

HOUSING STRATEGY 2008-11 – DRAFT

Contents

Page

SECTION 1 – OVERVIEW	
National Regional and Sub-Regional Context	
National Challenges and Government Policy Responses.....	
Regional Housing Strategy.....	
Draft Berkshire Sub-Regional Housing Strategy.....	
Profile of the Royal Borough	
Corporate Context	
Sustainable Communities Plan.....	
Local Area Agreement.....	
Local Development Framework.....	
Sustainability Issues.....	
Adult Plan.....	
Sub-Plans of Housing Strategy	
SECTION 2 – PRIVATE SECTOR	
SECTION 3 – HOUSING NEEDS	
SECTION 4 – SUPPORTED HOUSING and SUPPORTING PEOPLE	
SECTION 5 – NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING	
SECTION 6 – APPENDICES	
Consultation	
Action Plan	
Monitoring and Updating Arrangements	
Links to Other Documents	

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Section 1 – Overview

National, Regional and Sub-Regional Context

National Challenges and Government Policy Response

Housing issues are currently in the national spotlight. There is a pressing need for new housing to be delivered by the development industry to meet the needs and aspirations of the population. Within that there is a need for increased delivery of affordable housing, to address the needs of those who cannot afford to buy or rent privately in many areas, including ours. There is also a need for the carbon footprint of both new and existing housing to be reduced.

The Government have made Housing one of their key priorities, with a particular focus on increasing housing supply, wanting to see 3 million new houses built by 2020. There are also challenging targets for new affordable housing delivery (which in this part of the country is very dependent on affordable housing being delivered alongside new private housing via Section 106 agreements) of 70,000 a year by 2010/11.

New affordable housing is already expected to meet increasing environmental standards, above those of the private sector. There is however a very challenging target for all new homes to be carbon neutral by 2016. Minimum standards are also planned to cut water usage by 20%. An even bigger challenge is that of radically improving the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock. In addition there is also still an expectation that affordable housing will meet the Decent Homes Standard.

There is also a renewed focus on local authorities as place shapers and leaders of their communities, with the key role of housing recognised. Local Area Agreements have been given a statutory basis and a formal framework for co-operation for local partners. The LAA negotiating framework has been refined so that each LAA contains no more than 35 priority improvement targets picked from the new streamlined national indicator set. There is a changed emphasis on housing issues within the indicators.

To streamline work on housing at a national level, a new Homes and Communities Agency is being established, combining the investment role of the Housing Corporation, all of English Partnerships and the delivery work of the Communities and Local Government department.

At the time of writing, the impacts of the global “credit crunch” on the economy as a whole, and within that the housing market, are developing daily. In terms of housing, there has been a considerable slow-down in development as the mortgage market has tightened up. The Government has already made some responses to this, including earmarking some £400 million of Housing Corporation funding to enable housing associations to buy up new housing that had been intended for the private market; introducing a new Homebuy Direct scheme, to enable first time buyers to access properties on new-build development schemes; and piloting a mortgage rescue scheme. As market conditions continue to adjust, there will be an ongoing need to be able to respond quickly and effectively to the threats and opportunities that may arise. The Council will also need to consider the impact on partner agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Regional Housing Strategy

The Regional Housing Strategy 2008-11 produced by the South East England Regional Assembly informs Government funding decisions for the South East.

Their priorities include:

- Ensuring that 35% of all new homes are affordable, with an emphasis on homes for affordable rent.
- Ensuring that new affordable homes come in a range of sizes, to suit families as well as couples and singles.
- Making sure that new affordable homes meet high standards of building and energy efficiency and with a greater attention to the overall quality of design.
- Investing in refurbishing rundown private sector housing, with high environmental standards applying to the refurbishment of existing homes in all sectors; affordable homes in rural areas; and accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.
- Exploring approaches for establishing a consistent methodology that enables the need for accommodation-based support for vulnerable people to be identified.

Draft Berkshire Sub-Regional Housing Strategy

The six unitary authorities in Berkshire have adopted an active cross-boundary approach, in line with a greater Government emphasis on sub-regional cross-boundary working. The Berkshire Housing Strategists Group has met regularly, including in its membership not only local authority housing and planning officers, but local housing associations, the Government Office for the South East and the Housing Corporation. A draft Sub-Regional Housing Strategy has been produced, and endorsed by Berkshire Leaders Group. Many of the aims agreed in the draft strategy have been achieved, including:

- Sharing good practice to achieve the 2010 Temporary Accommodation Target.

- Develop Rural Housing initiatives – RBWM, along with West Berkshire and Wokingham have supported the Rural Housing Enabler initiative.
- Shared good practice on successfully negotiating affordable housing.
- Carried out one of the pilot sub-regional Housing Market Assessments.
- Participating in a successful joint bid, led by RBWM, to develop a sub-regional Flexible Loan Scheme involving 18 local authorities and worth £16million.

The successful work of the Group continues, with further pan-Berkshire Members level events planned to further develop joint working where appropriate.

Profile of the Royal Borough

The Royal Borough has some key characteristics. We are one of the six Unitaries within the old Berkshire boundary. In common with other Unitaries, our spatial relationships are important and complicated, for example the PCT and the Police deliver services across the Berkshire East area (Bracknell Forest, Slough and RBWM) and other partners, such as the Fire and Rescue service, work across all 6 Berkshire authorities. The Police also work in a wider Thames Valley context.

RBWM itself is relatively small with a population of about 139,100 (Source: Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-2006 population estimate). Current projections indicate that the population will continue to increase and that by 2015 the borough can expect a population of around 143,600. RBWM is very green having 83% of its land designated as green belt and also contains National Trust and Crown land. Another characteristic is the quality of the built environment, which is generally high. It has quite a high population density but with most people living in the two urban centres of Windsor and Maidenhead. (687 people per square kilometre compared to 424 for the SE region) Apart from these two population centres there are a number of small, attractive towns and villages, each area having distinctive characteristics in terms of buildings, the economy and population.

