Swale Borough Council

- Combined Approach Document to Disabled Facility Grants with Social Services and all Kent Authorities

- Home Improvement Agencies

- Joint Tenant Participation forum and Joint Tenants' Conference

- Housing opportunities in North East Kent: joint approach to employment generated housing demand in the Sandwich corridor.

- Health Improvement Plan (HimP).

## **SUPPORTED HOUSING**

Research completed across East Kent has revealed that a large proportion of people have additional support needs, and are amongst the most disadvantaged, vulnerable and socially excluded members of the community. Many of these people currently have an unmet housing need due to a lack of suitable accommodation, while others require assistance to enable them to both access and maintain their home. The focus of supported housing projects and need across the area is in helping people to achieve the maximum level of independence possible and developing and delivering a range of flexible services that meet the needs of individual clients living in the community.

Housing Needs Studies completed in each of the 3 district Council areas have identified that around 19% of all households contain someone with a support need. These issues have been investigated in more detail through the completion of specific Supported Housing Research across East Kent, which was commissioned by the Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing). The findings of these research projects have been used to influence Housing Strategies in the area.

Further research is currently being undertaken by the Disabled Persons Accommodation Agency, also commissioned by the Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing), which is looking at the specific needs of people with physical disabilities. This research is due to report its findings in March 2002.

The research completed has identified a number of common themes and priorities for supported housing across East Kent. These are:

- More flexible services to help older people to remain in their own homes, including the provision of enhanced care sheltered housing, particularly in Dover and Thanet.
- Cross-district Independent Living Schemes for people with on-going support needs. Particularly for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities.
- Floating support services for a wide range of people with short to medium term support needs, including young people, teenage mothers, people with mental health problems or learning disabilities, ex-offenders, people with histories of rough sleeping and asylum seekers.
- Increased provision of homes designed for people with physical disabilities, and improved access arrangements.
- Housing with intensive management and support services for those with the most complex support needs, including young people, ex-offenders, people with drug or alcohol problems, women fleeing domestic violence and rough sleepers.
- The introduction of specific cross authority housing registers for supported housing and housing for people with physical disabilities.
- Improved information to the community about the range, location and access arrangements to supported housing.

The three District Councils within East Kent will continue to support:

- the Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing)
- the Kent Commissioning Forum for Supporting People

to implement the Supporting People proposals, co-ordinate, priorities and commission housing, care and support services across the area.

## **PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR**

The level of unfitness in the private rented sector continues to rise and disturbingly, so does the number of properties in serious disrepair. Across East Kent concerns are shared on the impact this has on the health and self-esteem of individuals and communities and more broadly on economic development and regeneration.

Looking to the detail of action taken in the private sector, registration schemes are seen as a positive tool in managing multi-occupied premises. The three districts are seeking to share existing experience with registration with a view to delivering consistent schemes across East Kent. In this way landlords and the larger managing agents or landlords with properties in more than one district will be dealt with on an equal basis.

Enforcement standards and approach to education and guidance worked in isolation can also have a negative impact on another district. A joint approach is seen as a positive means to secure longer-term benefit for East Kent and this is another area where development is seen to be appropriate.

### **Shared Objectives**

**Aim: To identify Housing in the Private Rented Sector which is unfit or unsuitable for occupation and through education, encouragement or enforcement bring it up to an acceptable standard.**

- to share experiences, skills and training in Housing Enforcement work, fostering consistency in approach and best practice having regard to priorities of individual authorities
- whilst recognising the important role of the Private Rented Sector in housing provision, to acknowledge the poor state of many properties especially Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and to work together to seek improvements to these properties
- to work together with Landlord and Tenants in an educative role and to encourage the creation of Landlord forums and accreditation schemes
- to share knowledge of Landlords who operate on a cross border basis where this information can be legally supplied
- to develop external legal housing expertise where that expertise is not available in house
- to work collaboratively to ensure that all asylum seeker accommodation meets appropriate housing standards and to ensure that national and local agencies dealing with such are meeting their responsibilities to provide safe accommodation
- to strengthen working relationships with RSLs, and other social housing providers where they are providing housing in the private rented sector
- to develop policies and procedures for ensuring that empty properties are brought back into use and that good practice is shared amongst the authorities
- To focus priority spending on wards showing high levels of unfitness and deprivation

## **JOINT STRATEGY FOR HOMELESSNESS**

The three authorities all experience the same range of problems and have seen an increase in recent years in the numbers of clients with a range of problems and support needs. Some clients with substance abuse or mental health problems may prove difficult to accommodate due to their challenging behaviour.

