



CABINET AGENDA

Wednesday, 9 June 2010

The Jeffery Room, The Guildhall, St Giles Square,
Northampton NN1 1DE

6:00 pm

Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor: Brian Hoare (Leader of the Council)
Councillor: Paul Varnsvery (Deputy Leader)
Councillors: Sally Beardsworth, Richard Church,
Trini Crake, Brian Markham, David Perkins

Chief Executive David Kennedy

If you have any enquiries about this agenda please contact Frazer McGown
fmcgown@northampton.gov.uk or 01604 837089

PORTFOLIOS OF CABINET MEMBERS

CABINET MEMBER	PORTFOLIO TITLE
Councillor B. Hoare	Leader Partnership and Improvement
Councillor P.D. Varnserry	Deputy Leader Community Engagement
Councillor S. Beardsworth	Housing
Councillor R. Church	Planning and Regeneration
Councillor T. Crake	Environment
Councillor B Markham	Performance and Support
Councillor D. Perkins	Finance

SPEAKING AT CABINET MEETINGS

Persons (other than Members) wishing to address Cabinet must register their intention to do so by 12 noon on the day of the meeting and may speak on any item on that meeting's agenda.

Registration can be by:

Telephone: (01604) 837101, 837089, 837355, 837356
(Fax 01604 838729)


In writing: The Borough Solicitor,
The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton NN1 1DE
For the attention of the Democratic Services Officer

By e-mail to democraticservices@northampton.gov.uk

Only thirty minutes in total will be allowed for addresses, so that if speakers each take three minutes no more than ten speakers will be heard. Each speaker will be allowed to speak for a maximum of three minutes at each meeting. Speakers will normally be heard in the order in which they registered to speak. However, the Chair of Cabinet may decide to depart from that order in the interest of hearing a greater diversity of views on an item, or hearing views on a greater number of items. The Chair of Cabinet may also decide to allow a greater number of addresses and a greater time slot subject still to the maximum three minutes per address for such addresses for items of special public interest.

Members who wish to address Cabinet shall notify the Chair prior to the commencement of the meeting and may speak on any item on that meeting's agenda. Such addresses will be for a maximum of three minutes unless the Chair exercises discretion to allow longer. The time these addresses take will not count towards the thirty minute period referred to above so as to prejudice any other persons who have registered their wish to speak.

KEY DECISIONS

 denotes the issue is a 'Key' decision:

- Any decision in relation to the Executive function* which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of saving which are significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates. For these purpose the minimum financial threshold will be £50,000;
- Where decisions are not likely to involve significant expenditure or savings but nevertheless are likely to be significant in terms of their effects on communities in two or more wards or electoral divisions; and
- For the purpose of interpretation a decision, which is ancillary or incidental to a Key decision, which had been previously taken by or on behalf of the Council shall not of itself be further deemed to be significant for the purpose of the definition.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held in The Jeffery Room,
The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton NN1 1DE on Wednesday, 9
June 2010 at 6:00 pm.

D Kennedy
Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES
3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
5. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES
 - (A) OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COST OF CONSULTANTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT.
 - (B) SHELTERED HOUSING AND HOUSING OPTIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE TASK AND FINISH GROUP
 - (C) COMMUNITY CENTRES TASK AND FINISH GROUP
6. CHANGE OF SCENE PROJECT
Report of Director of Environment and Culture (Copy herewith)
7. PARISH PARTNERSHIPS - THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCILS' CHARTER
🔑 Report of the Chief Executive.
8. HOUSING STRATEGY
🔑 Report of Director of Housing. (Copy to herewith)
9. THE WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT AND THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION IN NORTHAMPTON
🔑 Report of Director of Planning and Regeneration (copy herewith)
10. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS (CBL) ALLOCATIONS POLICY
🔑 Report of the Director of Housing (Copy herewith)
11. VOIDS LETTABLE STANDARD
🔑 Report of Director of Housing.

12. RENT ARREARS RECOVERY STRATEGY

🔗 Report of Director of Housing. (Copy herewith)

13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

THE CHAIR TO MOVE:

“THAT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS BE EXCLUDED FROM THE REMAINDER OF THE MEETING ON THE GROUNDS THAT THERE IS LIKELY TO BE DISCLOSURE TO THEM OF SUCH CATEGORIES OF EXEMPT INFORMATION AS DEFINED BY SECTION 100(1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS LISTED AGAINST SUCH ITEMS OF BUSINESS BY REFERENCE TO THE APPROPRIATE PARAGRAPH OF SCHEDULE 12A TO SUCH ACT.”

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

**Exempted Under Schedule
12A of L.Govt Act 1972
Para No:-**



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 9th JUNE 2010

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THREE (IMPROVEMENT, PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE) – COST OF CONSULTANTS
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Three (Improvement, Performance and Finance) on the findings of the Review – Cost of Consultants.
- 1.2 The Executive Summary to Overview and Scrutiny Committee Three's report is attached at Appendix 1. Members of Cabinet have been issued with a copy of the full report. All Overview and Scrutiny Review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of the this report can be located: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Task and Finish Group recommends to Cabinet that:
- 2.2 A procedure based on the document "*Transforming the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success*" is produced and used by each Service Area when engaging temporary, Agency and Interim staff.
- 2.3 Cabinet considers the engagement of students from University of Northampton and Northampton College as well as apprenticeships and future job fund opportunities with generic skills, for the filling of temporary vacancies that are currently filled by Agency Staff. A central base of between one and four postgraduate students could be created.
- 2.4 Consideration is given to the introduction of a floating workforce that could be pooled by all departments.