One special characteristic is that RBWM is a major visitor and tourist attraction attracting seven million visitors a year generating a local spend of £360 million.

Some of the issues facing the Borough come from its affluence and its attractiveness to visitors. Whilst the locality is generally affluent, healthy and offers full employment, this masks certain inequalities and deprivation in some areas. An issue increasingly pressing on the public sector is the rising age of the population specially those in the most elderly groups. Managing the differences between people and communities is also important: wealthy and poor, rural and urban, different ethnic groups.

People from black and minority groups comprise 7.6% of the total population. This is the third highest proportion in Berkshire after the urban areas of Reading and Slough. About 4.6% of the total population have Asian or Asian British ethnic minority backgrounds, 1.7% Irish backgrounds and 0.5% Chinese backgrounds. There are three wards in Maidenhead where over 10% of the population are from BME groups. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds in the Borough's schools is

15.6%. In some schools this figure is much higher - in one school 75% of pupils have a Pakistani ethnic minority background.

House prices are amongst the highest outside Greater London and are twice the national average. The high cost of housing, the high use of car transport and the large movement across borders to reach work has widespread effects. Even relatively well-paid workers may find it difficult to find a home and RBWM needs to provide a variety of types and sizes of accommodation to suit all groups, especially affordable housing in the most appropriate areas.

The Council was one of the first to transfer its housing stock, to Maidenhead and District Housing Association and Windsor and District Housing Association. We continue to work closely with both of these and with other local providers of affordable housing to ensure that the Borough's affordable housing needs are optimally met. The Council also works to improve the private housing sector, and seeks to optimise the use of its Supporting People budget to deliver the best possible services to people requiring housing related support.

Corporate Context

Sustainable Communities Plan

The Council's Community Strategy 2007-13 represents its current Sustainable Communities Plan. Four Ambition Groups are the vehicle for progressing the Council's key priorities:

- Supporting Children and Young People
- Supporting Adults and Older People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- A Thriving, Cleaner, Greener Borough

These link with the four blocks within the local area Agreement Framework. Housing has a key role to play in many aspects of these, as recognised in Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities Statutory Guidance published by Communities and Local Government in July 2008.

Local Area Agreement

The Local Government White Paper heralded a new style of Local Area Agreement, coming into force from June 2008, with new 'all-encompassing' agreements that will form the central delivery mechanism between local authorities, their partners and central government. The new LAAs, running from 2008-11 will be extended from current arrangements to cover a wider range of services. The new-style Local Area Agreements will be much more outcome and customer focused and are intended to give local areas more flexibility and accountability, and will be far more central to the work and financial arrangements of the council and its partners than the current LAA, which is often seen as peripheral. All top tier authorities will have an LAA. The new LAA will run alongside the current LAA, which has 13 reward targets with reward grant

attached if targets are met. The current LAA runs from 2007 - 2010. The new one will go from 2008 - 2011.

The Royal Borough is negotiating on Indicator NI155 which covers the provision of new affordable housing as part of its core suite of improvement targets, and is expecting to see a 15% increase in the number of affordable housing completions over the life of the new LAA. This demonstrates the Council's commitment to optimising the provision of additional affordable housing to meet the needs of its population.

Local Development Framework

The Council has a duty to plan for the future of the Royal Borough, including the delivery of Government development requirements, by producing a Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF deals with spatial issues, that is those that involve the use of land, the movement of people and access to opportunities. The LDF will consist of a number of documents published at different times which will fit together to provide a consistent strategy. The council will be preparing two Development Plan Documents (DPD) (a spatial planning document within the Council's Local Development Framework which sets out policies for development and the use of land). Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy they form the development plan for the area. They are subject to independent examination]: the 'Core Strategy and Policies DPD' and the 'Delivery and Development Principles DPD'.

A central aspect of the LDF is to determine where and in what form development should take place. The Core Strategy DPD will provide the overarching spatial strategy. In doing so it will provide the context within which other parts of the LDF will be prepared. The Delivery and Development Principles DPD will contain detailed policies including all major sites that might be developed to meet the Royal Borough's requirement to provide homes, jobs, shopping and recreation.

Further detail on the LDF can be obtained from the council's web site http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/pp_ldf.htm

Sustainability issues

The Council's Sustainability Panel has cross-party representation and meets bi-monthly to take an overview of sustainability issues across the community. The Council is currently working on its Carbon Management Plan for all council owned properties and activities. This will not only ensure that the Council is leading the way in reducing its carbon footprint, but will act as an exemplar to other organisations and private individuals. A Climate Change Strategy is also currently being prepared.

As part of the LDF, a Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is being prepared. It will provide greater detail on existing planning policies and best practice to help improve the sustainability performance of buildings and spaces. It thereby sets out measures which would seem to satisfy the council's requirements.

All development undertaken with the benefit of funding from the Housing Corporation is already required to meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3. The Council will encourage affordable housing developers to meet higher environmental standards where possible, and are keen that developers of private housing should move to meet the same standards as are required of the publicly funded sector as soon as possible.

Much of the work carried out by the Environmental Health Residential Team in the private housing deals with sustainability issues and is detailed in Section 2 below. The local affordable housing stock is all owned by housing associations and the vast majority should meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

Adult Plan

The Council's Strategy for Adult Care Services 2008-20 provides a framework for the strategic commissioning of social care services for the community of the Royal Borough through to 2020 and beyond. It highlights the Council's key objectives in delivering the outcomes set out in the White Paper "Our health, our care, our say". The Council's vision for Adult Services is "Through making personalisation a reality the Royal Borough will empower and support citizens to shape their own lives and the services they receive".