### **Shared Objectives:**

- To continue to take a proactive approach towards homelessness and seek improvements in the service through exchanging Best Practice and benchmarking through Kent Homeless Officers Group, joint working with partner authorities and participation in other groups
- To continue to work with Social Services, 16plus and other agencies to meet the needs of young people who have been looked after and to encourage, where appropriate, arrangements for floating support
- To review policies and procedures for dealing with homelessness to take account of the Homeless Bill 2001 and changes in powers and duties to ensure consistent policies which have no negative impact on partner Authorities.
- To work with partner authorities to exchange Best Practice on new initiatives.
- To strengthen partnerships with Social Services, Health Authority and other agencies to provide support to those with mental or physical health or substance abuse problems and encourage the provision of more supported accommodation and floating support for these client groups
- To strengthen partnerships with Social Services, 16plus, and other agencies to meet the needs of young people and to encourage the provision of floating support for this client group.
- To strengthen partnerships with the Womens Refuge, and other organisations to meet the needs of those fleeing violence and encourage the provision of floating support for this client group.
- In partnership with Canterbury Cyrenians, to carry out a head count of rough sleepers to inform the development of the 5 year Homeless Strategy.

## **BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC ISSUES**

The East Kent Authorities share a strong commitment to Equal Opportunities for all the community and consider they have a responsibility to ensure there is no discrimination in the delivery of services.

Each Authority undertakes to make sure its services are equally accessible to everyone and will not tolerate discrimination against anyone on the grounds of sex, disability, race, marital status, age sexual orientation, religious beliefs or any other reason.

The Authorities will jointly build links with organisations representing BME communities with a view to developing a BME Housing Strategy.

Effective ongoing ethnic monitoring will be carried out to ensure that policies and outcomes are not discriminatory and positive action will be taken to rectify any imbalances or under-representation identified.

Authorities will ensure staff receive training on Human Rights, equal opportunities and are sensitive to BME issues.

draft

**DOVER**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



# **HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE**

**July 2001**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The current Housing Strategy was prepared in 1998 to cover the period 1999-2003. This update provides information on areas of work where there have been further developments and to cover the period 2003/2008.

In preparation for the development of a new strategy in 2002 changes since that time in consultation with the community and other stakeholders, work has taken place in 2000/2001 in collecting and analysing the information to provide a firm basis to develop the strategy within the corporate context. Surveys of private and public sector Stock Condition and Housing Needs have been completed in 2001.

## **STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

The Strategy Action plan for 2002 onwards appears on page 9 and reference to specific actions relating to the text are shown in brackets.

## **EAST KENT TRIANGLE JOINT HOUSING STRATEGY**

Since the main Housing Strategy was drafted the three Councils in the East Kent Triangle, Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council and Thanet District Council have worked increasingly closer together. More recently it has been possible to develop a thematic joint strategy which deals with areas of mutual concern. This joint housing strategy should be read in conjunction with the main strategy and this strategy update.

## **CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING**

The Council has a well-developed system of corporate planning which has been focused most recently in the shape of the Best Value Performance Plan entitled 'Our District, Our Future'. The second edition of this document covering 2001 to 2002 has recently been published. This plan is a wide ranging document which describes how the Council is organised, the services provided and the main objectives for the future. Extensive consultation with the general public and other interested bodies is being encouraged to ensure that the plan reflects the aspirations of the local community, and evolving aims and objectives that emanate from the consultation will be consolidated into a Corporate Plan.