- 2.5 Build into the Consultant engagement process an independent review after a set time period by the Head of Human Resources to ensure the engagement is still appropriate.
- 2.6 The Policy regarding the employment of Agency Staff be expanded and reviewed including: -
- Setting a maximum percentage target for each directorate of Agency staff.
 - Confirm the definitions within the policy based on the definitions as set out in this report

3. Background and Issues

3.1 The purpose of the Review was: -

- To investigate the reasons for the use of consultants at Northampton Borough Council
- To investigate the reasons for the use of agency labour at Northampton Borough Council
- To consider the alternatives to using consultants
- To consider the alternatives to using agency labour
- To assess the risks involved in implementing these alternatives
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the work undertaken by consultants within the authority and determine the impact on the existing staff base
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using consultants and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using agency labour and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with consultants department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with agency labour department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procedure for the procurement arrangements associated with consultants and how this is budgeted for and financed
- To examine whether the use of consultants is a skilling or de-skilling process

3.2 A previous Overview and Scrutiny Review into Historic Buildings and Regeneration was undertaken which noted the engagement of consultants in Planning Services When Overview and Scrutiny Committee finalised its work programme, the issue of the employment of consultants by the Authority was raised and it was requested that a Review of this issue be included onto the Work Programme. This request was agreed and the timescale for the Review set.

3.3 A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established comprising Councillor Tony Clarke (Chair); Councillors Joy Capstick, Jenny Conroy, Matthew Golby and Jamie Lane.

3.4 Information obtained from the following sources formed the main body of evidence gathered by the Committee:

- Detailed information for all Northampton Borough Council departments regarding spend in relation to consultants and Agency employees for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08
- Data from other (best practice) Local Authorities for the same periods, in particular a large district council. For comparison purposes the data will be altered to reflect population in respect of spend per population
- Local Government Association (LGA) or similar guidance on the use of consultants and Agency workers
- Evidence from Northampton Borough Council Directors (or Heads of Services)
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement)
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement) for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- Evidence from members of the Council for the period 2005/06 and 2007/08 (current Members)

3.5 In considering the evidence the following conclusions were made: -

3.6 In considering *Transforming the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success*, which was commissioned by the London Centre of Excellence (LCE), the Task and Finish Group felt that there are alternatives to the employment of Agency Staff such as the engagement of different types of trainee posts such as undergraduate student placements, graduate placements, future jobs fund, and apprenticeships from The University of Northampton and Northampton College with generic skills. A central base of between one and four postgraduate students could be created. The Task and Finish Group further felt that it would be beneficial for there to be a 'floating workforce' that could be pooled by all departments.

3.7 The Task and Finish Group highlights the fact that during the period of 2005/2006 central Government had provided financial assistance to the Authority for the engagement of consultants. Bearing this in mind the figures for this period may appear high.

3.8 There is a need to know how the Council has received value from money from a consultant both during their skills of engagement with the Council and whether these skills have been maintained. The engagement of consultants should be according to service need or specialist positions and be time limited. It is crucial that there is a clear understanding about the difference between locum and consultant. The Task and Finish Group welcomed the definitions of such staff that were provided by the Head of Human Resources. The Task and Finish Group further realised that, as the engagement of consultants should be time limited there was a need for an independent check around the time scale of to be implemented.

3.9 It was noted that over the periods that the Task and Finish Group investigated the Council has a Policy to reduce the spend on Agency Staff, in particular as part of the budget savings in 2009/10 it had been agreed that the Authority would reduce its spend on agency staff by £200, 000. This would be undertaken by applying this approach to agency staff. The Task and Finish

Group was surprised to see this saving was for white collar Agency Staff only, and that blue collar Agency Staff were used more to generate savings. . It appeared that the higher the cost of a Post the more of a saving by reducing consultants.

- 3.10 During the period of time of the Task and Finish Group brokers were changed, the Task and Finish Group recognised the need for changed but felt that there was a need for the Policy to be further developed and expanded
- 3.11 The Task and Finish Group noted that part of the way that business is carried out in Neighbourhood Environment involves using Agency staff and it was realised that this is the most value for money way in delivering the service also providing a lot of flexibility. Grounds and street maintenance do not need the cover as much as the refuse lorries. Agency staff is now only brought in to cover sickness absence on the refuse lorries not for street and grounds maintenance. In future, in-house staff may be asked to provide cover for sickness absence on the refuse lorries.
- 3.12 The Task and Finish Group highlighted the recruitment process within Neighbourhood Environment in particular when a permanent FTE left the service they would not be replaced with a full time employee but with Agency Staff. It was noted that the turnover of staff has not been huge, mainly due to the recession. It was also noted that this method of recruitment is set to continue as it makes NBC more competitive in terms of costs. Bearing this in mind, the Task and Finish Group felt that there is a need for the Council to have a Policy stating, for example that no more than 30% Agency Staff be employed. Should the service go out to competitive dialogue with a Company that has say for example, 80% Agency staff and just 20% full time employees this would not meet the Council's Policy. It was emphasised that there does need to be a balance between quality and cost. The Task and Finish Group suggested that a Policy could be produced which stated that the Council managed the workforce and maintained the standard. It was emphasised that there would be clear legal implications regarding a stated Policy on the employment of Agency Staff. As a major employer the Council needs to be seen to helping the economy. It is accepted that there is a need for Agency Staff but an appropriate level must be met in normal circumstances.

4. Options

- 4.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

5. Implications (including financial implications)

5.1 Policy

- 5.1.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council's policy framework through its work programme.
- 5.1.2 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to Community Centres. Cabinet's response will need to consider these issues in detail.