The Plan recognises that the Council will need to respond to the changing expectations of individuals around housing, accommodation and support. This will build on the considerable amount of work already carried out by the Housing Policy Unit working with our local housing associations to remodel outdated residential homes and supported housing schemes to provide cutting edge modern homes to meet the special housing needs of different sectors of the community. These include an extra-care scheme for the elderly at Lady Elizabeth Court, Maidenhead, and independent living schemes for people with Learning Disability in Windsor and Holyport.

Sub-Plans of Housing Strategy

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, Homelessness Strategy and Supporting People Strategy are all being renewed in 2008. Further details on these areas of work will be found below at Sections 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Section 2 – Private Sector

When considering 'housing' the primary concern is often supply – where and how are we going to accommodate the increasing population? However we cannot just focus on more homes forgetting that our current stock does not have an infinite life. We simply cannot expect housing already more than 70 years old to meet modern housing needs and to continue to do so for another 100 years without substantial investment.

Existing housing supply forms an essential strand of public health policies with non decent and overcrowded housing contributing to health inequalities, preventable cold and damp related ill health, preventable accidents, poor educational attainment and dissatisfaction with the local area.

1. Actions from 2004/07 Housing Strategy

- Improving private sector housing conditions through a new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and Local Public Service Agreement focusing on decent homes
- Tackling fuel poverty
- An HMO survey prior to the introduction of licensing

2. Achievements and Current Position

2.1 Achievements

Decent Homes – a successful Decent Homes Project running between April 2003 and March 2006 saw a focus on identifying vulnerable households living in non-decent homes, facilitating activities to improve the homes and health of the occupiers. Activities were supplemented by home repair assistance policies, which sought to focus on decent homes and joint working with Care and Repair, our local home improvement agency. Evolution of the project has resulted in the development of a flexible loan scheme designed to maintain the focus on decent homes but reaching a wider audience.

Fuel Poverty - A joint Primary Care Trust and RBWM Affordable Warmth Strategy was launched in August 2005 to tackle fuel poverty and excess winter deaths. This has resulted in training activities for health professionals visiting clients in their homes, discount schemes, promotional activities, completion of 330 warm front grants and advice to 880 households.

Empty Homes - An Empty Homes Strategy adopted in December 2004 and updated in November 2005 to include empty dwelling management orders, recognises that empty homes represent a wasted resource and cause blight to neighbourhoods. Brave decisions have been made since the introduction of the policy to use the full range of available enforcement powers where negotiation, persuasion and incentives have failed to reverse the decline of an area due to a long term vacant home. This has seen 119 empty homes brought back into use.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System – Introduced under the Housing Act 2004 and incorporated into housing activities this allows the identification of housing defects to be linked to the health affects and tackled accordingly. This has increased the focus on accident prevention and tackling cold homes.

Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) – Introduced under the Housing Act 2004 and incorporated into housing activities, this has increased the awareness of HMO requirements amongst landlords with 14 properties currently licensed. Activities now need to focus on identifying all HMO premises and ensuring they are being managed in accordance with legislative requirements.

2.2 Current Challenges

New Legislation, new innovations and changing population demography continues to present private sector housing with challenges, the key challenges and activities being undertaken to identify and address these are outlined below.

Decent Homes – current stock condition information relates to the fitness standard, now obsolete following the Housing Act 2004. A stock condition survey to determine housing stock information relative to decent homes would be desirable to ensure all decisions are based on the best up to date information.

Flexible Loans - Regionally 26% of households own their home outright, with 49% buying their home with a mortgage*. Historically grants have been offered to help residents maintain their home to ensure it continues to promote safe and healthy living. Although representing a good investment in preventative health this is not sustainable, it is responsive to poor conditions rather than proactive and does not encourage responsible home ownership. An ambitious flexible loans scheme has therefore been developed to allow certain households to release money to proactively invest in their home environment to make it suitable, safe and healthy. Gaining support from 16 local authorities with contiguous boundaries a successful consortium bid, led by RBWM, was submitted to the Regional Housing Board to establish a regional flexible loan scheme. Flexibility describes the repayment choices, which include full repayment on the sale of a property. Due to the repayment flexibility loans will initially only be available to applicants who are over 60 and for a minimum of £1,000. An exciting and innovative scheme this will have a lasting impact on the quality of existing homes, the suitability of existing homes, physical, mental and economic health of residents and a positive impact on communities in the borough.

Housing Assistance - Not every situation will be suitable for a flexible loan therefore a housing assistance grant will be maintained for small works below the feasible level of a loan. This will be retained for lifeline alarms, small but essential repairs i.e. boiler repairs, and to facilitate urgent disabled adaptations that may be causing bed blocking. Grants will remain targeted at households where residents are over 60 and in receipt of means tested benefit. Maximum grant will be for £2,000 in any five-year period.

Energy Efficiency – Included in the National Indicator Framework highlighting its importance in local authority housing activities a focus on energy efficiency will continue through the use of the housing health and safety rating system, promotional work, discount schemes, flexible loans and housing assistance.

Housing Suitability - Housing should facilitate the desire of older residents to remain active, confident and independent. Unfortunately it can present dangerous mobility hazards making residents feel confined and unable to carry out daily living activities.

Grants policies do seek to ensure that resident's homes are suitable to meet long and short term needs so considerations do include whether moving to a level access more adaptable home is suitable. Especially where housing association homes are under occupied and could be released to ease the burden on overcrowded households.

Over the last three years there has been an average of 76 grant completions per year with a demonstrable increase in demand. Schemes focus on being the simplest, most straightforward means to meet a need with the least overall disruption to the home.