Four key themes are identified:

### ***Community***

- providing more affordable housing
- improving health measures
- reducing crime
- reducing fear of crime
- promoting confidence and stimulating self-help

### ***Regeneration***

- bringing down the unemployment rate to below regional average
- revitalising urban centres, former coalfield sites and identified industrial areas
- raising education and skill levels above the Kent average



## ***Opportunity and Access***

- improving transportation links to, from and within the District
- improving the availability of public transport
- ensuring that everyone has access to all public services, buildings and information

## ***Environment***

- reducing pollution levels
- reducing waste
- encouraging recycling and energy efficiency
- promoting the countryside and protecting wildlife.

## **STRATEGIC CAPITAL PROGRAMMING**

Under the Single Capital pot arrangements, DDC qualifies for two allocations, the Housing Investment Programme and the Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services Programme. The Council is aware of the vital importance of a well prepared and cohesive strategic capital plan that is co-ordinated to achieve the stated corporate objectives. A cross-departmental officer working group including housing representation meets regularly to manage progress of the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan. The current level of capital programme generally only permits one major capital scheme at any one time, with a number of small supporting schemes directed to address the most pressing priorities. The Council has identified as one of its key themes the need to maintain visitor levels in the District and major capital projects identified in the medium term capital plan include the completion of Deal Dry side and then the refurbishment of Deal Pier.

## **COMMUNITY PLAN**

Work on the development of the Community Plan continues. A workshop was held in May 2001 involving a wide range of stakeholders. The workshop looked at key issues that should be addressed in the next three years. and identified specific outcomes that the partnership should devote energies to over the following three years together with longer term outcomes for the future.

The group also looked at how the Community Strategy Board should operate and could contribute to the co-ordination of the various development plans and joined up initiatives in the district. The first meeting of the Board took place in July 2001 and enabled stakeholders and community representatives to develop the priorities established in the workshop which will be the starting point for further development.

## **THE STRATEGIC HOUSING ROLE**

A Working Group was established in 2001 to look at ways of further separating the Strategic Housing functions from Landlord functions specifically dedicated to the delivery of service to tenants. The Group made recommendations in early summer which included the establishment of a small unit to work on Housing Strategy, Policy and Research. The recommendations will be implemented by December 2001 (Action Plan 2(iii)). This separation will allow closer links to be built with Corporate and Community Planning, Partners and Stakeholders and more time to be devoted to research and policy formulation.

## **PLANNING AND LAND SUPPLY ISSUES**

The Kent Structure Plan's requirement for housing land in the District has been more than met through the District Local Plan. The Local Plan, which is nearing adoption, covers the period to 2006. In addition, the latest Housing Land Supply Study produced by the County Council (base date 2000) indicates that there is already an identified land supply to meet Structure Plan requirements up to 2011.

The Local Plan has made specific allocations in the north of the District to help meet housing demands generated by the fast pace of economic growth in the Sandwich corridor. It also contains policies to enable affordable housing schemes on a rural exceptions basis, to negotiate with developers for a proportion of affordable housing on general market sites and to seek an element of small dwellings in schemes of more than 15 homes. Several rural exceptions schemes have been successfully completed and, on finalisation of the Council's commissioned Housing Needs Assessment, the Council will have a robust and defensible basis for negotiating with developers to provide an element of affordable housing in line with targets set out in the Local Plan together with an element of small dwellings. Outline planning permission for a site at Ash has already been granted on this basis and discussions are taking place with prospective developers of other sites. (Action Plan 1(iv)).

## **HOUSING NEEDS**

In December 2000 the Council commissioned David Couttie Associates to carry out a District-wide assessment of Housing Needs. The purpose of the study was to examine the housing requirements, needs aspirations and demands of the communities and households of the District. Initial findings indicate a level of need for affordable housing which cannot be met in the 5 year period recommended by Government.