5.2 Resources and Risk

5.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

5.3 Legal

5.3.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations

5.4 Equality

5.4.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

5.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

5.5.2 The Committee consulted and took evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.4 of this report.

6. Background Papers

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Three's Report – Cost of Consultants (May 2010)
- Minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Three – 13th May 2010

Report Author and Title: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Three (Improvement, Performance and Finance)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was:-

- To investigate the reasons for the use of consultants at Northampton Borough Council
- To investigate the reasons for the use of agency labour at Northampton Borough Council
- To consider the alternatives to using consultants
- To consider the alternatives to using agency labour
- To assess the risks involved in implementing these alternatives
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the work undertaken by consultants within the authority and determine the impact on the existing staff base
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using consultants and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using agency labour and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with consultants department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with agency labour department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procedure for the procurement arrangements associated with consultants and how this is budgeted for and financed
- To examine whether the use of consultants is a skilling or de-skilling process

A previous Overview and Scrutiny Review into Historic Buildings and Regeneration was undertaken which noted the engagement of consultants in Planning Services. When Overview and Scrutiny Committee finalised its work programme, the issue of the employment of consultants by the Authority was raised and it was requested that a Review of this issue be included onto the Work Programme. This request was agreed and the timescale for the Review set.

A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established comprising Councillor Tony Clarke (Chair); Councillors Joy Capstick, Jenny Conroy, Matthew Golby and Jamie Lane.

The Task and Finish Group agreed that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

- Detailed information for all Northampton Borough Council departments regarding spend in relation to consultants and Agency employees for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08

- Data from other (best practice) Local Authorities for the same periods, in particular a large district council. For comparison purposes the data will be altered to reflect population in respect of spend per population
- Local Government Association (LGA) or similar guidance on the use of consultants and Agency workers
- Evidence from NBC Directors (or Heads of Services)
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement)
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holders (Finance) and (Performance and Improvement) for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- Evidence from members of the Council for the period 2005/06 and 2007/08 (current Members)

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that: -

- 6.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:
 - 6.1.1 In considering Transforming *the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success*, which was commissioned by the London Centre of Excellence (LCE), the Task and Finish Group felt that there are alternatives to the employment of Agency Staff such as the engagement of different types of trainee posts such as undergraduate student placements, graduate placements, future jobs fund, and apprenticeships from The University of Northampton and Northampton College with generic skills. A central base of between one and four postgraduate students could be created. The Task and Finish Group further felt that it would be beneficial for there to be a 'floating workforce' that could be pooled by all departments.
 - 6.1.2 The Task and Finish Group highlights the fact that during the period of 2005/2006 central Government had provided financial assistance to the Authority for the engagement of consultants. Bearing this in mind the figures for this period may appear high.
 - 6.1.3 There is a need to know how the Council has received value from money from a consultant both during their skills of engagement with the Council and whether these skills have been maintained. The engagement of consultants should be according to service need or specialist positions and be time limited. It is crucial that there is a clear understanding about the difference between locum and consultant. The Task and Finish Group welcomed the definitions of such staff that were provided by the Head of Human Resources. The Task and Finish Group further realised that, as the engagement of consultants should be time limited there was a need for an independent check around the time scale of to be implemented.

- 6.1.4 It was noted that over the periods that the Task and Finish Group investigated the Council has a Policy to reduce the spend on Agency Staff, in particular as part of the budget savings in 2009/10 it had been agreed that the Authority would reduce its spend on agency staff by £200,000. This would be undertaken by applying this approach to agency staff. The Task and Finish Group was surprised to see this saving was for white collar Agency Staff only, and that blue collar Agency Staff were used more to generate savings. It appeared that the higher the cost of a Post the more of a saving by reducing consultants.
- 6.1.5 During the period of time of the Task and Finish Group brokers were changed, the Task and Finish Group recognised the need for changed but felt that there was a need for the Policy to be further developed and expanded
- 6.1.6 The Task and Finish Group noted that part of the way that business is carried out in Neighbourhood Environment involves using Agency staff and it was realised that this is the most value for money way in delivering the service also providing a lot of flexibility. Grounds and street maintenance do not need the cover as much as the refuse lorries. Agency staff is now only brought in to cover sickness absence on the refuse lorries not for street and grounds maintenance. In future, in-house staff may be asked to provide cover for sickness absence on the refuse lorries.
- 6.1.7 The Task and Finish Group highlighted the recruitment process within Neighbourhood Environment in particular when a permanent FTE left the service they would not be replaced with a full time employee but with Agency Staff. It was noted that the turnover of staff has not been huge, mainly due to the recession. It was also noted that this method of recruitment is set to continue as it makes NBC more competitive in terms of costs. Bearing this in mind, the Task and Finish Group felt that there is a need for the Council to have a Policy stating, for example that no more than 30% Agency Staff be employed. Should the service go out to competitive dialogue with a Company that has say for example, 80% Agency staff and just 20% full time employees this would not meet the Council's Policy. It was emphasised that there does need to be a balance between quality and cost. The Task and Finish Group suggested that a Policy could be produced which stated that the Council managed the workforce and maintained the standard. It was emphasised that there would be clear legal implications regarding a stated Policy on the employment of Agency Staff. As a major employer the Council needs to be seen to helping the economy. It is accepted that there is a need for Agency Staff but an appropriate level must be met in normal circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations. The Task and Finish Group therefore recommends to Cabinet that: -

- 7.1.1 A procedure based on the document “*Transforming the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success*” is produced and used by each Service Area when engaging temporary, Agency and Interim staff.
- 7.1.2 Cabinet considers the engagement of students from University of Northampton and Northampton college as well as apprenticeships and future job fund opportunities with generic skills, for the filling of temporary vacancies that are currently filled by Agency Staff. A central base of between one and four postgraduate students could be created.
- 7.1.3 Consideration is given to the introduction of a floating workforce that could be pooled by all departments.
- 7.1.4 Build into the Consultant engagement process an independent review after a set time period by the Head of Human Resources to ensure the engagement is still appropriate.
- 7.1.5 The Policy regarding the employment of Agency Staff be expanded and reviewed including: -
 - Setting a maximum percentage target for each directorate of Agency staff.
 - Confirm the definitions within the policy based on the definitions as set out in this report