In order to make the most of limited funding the property charges introduced under, Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008, will be incorporated to request repayment in cases where grants result in improvements to properties, i.e. creating additional space within or additional to the home. In accordance with this General Consent repayment requirements will apply where the grant recipient disposes of the premises, in respect of which grant was paid, within 10 years of the certified date of completion. This will apply to grants over £5000 with a maximum repayment condition of £10,000. The First £5000 is exempt, after that repayment clause of £1 for every £2.50 spent will be applied

Private Rented Sector - The private rented sector needs to be considered separately from the private sector as a whole because its management, impact on the locality, impact on the housing market and economy are significantly different from owner occupied housing. Activities in the private rented sector have to achieve a balance between enabling activities and enforcing standards.

1) **Enabling** – it is our intention to increase the information available to prospective tenants to enable them to make good housing choices reducing the need for subsequent intervention.

2) **Enforcing standards** – through the duration of the last housing strategy 2004 – 2008, 38 notices were served under housing legislation, showing that unfortunately not all landlords are either aware of or take seriously their responsibilities to their tenants. Tenants have the right to expect decent housing and appropriate enforcement action will be taken in line with our enforcement policy to ensure this.

Enforcement Policy - In line with the Housing Act 2004 and the RBWM Prosecution and Enforcement policy appropriate formal enforcement action will be taken in relation serious hazards to health in homes. The housing health and safety hazard rating system categorises hazards from A – J with those in A, B & C classed as category 1 and D onwards as category 2. Action will be taken in relation to category one hazards and may be taken in relation to category 2 hazards if they fall into category D and have a public health, accident prevention or nuisance implication.

Changes for enforcement

Under The Housing Act 2004 Local Authorities have the power to make a reasonable charge as a means of recovering certain expenses incurred in relation to enforcement

activities. Expenses are in connection with inspection of the premises, subsequent consideration of action to be taken and the service of notices. Following the RBWM Prosecution and Enforcement Policy potential notice recipients are given the opportunity to resolve the issue informally prior to the service of a notice. If potential recipients fail to respond to informal activities reasonable charges for enforcement will be applied.

Houses in Multiple Occupation - Providing valuable housing options yet providing serious concerns where badly managed 7% of households regionally live in multiple occupation, which is consistent with the national average.* Activities are needed to identify and take appropriate action in relation to any non licensed HMO's or non licensable HMO's. With evidence of an increasing HMO sector in the borough this will be a challenge over the term of this Housing Strategy.

Actions required

- Bid for additional funding to carry out pro active identification and inspections of HMO's
- Launch the flexible loan scheme
- Promote warm front grants and energy advice services
- Bid for funding to conduct a private sector stock condition survey
- Introduce repayment criteria for certain disabled facility grants
- Provide information to potential tenants on choosing a decent home
- Work with Housing Associations to develop approved contractor lists for grants and flexible loans
- Improved liaison with Landlords / Landlords Accreditation Scheme
- Tenants Education scheme / Life skills training

Section 3 – Housing Needs

1. Actions from 2004/07 Housing Strategy

- to undertake a new Housing Needs Survey during 2004.
- to improve services for homeless people and reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast to zero.
- to work with Social Services in the preparation of strategies for Adult Learning Disabilities and Mental Health Services.

2. Achievements and Current Position

2.1 Achievements

A Housing Needs Survey was completed in January 2005 and made publicly available. This information has been crucial for the development of the Local Development Framework. A Housing Market Assessment has also been produced in partnership with other local authorities, and a Gypsy & Traveller Needs Assessment in conjunction with other authorities in the Thames Valley region.

The Housing Options Team now provides a proactive advice service about housing options in order to prevent homelessness occurring, rather than just reacting to situations when they have become crises. This resulted in achieving the Government target of zero use of bed & breakfast, and it is a position which continues to be maintained.

Housing Needs have figured highly in the strategies for both Learning Disabilities and Mental Health. As a consequence two brand new supported housing schemes for people with a Learning Disability have been delivered with Housing Association partners, and a supported housing scheme for people with mental health problems is planned on a site which will also provide 100% mixed tenure affordable housing.

2.2 Current Challenges

The need for affordable rented housing continues to remain high for people on low incomes, with over 2000 households being registered on the General Needs List and Housing Association Transfer List. This figure has remained relatively constant in recent years, but it is possible that this figure will rise as a consequence of immigration, whilst the current problems with the financial markets and the consequent impact on housing markets both locally and nationally are likely to add to the problem because home ownership will no longer be an option for many people. There is an extreme shortage of all types of units, but 3 bed houses are in particularly short supply.

Whilst there has recently been interest in shared ownership schemes for households on medium incomes, this looks likely to be less of an option for

many households in the medium term. The number of lenders who will consider mortgages for shared ownership has shrunk, there are less products available, and many lenders are asking for deposits of 15% - 20%, which makes many schemes unaffordable given local values.

Another concern in the medium term is an increase in homelessness due to debt problems, larger numbers of people defaulting on mortgages, and earlier repossessions by lenders. If this does happen then it will become increasingly difficult to maintain the current zero use of bed & breakfast, and minimising the use of other temporary accommodation will also become very difficult.

The council will have to monitor the impact of changes in the housing market and be ready to respond to the challenges this will pose. A review of homelessness is currently underway, and a new strategy will be produced during 2008.

The Council is also currently looking at the benefits or otherwise of implementing a Choice Based Lettings Scheme in partnership with local Housing Associations. A decision on whether to progress a scheme will be made during 2008.