The survey identifies a mismatch between the size, type and location of dwellings in the stock of all sectors, and the size, type and location of the demand expressed by existing and newly formed households. The findings draw particular attention to the under supply of flats in all sectors of housing. There is an affordability problem in the district for low-income households and access to owner occupation was beyond the reach of a sizeable proportion of concealed households and there is a need for low-cost market housing particularly to meet the need for smaller dwellings. (Action Plan 1(i))

## **PRIVATE SECTOR STOCK CONDITION SURVEY**

This survey was completed in April 2001 and reinforces concerns about parts of the owner occupied and private rented stock. Overall unfitness levels of 13% were found across the whole district rising to 19% in one area of Dover. The preponderance of pre 1919 terraced houses and a large private rented sector are responsible for high unfitness levels, which are nearly twice the national average. Dover wards were found to be in the worst condition. 30% of the private rented sector stock was found to be unfit. The 21 -30 age group had the highest levels of unfitness as a group reflecting the age group which live in flats. Castle ward was singled out as having particular problems with HMO's in particular converted flats.

The number of empty properties at 3% is below the national average and not a significant problem. Previous surveys have tended to include second homes, which by definition should not have been included.

The average SAP rating of 47 is again better than the national average and reflects the commitment the Council has made to energy conservation over the past three years. However 19% of residents are estimated to suffer fuel poverty. (Action Plan 1(iii))

### **Private Sector Grants Policies**

The grant budget for all types of grant has been set at £700,000 for the coming financial year. Due to approvals in previous years being above this limit no new offers are being made except for disabled facilities grants. This has impacted on our Empty Property Grant Scheme as well as renovation and other grants. In the light of the House Condition Survey this causes some concern.

### **DEVELOPMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH RSLs**

As a result of the effect of the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) and other priorities within the Housing Capital Programme, it has not been possible to allocate any LASHG in 2002/03 and it is unlikely that this position will improve in the short term. The main emphasis on priorities within the Housing Corporation Programme continues to be completion of schemes to replace the Airey houses in the rural areas of the district. (Action Plan 1(v) and 2(iv)).

### **UNDER-OCCUPATION IN SOCIAL HOUSING**

Guidance issued by DETR in 2001 draws attention to the need for a strategy on under-occupation which recognises and provides for those who wish to move to a smaller home and encourage others to consider such a move at an earlier stage than they might otherwise have done.

Under-occupation is of particular concern where:

- homeless households and families on the housing register are living in unsatisfactory conditions because the supply of family sized relets is too small .
- existing tenants are overcrowded and have no opportunity to transfer to a larger home.
- the existing home is a burden to the tenant who is under-occupying.

It is however accepted that there may be sound reasons for under-occupation in certain types of property or certain locations, for instance to reduce child densities, retain mix of household types or encourage people to live on unpopular estates. A policy to reduce under-occupation in low demand areas can be counter-productive to development of sustainable communities by moving longstanding members.

The Housing Needs Survey identified under-occupation at 17.4% of all households. This figure was assessed using a criteria more than one spare bedroom as the benchmark of under occupation while the majority of under-occupied households are found among owner occupiers, the results indicate 9.2% of Council tenants and 2.4% of Registered Social Landlord (RSL) tenants were under-occupying their homes.

Council policies to tackle under-occupation already include higher priority for transfer to smaller properties and an incentive scheme which provides payments of £1,000 to Council tenants moving to vacate family accommodation. However, the level of under-occupation indicates that there is scope for discussing further initiatives from the Guidance with Tenants Groups to develop a wider range of options to reduce under-occupation. (Action Plan 1(vi)).

### **MEDIATION SERVICE**

During 2001 a Mediation Service was piloted with a number of Council tenants in the District. The service is provided by way of a grant payment to Shepway Mediation Service, established in 1998 in the neighbouring Local Authority area, using trained volunteers recruited from a cross-section of the community. Mediation is used to help resolve disputes between neighbours who are either inconsiderate or intolerant of the lifestyles of others and commonly features noise or anti-social behaviour.

The effectiveness of the scheme will be considered in late 2001, with a view to extending it to private sector tenants if the pilot proves successful. (Action Plan 3(v)).