NORTHAMPTON
B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET – 9th JUNE 2010

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TWO (HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT)– SHELTERED HOUSING AND HOUSING OPTIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Two (Housing and Environment) on the findings of the Review – Sheltered Housing and Housing Options for Older People.
- 1.2 The Executive Summary to Overview and Scrutiny Committee Two's report is attached at Appendix 1. Members of Cabinet have been issued with a copy of the full report. All Overview and Scrutiny Review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of the this report can be located: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Two recommends that Cabinet notes and approves the following recommendations made by the Committee:
- 2.2 When considering the Task and Finish Group's recommendations that Cabinet recognises that the ageing population presents a huge challenge for the council in a period of public spending cuts. It also presents a significant opportunity to improve the Services offered to older people in a way that effectively promotes independent living. The fact that there are more individuals aged over 60 than under 25 is a huge issue that should be addressed and the impact on Northampton understood and responded to. The Council needs to develop a wide range of options to suit the needs of older and vulnerable people and that represent real choice in terms of the services offered.
- 2.3 After hearing all the evidence from various sources, the Task and Finish Group realised that a return to the old system of residential wardens would not improve services to older people and should not be returned to.

- 2.4 To ensure that services represent excellent value for money, are competitive and deliver positive outcomes to promote independent living, a flexible structure of visits to sheltered housing tenants should be introduced according to individual needs. Such changes to be in line with the Supporting People grant conditions to safeguard this important funding stream.
- 2.5 The Head of Housing Needs and Support be authorised to commence dialogue with private sector housing providers to encourage the co-ordination and widespread installation of the Lifeline system.
- 2.6 The Task and Finish Group accepts that the floating support system generally works but highlights the need for flexibility of provision and to minimise the frequency of staff changes to ensure stability and continuity of service provision.
- 2.7 Discussions should take place regarding how Northamptonshire County Council and Northampton Borough Council can work more closely together to eliminate overlaps with some of the work streams at the Call Centre and Telecare Office.
- 2.8. The use of digital technology should be maximised to support the delivery of services, such as Telehealth.
- 2.9 Dialogue takes place between the Portfolio Holder (Housing), relevant key officers, ward Councillors, tenants and other concerned Agencies to investigate how the community rooms can be used to their full potential.
- 2.10 The Head of Housing Needs and Support be authorised to set up a meeting with Northamptonshire County Council, all relevant Agencies and organisations to promote a joined up approach to the delivery of services for older people, with a particular focus on the role of Voluntary Groups and the importance of community activities to counteract social isolation.
- 2.11 A general review of the Garage Tenancy Agreement should take place to include the possible adaption of garages for the storage of mobility scooters.
- 2.12 That the Head of Housing Needs and Support completes the review of sheltered housing properties and produces a plan that outlines which properties will no longer be designated as sheltered, identifying opportunities for new build which meets lifetime homes standards. The Task and Finish Group's observations about heating systems at some sheltered housing units to be taken into consideration during this review.
- 2.13 A full consultation programme, in accordance with the Council's Consultation Toolkit, with existing and potential sheltered housing tenants, is developed regarding any proposed changes.
- 2.14 Improved communication methods with existing and potential sheltered housing tenants is maintained. In particular to work with dissatisfied residents to understand their issues and respond to their concerns
- 2.15 The location of the Call Care service to be reviewed due to the poor quality of accommodation currently used and the service is relocated.
- 2.16 A Policy for the storing of mobility scooters at sheltered housing accommodation is introduced. The evidence contained in this report should form part of that Policy.

- 2.17 Ward Councillors to be issued with details of the location of sheltered housing and details of the Sheltered Housing Coordinators for each ward
- 2.18 The issue of security doors and access is reviewed in blocks of flats designated as sheltered housing
- 2.19 That the Head of Landlord Services is requested to address specific issues at Melbourne House as identified in the main body of this report. The first floor door entry systems at Melbourne, Abbey and Devonshire be redesigned or appropriately adjusted to alleviate the current problems encountered by tenants.
- 2.20 A full Equality Impact Assessment is produced for future changes to Sheltered Housing.

3 Background Information

- 3.1 The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to
- To establish whether the Sheltered Housing Service provides a value for money service and how it can be improved.
 - To establish residents' satisfaction levels and understanding of Sheltered Housing and Housing Options for Older People
 - To determine a better understanding of the complex nature of Sheltered Housing
- 3.2 This Review had been part of the Committee's Work Programme for some time and it was agreed that it was timely for the Review to commence in October 2009.
- 3.3 Information obtained from the following sources formed the main body of evidence gathered by the Committee:
- A synopsis of all information available
 - Results of surveys undertaken
 - Performance Indicator Statistics
 - Evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Housing)
 - Best practice Council – Nottingham and Cambridge
 - Visits to internal Sheltered Housing accommodation – observing process and speaking to employees and tenants: -
 - Visit to the Call Centre – observing process and speaking to employees
 - Evidence from tenants – meetings, as part of the site sites, written evidence
 - Evidence from: -
 - SITRA
 - Northamptonshire County Council
 - Age Concern
- 3.4 In considering the evidence the following conclusions were made: -
- 3.5 The Task and Finish Group recognised that traditional sheltered housing is provided in a variety of forms and that Northampton, similar to other towns, has built and/or adapted accommodation as sheltered housing over the last fifty years.
- 3.6 The financial costs of providing support to older people are significant. It is important that services demonstrate value-for-money, maximise their impact

and deliver positive outcomes that contribute and complement the other support that older people receive (i.e. family, health service etc.)