3. Actions Required

- Young Persons Multi-Agency Panel to be set up to address housing issues for young people
- To provide awareness training and education for partner agencies to improve understanding of housing and homelessness issues
- Joint Protocol with Environmental Services private sector housing
- Continue to attend multi-agency arrangements
- Joint workshops for RSL staff
- Joint workshops for Housing Options Teams in neighbouring Boroughs
- Continue to complete annual training needs analysis
- Provision of sanctuary scheme
- Provision of domestic abuse outreach service
- Ensure every applicant threatened with homelessness is visited at home
- Production of written protocol for home visits
- Review of multi-agency panel to consider discretionary housing payments applications
- Review of Allocations Policy and points system
- Choice based lettings system
- Remodel the collection of information regarding voids and lettings
- Extension of assisted transfer scheme
- Continue liaison with Defence Housing Executive
- Review of tenancy sustainment service
- Reprovision of Admel House to provide 12 units of supported accommodation for young people in Windsor
- Continue to provide mediation service
- Multi Agency Panel/Joint assessment Framework adopted

Section 4 – Supported housing & Supporting

People

1. Actions from 2004/07 Housing Strategy:

- to develop the Supporting People programme locally
- to commence Supporting People service reviews
- to undertake a needs survey
- to promote and develop services for older people to maintain their independence and reduce numbers of delayed discharge cases

2. Achievements and Current Position

2.1 Services

The Supporting People first service reviews programme was completed by 30 June 2006. These in depth reviews coupled with needs information from the Supported Housing Needs Survey of 5 January 2006 showed an essential need to redistribute funding in two main client groups – learning disabilities and older peoples' services.

a) Learning Disability Services Re-Modelling

Learning disabilities had 42% of the Supporting People budget for 40 service users making them the highest cost client group. Some service users having over 90 hours of support per week. Older people's services having 18% of the overall budget for 1,019 service users but some service users in sheltered services having no support need at all just an accommodation need. The historical method of collection of income by all housing associations having led to this anomaly.

Re-modelling of the service provision for both these client groups has therefore been undertaken. Supporting People services are now capped at 23.5 hours per week. This has led to a re-distribution of funding to a wider range of service users. An integrated contract with Social Services has been commissioned on 1 April 2008 with one provider for most of the Borough's learning disabilities services. This has resulted in a higher standard of quality and much better value for money.

b) Older Peoples' Services Re-Modelling

In terms of older peoples' services it is essential to ensure needs led services but the re-modelling of traditional sheltered schemes has proved to be a very sensitive issue locally for all key stakeholders – progress has therefore been slow. Re-distribution of funding to help a wider range of people access preventative services that promote independence will enable a more individual approach to service provision and better quality services. Key elements of the new model will be ensuring the needs of BME elders are addressed and that all service users have access to social activities.

c) Further Development of Services

Through savings achieved through service reviews it has been possible to provide additional funding for the Tenancy Sustainability service and this now has a substance misuse specialism.

Further funding has been provided into the Home Improvement Agency –Repair with Care – and this service prioritises delayed discharges patients from hospital.

Planning permission is currently being sought to re-develop the Admel House service for young people at risk and the aim is to increase the scope of the service from 8 units to 12 and to provide much improved accommodation to specifically meet the needs of this vulnerable client group.

2.2 Service Users

Service user views are paramount in ensuring local services meet the needs of local people. There has been a considerable amount of service user consultation in the last year over a variety of issues and this has culminated in service user representatives being established on many services.

2.3 Local Structure for Supporting People

The Audit Commission inspection of June 2006 created a catalyst for change within the local structure for Supporting People. As a result of the recommendations a review was carried out of the work of the Commissioning Body and the Core Strategy Group with a requirement of closer working between the two groups in addition to other suggestions as to strategic direction and practice. Attendance at the Core Strategy Group had become irregular and so a new group has been launched as part of the new Housing Forum.

The Supporting People Inclusive Forum - which played such an important role during the implementation of the programme – have now reduced their meetings to two per year and these will be in the form of seminars about particular client groups or subjects. Ongoing contact with providers by the Supporting People Team will be via email updates and newsletters.

3. Current Challenges

3.1 Future Funding Levels

Traditionally Supporting People Grant has not been sufficient in this authority to meet the costs of the essential services provided and so the Borough has provided further funding to supplement grant provision in the Borough is reviewed each year and is not guaranteed. This means there is no allowance for inflation and any future development of services to fill gaps can only be as a result of re-modelling or efficiency savings.

3.2 Local Government Reform

From 1 April 2008 Supporting People Administration Grant has become an area based grant under the control of the Local Strategic Partnership known locally as the Community Partnership. This will pave the way for the Programme Grant which loses ring-fenced status and will be under the control of the Community Partnership from 1 April 2009. The concept is that through Local Area Agreements all the area based funding streams will deliver the improvement targets set for each theme. A concern is that there may be a desire to re-direct existing Supporting People Grant- which is contracted for up to 5 years to provide existing services away to be used to deliver the targets of the LAAs.

4. Actions Required

- Promote service user involvement to inform local service delivery
- Ensure the strategic relevance of existing Supporting People services in terms of the outcomes and targets within the Local Area Agreements
- In terms of gaps in local provision explore the possibility of aligning other funding within the LSP alongside Supporting People Grant to fill these gaps
- Where existing services do not deliver the LAA outcomes and targets carry out reviews

Section 5 – New Affordable Housing

1. Actions from 2004/07 Housing Strategy

- continued provision of new affordable housing in partnership with local Registered Social Landlords, aiming for an average of 100 units a year.
- to increase the supply of supported housing for vulnerable people.
- to negotiate optimal Section 106 agreements for the provision of affordable housing
- to consider the Council's affordable housing policies during the review of the local Plan.
- to participate in the Berkshire Housing Strategists' Group and development of the sub-regional housing strategy.
- to work with other Berkshire authorities to commission a pilot Housing Market Assessment

2. Achievements and Current Position

2.1 Achievements

A total of 414 units of new affordable housing were provided in the Royal Borough over the four years 2004/5 and 2007/8. This has been achieved by local Registered Social Landlords, with the support of the Council, successfully bidding for over £15 million of Housing Corporation funding over this period. Within this overall programme, the Council has worked in partnership to achieve the development of a number of supported housing schemes for vulnerable people. This includes two schemes totalling twenty units in all providing self-contained housing with support for people with Learning Difficulties, and the development of a scheme in Windsor, to complement the existing provision in Maidenhead, to provide supported accommodation for vulnerable young people. Planning permission has also been achieved for a nine unit scheme to provide accommodation with floating support for people with mental health problems.