### **STRATEGY FOR HOMELESSNESS**

During 2000/2001, 869 households approached the Council for assistance and 241 were accepted as homeless and in priority need. The Council currently has 46 units of stock designated as intermediate housing, and also make use of less popular vacancies. These are offered on non-secure tenancies to homeless households who are either rehoused or made secure tenants at the appropriate time. The Council also has sole use of two homeless hostels, comprising 17 units, managed by RSLs. Private sector leased properties managed by RSLs are also used extensively to discharge the Council's homeless duty and 35 such units were in use in March 2001. Where a household accepted priority need is registered on the SHR additional priority can be given in certain circumstances so that a secure tenancy can be offered. A high proportion of households made homeless from the private sector at the end of a shorthold tenancy are housed in this way without the need for use of temporary accommodation.

The current approach continues to focus on the following core activities:

- preventing homelessness by providing advice on a range of tenancy and mortgage issues
- liaising with landlords in support of tenants' legal right of occupation
- providing support to the homeless by liaising with Social Services, Mental Health Team, Probation, and Womens' Refuge
- providing support for those who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- keeping the use of bed and breakfast to a minimum.
- securing accommodation for the homeless

The Council recognises the importance of the links between homelessness policies, the Housing Advice service and allocation policies and the need to ensure that policies work in a complimentary way to meet housing need and prevent homelessness. During 2001 work will begin on reviewing the policy for allocation of social housing to comply with legislative changes, develop sustainable lettings and promote corporate objectives. This will include working with RSLs to improve fairness and choice through further development of common waiting list and

allocations policy. In addition to the shared objectives described in the East Kent Triangle document specific local initiatives include on going work with Downland Housing Society and Stonham Housing Association towards the successful completion of the Leyburne Road scheme for single people including direct access provision. Since the closure of the YMCA there has been no direct access provision in the District, which some of the most vulnerable people without shelter. (Action Plan 1(viii)). A headcount of Rough Sleepers planned for Autumn 2001 which provide more accurate information on the extend of need. (Action Plan 1(ix)).

Revenue Deficit Grant will continue to be paid to Hyde Housing Association to support the Women's Refuge and to Stonham Housing Association who provide hostel bedspaces for ex-offenders and single people with a variety of support needs. The Council is negotiating with Stonham for increased nominations in exchange for a transfer of the freehold of one hostel at less than market price. (Action Plan 1(xi)).

In 2002 work will begin to develop a detailed Homelessness Strategy for 2003 to 2008 in consultation with partners and stakeholders. The strategy will comply with the provisions of the Homeless Bill 2001 and reflect the particular needs of specific client groups. It will show strong links to the main Housing Strategy and Corporate Policy particularly in the areas of Community and Opportunity and Access. (Action Plan 1(x))

A Best Value Service Review of Homelessness service is planned in 2004. This will involve consulting with the community and our partners, comparing performance with other Councils and service providers, demonstrating competitiveness, and challenging the method of service provision. (Action Plan 2(i)).

### **FLOATING SUPPORT**

In order to address the difficulties some social housing residents face in sustaining their tenancy, various models of offering floating support are being researched. Discussions are proceeding with organisations and RSLs who have experience of providing floating support to tenants under 24 years and to tenants who have mental health or dependency problems. Initially support will be provided to a small number of Councils and RSL tenants who are particularly vulnerable with a view to extending the scheme to vulnerable tenants who might otherwise be at risk of losing their tenancy. (Action Plan 1(xiv)).

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND BME ISSUES**

The Council's strong commitment to Equal Opportunities for all the community continues through the work of the Equal Opportunities Task Force. The Task Force is working to develop a comprehensive policy by the end of 2001 building on and improving the specific policies within services and Departments of the Council. A BME Housing Strategy will be developed by the East Kent Triangle Authorities. (Action Plan 1(vii) and 3(vi)).

### **HOUSING STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

Following on the completion on the Housing Needs Assessment and Private Sector Surveys, work will begin on the development of a fresh Housing Strategy to cover the period 2003/2008. The strategy will be developed building on the work of the East Kent Triangle Authorities and in consultation with stakeholders. (Action Plan 1(iii)).