- 3.7 It was acknowledged that people are now living longer and the older population is growing. There are now more people aged over 60 than under 25 in the general population. The Task and Finish Group realises that this is a huge issue that needs to be addressed in order to understand the impact on Northampton.
- 3.8 Further discussions are taking place with Supporting People regarding preventative services and it was acknowledged that it needs to adapt to the changing environment or risk losing Supporting People funding.
- 3.9 There is not one single solution of housing options for older people and that it must be about choice with a range of options available. Detailed at Appendix D is population comparison data for Northampton Borough Council and Milton Keynes Council.
- 3.10 A lot of elderly people live in general needs accommodation but cannot access support, therefore there is a need to review the situation and look more widely at a joined up approach with partners, which will assist greater numbers of people to live independently.
- 3.11 After hearing all the evidence the Task and Finish Group agreed that the current set number of scheduled visits to sheltered housing tenants is not flexible enough and should be based on needs.
- 3.12 The Task and Finish Group noted the importance of the benefits of the Telecare System but was concerned to hear that not all of the Telecare system was compatible with the Lifeline system currently operated by Northampton Borough Council. This system assists residents to live as independently as possible in their own homes. There are several 'add ons' to the system, which includes a medication dispenser, memo reminder and a plug to prevent flooding. The Task and Finish Group felt that with the Call Care Service, based at Exeter Place and the Telecare Scheme at Gladstone Centre there appeared to be some overlap in the assessment process and the Task and Finish Group supported discussions taking place regarding how this could be combined.
- 3.13 The Task and Finish Group commended the excellent job that staff based at Exeter Place were doing but was concerned about the lack of office space and recommended that alternative office space be considered such as John Dryden House.
- 3.14 The Task and Finish Group supported the investigations that are taking place into widening the provision of the Lifeline system, for example to individuals living on their own. It was acknowledged that this would create further income to the Council but may also require additional resources.
- 3.15 The Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for dialogue to take place with Private Sector Housing Providers and to encourage the co-ordination and widespread use of the Lifeline System.
- 3.16 There is a need to assist communities to help each other, and to invest in prevention initiatives that support independent living.

- 3.17 The Task and Finish Group felt that some of the community rooms located within Sheltered Housing are poorly managed and under used and that discussions should take place how they could be better used.
- 3.18 The Task and Finish Group noted the integrated system that is in operation within the Mental Health Service, which was brought in around eight years ago, works very well. Support is dependent upon the individual's needs. It was felt that this emphasised the need for a joined up approach of all Agencies for the service of sheltered housing and housing options for older people.
- 3.19 The Schemes Review is scheduled to complete by April 2010 and it was noted that this Review is likely to see a recommendation for a decrease in sheltered housing properties across the borough.
- 3.20 Currently ward Councillors are not made aware of the Sheltered Housing Coordinators are for each ward and the location of sheltered housing within each ward. The Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for Councillors to be provided with such a list. It would be useful for Councillors to be furnished with this information in case of a problem.
- 3.21 The Task and Finish Group felt that the sheltered housing coordinators' role should be clarified.
- 3.22 The Task and Finish Group noted the concerns raised by some residents regarding the loss of resident wardens and the replacement with floating support. Many residents realised that this was not the best way to deliver services, created dependency and was campaigned for by a vocal minority. The Task and Finish Group was therefore minded not to support the campaign for the return to traditional resident wardens.
- 3.23 It was recognised that there is a need to understand what is driving the requests for an on site warden. There is also a need to understand what people want so that issues such as the number of staff required can be understood; there may also be competition from the private sector. It was further realised that the Council was unable to continue with the old system and further consultation with residents and stakeholders would be required.
- 3.24 The Task and Finish Group was pleased to note that 86% of service users were relatively satisfied with the service following a user survey.
- 3.25 It was important however to understand the issues of the 14% who were not satisfied and work to make changes to improve services to this significant minority.
- 3.26 Northampton Borough Council has 47 Sheltered Housing Coordinators, which is equivalent to 37 and a half full time equivalent (FTE). It was noted that this is considered adequate to deliver the service contracted for. The Sheltered Housing Coordinators visit the 2,100 properties that are designated as sheltered housing in accordance with the three levels of support – daily, three times a week or monthly. The Task and Finish Group noted that Milton Keynes Council has 26 full time and two part-time Sheltered Housing Officer that cover 29 Sheltered Housing Schemes, around 800 households. Each Sheltered Housing Officer is based at an

office on site. The Sheltered Housing Officers carry out daily visits to tenants within their allocated sheltered housing scheme. Sheltered Housing Officers are funded via the Supporting People Programme.

- 3.27 The Task and Finish Group felt that consideration needs to be given as to how mobility scooters are best stored in the future and whether or not renting garages within the complex to people living outside is in the best interests of everyone concerned.
- 3.28 At the site visit to Milton Keynes, the Task and Finish Group heard that its Sheltered Housing tenants are permitted to use mobility scooters on site and in the corridors. Milton Keynes Council is putting together a Policy, with the Fire and Rescue Service stating the criteria for storage and charging of the vehicles. Tenants with such a vehicle will be required to have public liability insurance. It was suggested that when the Policy has been finalised that a copy should be forwarded to the Head of Housing Needs and Support.
- 3.29 Frequently smoking takes place in the communal lifts creating health and safety issues. The Task and Finish Group understands that the Sheltered Housing Co-ordinators are trying to resolve this situation but felt that extra steps will need to be taken to ensure that the safety and comfort of the residents is paramount.
- 3.30 When visiting Sheltered Housing accommodation within the borough, the Task and Finish Group was concerned to note the ineffectiveness of warm air heating. The Group had met with a tenant sitting under a blanket to get warm as she was unable to use the warm air heating system as it affected her asthma.
- 3.31 In putting together its Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (screening) the Task and Finish Group was mindful of the need for a full EIA to be produced for Sheltered Housing for any future changes.