The Council works hard to ensure that the optimal provision of affordable housing is achieved via Section 106 agreements on development sites. The bulk of new affordable housing is now delivered in this way. Our preference is always for the affordable housing to be provided on site, and this is achieved in the vast majority of cases. We have also successfully negotiated the provision of ten affordable units on an alternative site provided by the developer, and on rare occasions have accepted commuted sums for the provision of future affordable housing schemes. This money is being used judiciously to support the provision of additional affordable housing which would not otherwise have been feasible.

Changes to the Councils' affordable housing policies intended to provide improved levels of affordable housing (supported by an Affordable Housing

Viability Study) were examined closely as part of the Examination in Public of the Council's proposed new Core Strategy. This will be revisited as part of the Council's ongoing work on the Local Development Framework.

We have fully participated in the development of the Berkshire Housing Strategists' Group and have worked with colleagues across Berkshire to produce one of the first Draft Sub-Regional Housing Strategies and to commission and publish one of the pilot sub-regional Housing Market Assessments.

2.2 Current Challenges

The main ongoing challenge is to carry on optimising the supply of affordable housing units within the Royal Borough. This is deeply affected by the impact of the current credit crunch on the house building industry. The full implications of this are still to be fully appreciated. However, it is clear that the fact that the provision of new affordable housing in this part of the country has become very highly dependant on affordable units being built as part of private housing developments via Section 106 agreements, means that a slowdown in private housing development impacts very strongly on the provision of new affordable units.

On the other hand the current difficulties in the private house building sector may present some opportunities for the Council to work with Registered Social Landlords to "convert" some units which would have been built for private sale into affordable housing. It is important that regard to the suitability, size and quality of the units that could possibly be provided is not overlooked, however.

The credit crunch is also affecting Registered Social Landlords, and they are understandably becoming more risk averse, especially in relation to all types of shared ownership schemes, as the supply of potential buyers for has dried up.

3. Actions Required

- Work with colleagues and partners to ensure that new housing is developed to the highest practicable environmental and sustainability standards
- Appraise any positive opportunities to provide new affordable housing arising from the credit crunch and seek to develop those that provide good outcomes in terms of suitability, sustainability, size and quality as well as value
- Work with colleagues and partners to ensure an optimum ongoing supply of new affordable units of the best type, size, quality, location and tenure that can be achieved.
- Work with colleagues and partners to ensure that optimal outcomes for the provision of affordable housing are achieved through the negotiation of Section 106 agreements
- Work with local Registered Social Landlords to optimise the amount of Housing Corporation funding coming into schemes in the Royal Borough,

using accumulated Section 106 commuted sums judiciously to complement this where appropriate

- Work with Planning colleagues on housing aspects of the Local Development Framework
- Work with Planning colleagues on the implications of any implementation of the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy for the ongoing provision of affordable housing in the Royal Borough
- Work with colleagues via the Berkshire Strategists' Group on the further development and implementation of the sub-regional Housing Strategy

Section 6 – Appendices

Appendix 1: Consultation

The developing draft Housing Strategy has been the subject of consultation at Housing Forum meetings held in December 2007 and July 2008. The Forum meetings were addressed by the Lead Member for Planning and Housing, and presentations on the key issues for housing in the Royal Borough were made by the Head and Housing and Residential Care. Attendees participated in a variety of workshops to consider different aspects of the Housing Strategy.

It is intended to continue holding the Housing Forum twice yearly to report on progress on the implementation of the Housing Strategy, and to provide a venue for discussion on topical housing issues.

Invitees/attendees include:

External organisations:

Government Office for the South East
The Housing Corporation
Berkshire East Primary Care Trust
Windsor and Maidenhead Voluntary Action
Community Council for Berkshire
The Probation Service
Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum
Connexions
Michael Shanley Homes
A2 Housing Group
Paradigm Housing Group
Radian Housing Group
One Housing Group
Look Ahead
Home Group
Housing Solutions Group
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Reading Borough Council
Slough Borough Council
West Berkshire District Council
Wokingham Borough Council

RBWM:

Lead Member for Planning and Housing
Housing Options
Supporting People
Environmental Health
Housing Enabling

Adult Services
Children's Services
Community Safety
Sustainable Development
Planning

Appendix 2: Action Plan

Section 1: Private Sector

ACTION	OUTCOME/INDICATOR OF SUCCESS	TARGET DATE	KEY PARTNERS	RESOURCE/ FUNDING	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Bid for additional funding to carry out pro-active identification and inspections of HMO's	Robust up to date information and inspection details for identified HMO's	March 2010	PCT / Voluntary organisations	External funding options	Environmental Health Manager
Launch the flexible loan scheme	For the consortium of 17 local authorities to spend the full £3 million Regional Housing board Grant on flexible loans during the first three years	March 2011	Local Authorities in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Surrey.	Regional Housing Board	Environmental Health Manager
Promote warm front grants and energy advice services	Reduce the number of households in receipt of means tested benefit with a low energy efficiency rating of their home, by 1% each year	March 2011	Energy Savings Trust Warm Front Eaga PCT Voluntary Organisations Repair with Care	Accessing funding from Central Government and from the Energy Companies	Environmental Health Manager