The Council is currently considering the establishment of a Working group of Members, Officers and Stakeholders to inform and guide housing strategy development. Presentations on the surveys will be made autumn 2001. The Group will decide on the most effective way to ensure the strategy is fully informed, possibly through the use of Focus groups, it will work with officers to give policy direction and advice for the development of a draft and will determine the consultations stages possibly including a major seminar or conference. The Working Group will then have a role in monitoring delivery of the targets within the strategy, reviewing progress and developing updates.

## Strategy Action Plan - 2002 onwards

1. **Promote a sufficient supply of affordable, well maintained, energy efficient homes to ensure that everyone has equal opportunity and choice in access to affordable housing including support for those who need it.**

| Action   | Target   | To be Achieved by          |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| (i) To fully consider the results of the Housing Needs Assessment and develop policies to deal with need in conjunction with the community and other stakeholders.                 | Complete analysis  | March 2002                 |
| (ii) To further analyse the results of the private sector housing survey and develop policies to deal with the issues identified.  | Complete analysis  | March 2002                 |
| (iii) Develop Housing Strategy 2003/2008 in consultation with community and stakeholders   | Complete consultation and Strategy                                   | July 2002                  |
| (iv) Promote the provision of affordable housing through the planning process.   | Achieve 25% affordable housing on all schemes.                       | Annually from 2002 onwards |
| (v) Work with parish councils, local communities, Kent Rural community Council and RLSs to provide affordable housing to meet local need in rural areas according to local demand. | Identify need for schemes during development of new Housing Strategy | April 2003                 |
| (vi) In consultation with Tenants groups and RSLs, consider ways of reducing under-occupation of social housing stock.   | Using recent guidance complete consultation and agree policy         | April 2003                 |

| Action   | Target  | To be Achieved by   |
|--|---|---|
| (vii) Develop policies to achieve sustainable lettings to promote stable communities, increasing equality of access and maximising choice to those seeking social housing. | <p>Research sustainable lettings initiatives using Best Practice examples from other social landlords.</p> <p>Implement new policies to comply with the Homeless Bill and improve choice and sustainability in lettings.</p> <p>Ensure equal opportunities, Human Rights Act and BME issues are incorporated in the revised Lettings Policy.</p> <p>Working with RSLs to further develop the Common Waiting List.</p> | <p>March 2002</p> <p>By Government timescales</p> <p>By Government timescales</p> <p>April 2003</p> |
| (viii) To increase the supply of accommodation for homeless single people and provide direct access.   | Work with Downland Housing Society and Stonham Housing Association to complete project at Leyburne Road, Dover.   | 2002/03   |
| (ix) To carry out head count of Rough Sleepers to inform 5 year Homeless Strategy in partnership with EKT and Cyrenians  | Complete head count and analyse results   | December 2001   |
| (x) To develop detailed Homelessness Strategy for 2003/08 in consultation with partners and stakeholders to comply with provisions of Homeless Bill 2001                   | Complete Strategy following consultation  | By Government timescales  |
| (xi) Continue to promote Supported Housing.  | <p>Continue funding to Hyde Housing Association for Women's Refuge and Stonham Housing Association for hostels.</p> <p>Complete disposal of Freehold of Oban House, Dover, in exchange for increased nomination rights.</p>   | <p>Annually</p> <p>April 2003</p>   |
| (xii) Investigate the possibility of the Rent Deposit Scheme low income households access the private rented sector.   | Using Best Practice and working with partners.  | April 2003  |



| Action  | Target  | To be Achieved by            |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| (xiii) Fully implement 'Supporting People' proposals.   | Supporting people initiative implemented                                    | April 2003                   |
| (xiv) To introduce floating support to vulnerable tenants beginning with those under 24 years and those with mental health or dependency problems.<br><br>To review the benefits of floating support and extend the scheme. | To provide floating support to 15 social housing tenants as a pilot scheme. | April 2002<br><br>April 2003 |