4. Options

- 4.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

5 Implications (including financial implications)

5.1 Policy

- 5.1.1 The report and its recommendations have policy implications for housing and support work. Cabinet's response will need to consider these issues in further detail.

5.2 Resources and Risk

- 5.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

5.3 Legal

- 5.3.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

5.4 Equality

- 5.4.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations. This will need to include a full Equalities Impact Assessment for Sheltered Housing for any future changes.

5.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 5.5.1 Comprehensive consultation work was carried out as part of the evidence gathering stage of the Task and Finish Group work.
- 5.5.2 The Task and Finish Group had dialogue with a number of sheltered housing tenants and various key Officers regarding the facilities provided by Northampton Borough Council.
- 5.5.3 The Portfolio Holder (Housing) along with the Task and Finish Group visited Milton Keynes Council to see its Sheltered Housing facilities.
- 5.5.4 The Portfolio Holder (Housing) provided a response to the Task and Finish Group's core questions.
- 5.5.5 The Task and Finish Group held a meeting with members of the Older People's Forum and Disabled Peoples forum regarding the facilities provided by Northampton Borough Council.
- 5.5.6 Key expert witnesses provided evidence to inform the Review.

6. Background Papers

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Two's Report – Sheltered Housing and Housing Options for Older People (March 2010)
- Minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Two – 18th May 2010

Report Author and Title: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Christopher Malpas, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Two.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Review is

- To establish whether the Sheltered Housing Service provides a value for money service and how it can be improved.
- To establish residents' satisfaction levels and understanding of Sheltered Housing and Housing Options for Older People
- To determine a better understanding of the complex nature of Sheltered Housing

This Review has been part of the Committee's Work Programme for some time and it was agreed that it was timely for the Review to commence in October 2009.

A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established comprising Councillor Christopher Malpas (Chair); Councillor Malcolm Mildren (Vice Chair), Councillors Lee Mason, Irene Markham, Jean Hawkins and David Garlick. Two Co-opted members joined the Group, Councillor Gina Ogden, Chair, Adult and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, Northamptonshire County Council and Fiona Seymour, Head of Adult Social Care, Northamptonshire County Council.

The Task and Finish Group agreed that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

- A synopsis of all information available
- Results of surveys undertaken
- Performance Indicator Statistics
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Housing)
- Best practice Council – Nottingham and Cambridge
- Visits to internal Sheltered Housing accommodation – observing process and speaking to employees and tenants:-
- Visit to the Call Centre – observing process and speaking to employees
- Evidence from tenants – meetings, as part of the site sites, written evidence
- Evidence from:-
 - SITRA
 - Northamptonshire County Council
 - Northants Health
 - Age Concern

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that: -

- 4.1.1 The Task and Finish Group recognised that traditional sheltered housing is provided in a variety of forms and that Northampton, similar to other towns, has built and/or adapted accommodation as sheltered housing over the last fifty years.
- 4.1.2 The financial costs of providing support to older people are significant. It is important that services demonstrate value-for-money, maximise their impact and deliver positive outcomes that contribute and complement the other support that older people receive (i.e. family, health service etc.)
- 4.1.3 It was acknowledged that people are now living longer and the older population is growing. There are now more people aged over 60 than under 25 in the general population. The Task and Finish Group realises that this is a huge issue that needs to be addressed in order to understand the impact on Northampton.
- 4.2.1 Further discussions are taking place with Supporting People regarding preventative services and it was acknowledged that it needs to adapt to the changing environment or risk losing Supporting People funding.
- 4.2.2 There is not one single solution of housing options for older people and that it must be about choice with a range of options available. Detailed at Appendix D is population comparison data for Northampton Borough Council and Milton Keynes Council.
- 4.2.3 A lot of elderly people live in general needs accommodation but cannot access support, therefore there is a need to review the situation and look more widely at a joined up approach with partners, which will assist greater numbers of people to live independently.
- 4.2.4 After hearing all the evidence the Task and Finish Group agreed that the current set number of scheduled visits to sheltered housing tenants is not flexible enough and should be based on needs.
- 4.3.1 The Task and Finish Group noted the importance of the benefits of the Telecare System but was concerned to hear that not all of the Telecare system was compatible with the Lifeline system currently operated by Northampton Borough Council. This system assists residents to live as independently as possible in their own homes. There are several 'add ons' to the system, which includes a medication dispenser, memo reminder and a plug to prevent flooding. The Task and Finish Group felt that with the Call Care Service, based at Exeter Place and the Telecare Scheme at Gladstone Centre there appeared to be some overlap in the assessment process and the Task and Finish Group supported discussions taking place regarding how this could be combined.