Bid for funding to conduct a private sector stock condition survey	Robust up to date information on stock condition to base policies on and judge the success of activities in private sector housing	March 2011	Working with neighbouring local authorities has the potential to reduce the costs	Capital prioritisation process	Environmental Health Manager
Introduce repayment criteria for certain disabled facility grants	Updated policies reflecting modernisation guidance	March 2009		Funds to be re-circulated into disabled facility grant budget	Environmental Health Manager
Provide information to potential tenants on choosing a decent home	Reduce the number of enquiries from private sector tenants by 10%	March 2011	Voluntary Organisations	Within current service / revenue budget	Environmental Health Manager
Work with Housing Associations to develop approved contractor lists for grants and flexible loans	Confident contractor choices being made	March 2011	Housing Associations	Within current flexible loan service	Environmental Health Manager
Improved liaison with Landlords / Landlords Accreditation Scheme	Specific project details to be developed as prioritised for action	March 2011	Landlords Landlords Associations Housing Benefits	Identifying options to bid for external funding	Environmental Health Manager

Tenants Education scheme / Life skills training	Specific project details to be developed as prioritised for action	March 2011	Voluntary Organisations CAB Housing Benefits	Identifying options to bid for external funding	Environmental Health Manager
Identify mechanisms to work with developers in areas where there are pockets of deprivation	Specific project details to be developed as prioritised for action	March 2011	Private developers Development Control	Identifying options to bid for external funding	Environmental Health Manager

Section 2: Housing Needs

ACTION	OUTCOME/INDICATOR OF SUCCESS	TARGET DATE	KEY PARTNERS	RESOURCE/ FUNDING	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Young Persons Multi-Agency Panel to be set up to address housing issues for young people	Young Persons Multi-Agency Panel established.	January 2009	Housing, Learning & Care, Youth Offending Team, Connexions	Staff time Cross Agency	Head of Housing and Residential Development
To provide awareness training and education for partner agencies to improve understanding of housing and homelessness issues	Agencies conversant with work of housing options and have an understanding of homelessness prevention	December 2009		Staff time	Housing Options Manager
Joint Protocol with Environmental Services private sector housing	Protocol in place	June 2009		Staff time	Housing Options Manager Environmental Health Manager
Continue to attend multi-agency arrangements	Continued representation	Ongoing		Staff time	Service Development Officer

Joint workshops for RSL staff	Improved working relationships	Ongoing	Partner RSLs	Staff time	Housing Options Manager
Joint workshops for Housing Options Teams in neighbouring Boroughs	Improved working relationships	Ongoing	Neighbouring Local Authorities	Staff time	Housing Options Manager
Continue to complete annual training needs analysis	Housing Options Team continues to be fully and appropriately trained	April 2009		Staff time	RBWM
Provision of sanctuary scheme	Sanctuary scheme provided	June 2009 subject to funding	RSLs	Subject to funding	RBWM Domestic Abuse Forum
Provision of domestic abuse outreach service	Domestic abuse outreach service provided	March 2009	East Berkshire Women's Aid	External funding in place	RBWM Domestic Abuse Forum
Ensure every applicant threatened with homelessness is visited at home	Prevention of homelessness	April 2009 subject to funding		Additional team member	Housing Options Manager

Production of written protocol for home visits	Consistency in home visits achieved	December 2008		Staff time	Service Development Officer
Review of multi-agency panel to consider discretionary housing payments applications	Increase in number of private tenants enabled to remain in properties	Annually in May	Housing Options/ Learning & Care	Staff time	Head of Revenues and Benefits
Review of Allocations Policy and points system	Allocations Policy and points system reviewed in order to balance housing needs with housing supply	November 2008		Staff time	Head of Housing and Residential Development
Choice based lettings system	CBL system adopted	2010	Partner RSLs	Joint funding RSLs and RBWM	Head of Housing and Residential Development
Remodel the collection of information regarding voids and lettings	To ensure efficient use of affordable rented housing	April 2009	Partner RSLs		Housing Options Information Officer

Extension of assisted transfer scheme	Assisted Transfer Scheme supported to ensure efficient use of affordable rented housing	December 2008	Partner RSLs	Subject to additional funding of £40,000 being available from RBWM capital programme	Service Development Officer
Continue liaison with Defence Housing Executive	Minimise use of temporary accommodation by service personnel	Ongoing	Defence Housing Executive		Housing Options Manager
Review of tenancy sustainment service	Continued tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention	May 2009	Look Ahead Housing & Care	Supporting People Grant	Supporting People Manager
Reprovision of Admel House to provide 12 units of supported accommodation for young people in Windsor	Expansion of supported accommodation in Windsor for young people	May 2009	A2 Housing/ Look Ahead Housing & Care	Supporting People Grant Housing Corporation	Head of Housing and Residential Development
Continue to provide mediation service	Mediation service continued to ensure move on in a planned way, not crisis	Ongoing subject to funding	Thames Valley Family Mediation Service	Homelessness Budget	Service Development Officer

Multi Agency Panel/Joint Assessment Framework	Multi agency panel will adopt the common assessment framework to address all the needs of young people. Formalise protocols between agencies to ensure that every child matters	January 2009	YOT, Housing, Children's Services	Staff time	Housing Options Manager
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Section 3: Supported Housing and Supporting People

ACTION	OUTCOME/INDICATOR OF SUCCESS	TARGET DATE	KEY PARTNERS	RESOURCE/ FUNDING	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
<p>Promote service user involvement to inform local service delivery</p>	<p>Service user representative for each service acting as a point of contact during Supporting People monitoring and reviews and encouraging other users to have their say</p> <p>Carrying out a survey of all residents after the action points of each review have been completed by the provider to check if service users see actual benefits from the improvements recommended</p>	<p>Service Review Programme 2008/11 completed by March 2011</p>	<p>Service users Service providers Adult Services Children & Families</p>	<p>Supporting People Team</p> <p>Staff time</p>	<p>Supporting People Manager</p>