**2. Develop more open, positive and productive ways of listening to, working with and consulting the community, integrating Corporate principles of Best Value, Community Safety and Community Planning into all aspects of Housing Strategy.**

| Action  | Target  | To be Achieved by       |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| (i) Continue to develop the Best Value Reviews.   | Fully implement Building Maintenance Review.  | 2001/01                 |
|   | Complete Housing Management Best Value Reviews  | October 2001            |
|   | Implement Housing Management Best Value Improvement Plan                                | By target dates in plan |
|   | Carry out Best Value Review of Community Care   | 2002/03                 |
|   | Carry out Best Value Review of Housing Strategy   | 2004/05                 |
|   | Carry out Best Value Review of Homelessness   | 2004/05                 |
| (ii) Carry out regular service reviews and satisfaction surveys.                                    | To continue reviews and put in place reviews for remaining services.                    | April 2001              |
| (iii) Continue to develop the separation of the strategic enabling function from landlord services. | Implement recommendations of Working Group.   | December 2001           |
|   | Create unit to cover strategy, policy and research work.                                | December 2001           |
| (iv) Continue to improve liaison with landlords.  | Further development of East Kent Triangle RSL Forum and Private Sector Landlords Forum. | During 2002/03          |

**3. Increase tenant participation in policy direction, housing management and the design and implementation of service standards. Promote effective management of, and investment in, housing estates to provide an environment where tenants are content to live.**

| Action   | Target  | To be Achieved by                            |
|--|---|--|
| (i) Implement the Tenants Compact, including delegated area budgets under the direct control of the District Tenants Group.  | Involvement of tenants in the decision making process.  | 2001 onwards                                 |
| (ii) Consider options for financing future investment in the Council's stock, according to Best Value and the HRA Business Plan  | Options considered in partnership with tenants  | According to timescales from review and plan |
| (iii) Consider the options for the future provision of sheltered housing and support for elderly people  | Complete option appraisal.  | Summer 2002                                  |
| (iv) Increase the level of consultation regarding the next refurbishment of a sheltered housing scheme, involving tenants earlier on in the proposed designs regarding layout as well as colour choices etc. | To develop the already high level of client/tenant consultation in the design or refurbishment schemes commencing with Manley House, Whitfield  | December 2001                                |
| (v) Evaluate mediation service introduced for Council tenant 2001 and consider extending to private sector   | Evaluate effectiveness.<br><br>Extend scheme if appropriate   | October 2001<br><br>April 2002               |
| (vi) Work to promote sustainable communities, social inclusion and equal opportunities on housing estates.   | In conjunction with the Equal Opportunities Task Force, work to develop policies.<br><br>Work with the East Kent Triangle partners (Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council and Thanet District Council) to develop a joint BME strategy.<br><br>Continue to take a firm line on racial harassment and monitor progress.<br><br>Ensure staff receive training on Human Rights Act, equal opportunities and are sensitive to BME issues.<br><br>Continue to improve speed and effectiveness of dealing with anti-social behaviour. | March 2002                                   |

| Action   | Target   | To be Achieved by                      |
|--|--|--|
| (vii) Continue to develop Void Strategy to ensure minimum loss of rent through vacancy.  | <p>Develop Best Practice and continue close working of Void Strategy Group.</p> <p>Reduce average relet time below 35 days.</p> <p>Reduce percentage of rent lost through local authority dwellings becoming vacant below 1%.</p>  | Ongoing                                |
| (viii) Continue sharing of Best Practice and Best Value Benchmarking with Kent Authorities and other organisations as appropriate  | Obtain comparative information to provide a quantitative measurement of delivered value and help stimulate continuous improvement  | Ongoing                                |
| (ix) Continue to give priority to investment in housing estates to provide a safe and secure environment and work with other Departments and Agencies to promote regeneration and the objectives of the Community Plan | <p>Target resources at St Radigunds and Lower Buckland for Estate Environmental Improvements to include working with the SRB unit / Kent Constabulary Architectural Liaison Officer and Crime Reduction Officers.</p> <p>Work with the community and other Agencies to secure funding for Golf Road Community Project in Deal.</p> | <p>April 2002</p> <p>December 2002</p> |