- 4.3.2 The Task and Finish Group commended the excellent job that staff based at Exeter Place were doing but was concerned about the lack of office space and recommended that alternative office space be considered such as John Dryden House.
- 4.3.3 The Task and Finish Group supported the investigations that are taking place into widening the provision of the Lifeline system, for example to individuals living on their own. It was acknowledged that this would create further income to the Council but may also require additional resources.
- 4.3.4 The Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for dialogue to take place with Private Sector Housing Providers and to encourage the co-ordination and widespread use of the Lifeline System.
- 4.4.1 There is a need to assist communities to help each other, and to invest in prevention initiatives that support independent living.
- 4.4.2 The Task and Finish Group felt that some of the community rooms located within Sheltered Housing are poorly managed and under used and that discussions should take place how they could be better used.
- 4.4.3 The Task and Finish Group noted the integrated system that is in operation within the Mental Health Service, which was brought in around eight years ago, works very well. Support is dependent upon the individual's needs. It was felt that this emphasised the need for a joined up approach of all Agencies for the service of sheltered housing and housing options for older people.
- 4.5 The Schemes Review is scheduled to complete by April 2010 and it was noted that this Review is likely to see a recommendation for a decrease in sheltered housing properties across the borough.
- 4.5.1 Currently ward Councillors are not made aware of the Sheltered Housing Coordinators are for each ward and the location of sheltered housing within each ward. The Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for Councillors to be provided with such a list. It would be useful for Councillors to be furnished with this information in case of a problem.
- 4.5.2 The Task and Finish Group felt that the sheltered housing coordinators' role should be clarified.
- 4.6.1 The Task and Finish Group noted the concerns raised by some residents regarding the loss of resident wardens and the replacement with floating support. Many residents realised that this was not the best way to deliver services, created dependency and was campaigned for by a vocal minority. The Task and Finish Group was therefore minded not to support the campaign for the return to traditional resident wardens.
- 4.6.2 It was recognised that there is a need to understand what is driving the requests for an on site warden. There is also a need to understand what people want so that issues such as the number of staff required can be understood; there may also be competition from the private sector. It was

further realised that the Council was unable to continue with the old system and further consultation with residents and stakeholders would be required.

- 4.6.3 The Task and Finish Group was pleased to note that 86% of service users were relatively satisfied with the service following a user survey.
- 4.6.4 It was important however to understand the issues of the 14% who were not satisfied and work to make changes to improve services to this significant minority.
- 4.7 Northampton Borough Council has 47 Sheltered Housing Coordinators, which is equivalent to 37 and a half full time equivalent (FTE). It was noted that this is considered adequate to deliver the service contracted for. The Sheltered Housing Coordinators visit the 2,100 properties that are designated as sheltered housing in accordance with the three levels of support – daily, three times a week or monthly. The Task and Finish Group noted that Milton Keynes Council has 26 full time and two part-time Sheltered Housing Officer that cover 29 Sheltered Housing Schemes, around 800 households. Each Sheltered Housing Officer is based at an office on site. The Sheltered Housing Officers carry out daily visits to tenants within their allocated sheltered housing scheme. Sheltered Housing Officers are funded via the Supporting People Programme.
- 4.8.1 The Task and Finish Group felt that consideration needs to be given as to how mobility scooters are best stored in the future and whether or not renting garages within the complex to people living outside is in the best interests of everyone concerned.
- 4.8.2 At the site visit to Milton Keynes, the Task and Finish Group heard that its Sheltered Housing tenants are permitted to use mobility scooters on site and in the corridors. Milton Keynes Council is putting together a Policy, with the Fire and Rescue Service stating the criteria for storage and charging of the vehicles. Tenants with such a vehicle will be required to have public liability insurance. It was suggested that when the Policy has been finalised that a copy should be forwarded to the Head of Housing Needs and Support.
- 4.9.1 Frequently smoking takes place in the communal lifts creating health and safety issues. The Task and Finish Group understands that the Sheltered Housing Co-ordinators are trying to resolve this situation but felt that extra steps will need to be taken to ensure that the safety and comfort of the residents is paramount.
- 4.9.2 When visiting Sheltered Housing accommodation within the borough, the Task and Finish Group was concerned to note the ineffectiveness of warm air heating. The Group had met with a tenant sitting under a blanket to get warm as she was unable to use the warm air heating system as it affected her asthma.
- 4.10 In putting together its Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (screening) the Task and Finish Group was mindful of the need for a full EIA to be produced for Sheltered Housing for any future changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations.

- 5.1 The Task and Finish Group therefore recommends to Cabinet that:
 - 5.1.1 When considering the Task and Finish Group's recommendations that Cabinet recognises that the ageing population presents a huge challenge for the council in a period of public spending cuts. It also presents a significant opportunity to improve the Services offered to older people in a way that effectively promotes independent living. The fact that there are more individuals aged over 60 than under 25 is a huge issue that should be addressed and the impact on Northampton understood and responded to. The Council needs to develop a wide range of options to suit the needs of older and vulnerable people and that represent real choice in terms of the services offered.
 - 5.1.2 After hearing all the evidence from various sources, the Task and Finish Group realised that a return to the old system of residential wardens would not improve services to older people and should not be returned to.
 - 5.2.1 To ensure that services represent excellent value for money, are competitive and deliver positive outcomes to promote independent living, a flexible structure of visits to sheltered housing tenants should be introduced according to individual needs. Such changes to be in line with the Supporting People grant conditions to safeguard this important funding stream.
 - 5.2.2 The Head of Housing Needs and Support be authorised to commence dialogue with private sector housing providers to encourage the co-ordination and widespread installation of the Lifeline system.
 - 5.2.3 The Task and Finish Group accepts that the floating support system generally works but highlights the need for flexibility of provision and to minimise the frequency of staff changes to ensure stability and continuity of service provision.
 - 5.3.1 Discussions should take place regarding how Northamptonshire County Council and Northampton Borough Council can work more closely together to eliminate overlaps with some of the work streams at the Call Centre and Telecare Office.
 - 5.3.2 The use of digital technology should be maximised to support the delivery of services, such as Telehealth.
 - 5.4.1 Dialogue takes place between the Portfolio Holder (Housing), relevant key officers, ward Councillors, tenants and other concerned Agencies to investigate how the community rooms can be used to their full potential.