<p>Ensure the strategic relevance of existing Supporting People services in terms of the outcomes and targets within the Local Area Agreements</p>	<p>Strategic reviews of existing Supporting People services demonstrate their relevance to the delivery of the national indicator set according to pre-determined criteria</p>	<p>Strategic Reviews completed by March 2010</p>	<p>Berkshire East PCT Thames Valley Probation Adult Services Children & Families Service providers</p>	<p>Supporting People Team Staff time</p>	<p>Supporting People Manager</p>
<p>In terms of gaps in local provision explore the possibility of aligning other funding within the LSP alongside Supporting People Grant to fill these gaps</p>	<p>A gap analysis of local supported housing shows synergy with a lack of a suitable vehicle to deliver some of the national indicator targets and a joint funding approach is agreed within the LSP which includes Supporting People Grant</p>	<p>Gap analysis completed by March 2010</p>	<p>LAA Ambition Groups Adult Services Children & Families Service providers</p>	<p>Supporting People Manager Joint Commissioning Manager Staff time</p>	<p>Supporting People Manager</p>

<p>Where existing services do not deliver the LAA outcomes and targets carry out reviews</p>	<p>Strategic reviews demonstrate that some services do not currently deliver the targets of the national indicators according to set criteria and these services are re-modelled to achieve compliance</p>	<p>Strategic Reviews and subsequent remodelling completed by March 2011</p>	<p>Service users Service providers Berkshire East PCT Thames Valley Probation Adult Services Children & Families</p>	<p>Supporting People Team Staff time</p>	<p>Supporting People Manager</p>
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Section 4: New Affordable Housing

ACTION	OUTCOME/INDICATOR OF SUCCESS	TARGET DATE	KEY PARTNERS	RESOURCE/ FUNDING	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Work with colleagues and partners to ensure that new housing is developed to the highest practicable environmental and sustainability standards	<p>Number of units exceeding Code Level 3 where grant funded</p> <p>Number of units meeting or exceeding Code Level 3 where not grant funded</p>	Review annually starting April 2009	<p>RSLs</p> <p>Private developers</p> <p>Planning</p> <p>Sustainability Team</p>	Staff time	Housing Enabling Manager
Appraise any positive opportunities to provide new affordable housing arising from the credit crunch and seek to develop those that provide good outcomes in terms of suitability, sustainability, size and quality as well as value	<p>Number of units produced maintained</p> <p>Number of additional units produced as result of opportunities for partnership working</p>	Ongoing Review annually starting April 2009	<p>RSLs</p> <p>Private developers</p> <p>Planning</p>	Staff time	Housing Enabling Manager

<p>Work with colleagues and partners to ensure an optimum ongoing supply of new affordable units of the best type, size, quality, location and tenure that can be achieved</p>	<p>LAA target NI155 Affordable Housing Delivery achieved</p> <p>Continue participation in Rural Housing Enabler Project to promote appropriate development of affordable housing in rural areas of Royal Borough</p> <p>Ongoing optimal affordable housing supply stream</p>	<p>Ongoing Review annually starting April 2009</p>	<p>RSLs Private developers Rural Housing Enabler Planning</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Housing Enabling Manager</p>
<p>Work with colleagues and partners to ensure that optimal outcomes for the provision of affordable housing are achieved through the negotiation of Section 106 agreements</p>	<p>Bilateral Section 106 Agreements negotiated whenever appropriate</p> <p>Unilateral Undertakings influenced where possible to optimise outcome for affordable housing</p> <p>Standard requirements for affordable housing included</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>RSLs Private developers Planning Legal Services</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Housing Enabling Manager</p>

<p>Work with local Registered Social Landlords to optimise the amount of Housing Corporation funding coming into schemes in the Royal Borough, using accumulated Section 106 commuted sums judiciously to complement this where appropriate</p>	<p>Liaise re. bids to the Housing Corporation under Continuous Market Engagement</p> <p>Consider investment of Section 106 commuted sums where provides added value</p>	<p>Ongoing Review annually starting April 2009</p>	<p>RSLs Private developers Housing Corporation Planning Legal Services</p>	<p>Staff time Section 106 commuted sums</p>	<p>Housing Enabling Manager</p>
<p>Work with Planning colleagues on housing aspects of the Local Development Framework</p>	<p>Successful development of new affordable housing policies</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Planning RSLs Private developers</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Housing Enabling Manager</p>
<p>Work with Planning colleagues on the implications of any implementation of the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy for the ongoing provision of affordable housing in the Royal Borough</p>	<p>Continued optimum provision of affordable housing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Planning RSLs Private developers</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Housing Enabling Manager</p>

Work with colleagues via the Berkshire Strategists' Group on the further development and implementation of the sub-regional Housing Strategy	Continued involvement in Group (RBWM due to Chair in 2009) and development of update sub-regional Housing Strategy	Ongoing	Other Berkshire Unitary Authorities RSL partners Planning	Staff time	Housing Enabling Manager
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Appendix 3: Monitoring and updating arrangements

Following consultation at the Housing Forum in July 2008, it is planned to set up a sub-group to take responsibility for monitoring and updating the Action Plan. It is anticipated this would meet twice yearly. A draft format for monitoring and updating the Action Plan is shown below:

CODE		MEANING		
GREEN		On target and likely to deliver within timescale.		
AMBER		May be delayed. Achievement uncertain and action may be needed.		
RED		Will not achieve target.		
Action	Outcome/Indicator of success	Target Date	Lead Officer	Update to mm/yyyy

Appendix 4: Links to other documents

To be completed