- 5.4.2 The Head of Housing Needs and Support be authorised to set up a meeting with Northamptonshire County Council, all relevant Agencies and organisations to promote a joined up approach to the delivery of services for older people, with a particular focus on the role of Voluntary Groups and the importance of community activities to counteract social isolation.
- 5.4.3 A general review of the Garage Tenancy Agreement should take place to include the possible adaption of garages for the storage of mobility scooters.
- 5.5 That the Head of Housing Needs and Support completes the review of sheltered housing properties and produces a plan that outlines which properties will no longer be designated as sheltered, identifying opportunities for new build which meets lifetime homes standards. The Task and Finish Group's observations about heating systems at some sheltered housing units to be taken into consideration during this review.
- 5.6.1 A full consultation programme, in accordance with the Council's Consultation Toolkit, with existing and potential sheltered housing tenants, is developed regarding any proposed changes.
- 5.6.2 Improved communication methods with existing and potential sheltered housing tenants is maintained. In particular to work with dissatisfied residents to understand their issues and respond to their concerns
- 5.7 The location of the Call Care service to be reviewed due to the poor quality of accommodation currently used and the service is relocated.
- 5.8.1 A Policy for the storing of mobility scooters at sheltered housing accommodation is introduced. The evidence contained in this report should form part of that Policy.
- 5.8.2 Ward Councillors to be issued with details of the location of sheltered housing and details of the Sheltered Housing Coordinators for each ward
- 5.9.1 The issue of security doors and access is reviewed in blocks of flats designated as sheltered housing
- 5.9.2 That the Head of Landlord Services is requested to address specific issues at Melbourne House as identified in the main body of this report. The first floor door entry systems at Melbourne, Abbey and Devonshire be redesigned or appropriately adjusted to alleviate the current problems encountered by tenants.
- 5.10 A full Equality Impact Assessment is produced for future changes to Sheltered Housing.

Agenda Item 5c

Appendices: 1

Item No.



NORTHAMPTON
B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET – 9th June 2010

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ONE (PARTNERSHIPS, REGENERATION, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENGAGEMENT) – REVIEW OF COMMUNITY CENTRES
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement) on the findings of the Review – Community Centres.
- 1.2 The Executive Summary to Overview and Scrutiny Committee One's report is attached at Appendix 1. Members of Cabinet have been issued with a copy of the full report. All Overview and Scrutiny Review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of the this report can be located: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee One recommends that Cabinet notes and approves the following recommendations made by the Committee:
 - 2.1.1 All leases for self managed Community Centres are reviewed to ensure that they meet consistent standards; based on a common core document. Leases be on a term of at least 25 years.
 - 2.1.2 In assessing the business cases, Management Committees must be able to demonstrate they are maintaining a local focus and provide evidence to support it can manage a number of Community Centres fitting the set criteria.
 - 2.1.3 Northampton Borough Council provides information, such as building surveys, details of running costs to Self Managed Community Centres to aid business planning.
 - 2.1.4 Management Committees are charged with ensuring that Community Centres are kept in a good state of repair. Northampton Borough Council provides an allocated sum of

money to the Management Committees for general maintenance and repair of the Community Centres. Northampton Borough Council remains the budget holder for major repairs.

- 2.1.5 Suitable Community Groups are given the opportunity to submit an application for the management of a Community Centre(s). Existing Management Committees are given first opportunity to submit proposals for community centre(s) that they currently manage.
- 2.1.6 Where appropriate, Community Groups taking on the management role of the Community Centres, the Council or other partners provide a grant towards running costs, with the proviso that the Groups work in partnership with the Council to achieve community outcomes.
- 2.1.7 Northampton Borough Council works with Community Groups that take on the management of a Community Centre regarding the employment of a Centre Coordinator and/or Centre Manager.
- 2.1.8 The Council works with Management Committees to ensure that the Community Centres meet the needs of the Community.
- 2.1.9 A Policy, containing particular components such as an Equality Impact Assessment, Health and Safety issues, Terms of Access, booking and contact details to be clearly visible from the outside of the building, details of the condition in which the Community Centre should be left when the hirer has concluded its session, be introduced and issued to all Community Centres. The Policy is renewed on an annual basis.
- 2.1.10 Monitoring of the management of Community Centres is introduced, using management tools.
- 2.1.11 Cabinet considers, within appropriate resources, a method of promoting and marketing Community Centres.
- 2.1.12 The Task and Finish Group supports the development of a Community Asset Transfer Policy.
- 2.1.13 Centre Coordinators are responsible for a particular Community Centre/clusters of Community Centres to encourage ownership.
- 2.1.14 Community Centres are available for hire seven days a week.
- 2.1.15 A review of the fees and charges for Northampton Borough Council managed Community Centres is undertaken.
- 2.1.16 New builds for Community Centres achieve the same standard, or better, of the design of the floor space, accessibility and layout of Parklands and Pastures Community Centres.

3. Background and Issues

- 3.1 The purpose of this Review was to support the development of policy in relation to: -
 - the provision of premises for community use, and
 - the role of Northampton Borough Council in such provision
 - monitoring any budget proposals in relation to community centres

- 3.2 This Review was included onto the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme following some short pre-decision scrutiny of the issue and a presentation to the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the Head of Policy and Community Engagement that included: -
- The reasons to review Community Centres
 - Communities and their Centres
 - Value for Money
 - Active Management
 - Emerging Proposals
- 3.3 The Council embarked upon a Review of the Management of its Community Centres and it was agreed that Overview and Scrutiny could assist this piece of policy development work by undertaking research and providing assistance and recommendations to support the Review. The Review commenced in August 2009 as an Appreciative Inquiry and converted to a Task and Finish Group in December 2009 with available resources, to conduct this in-depth piece of work.
- 3.4 A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established comprising Councillor Portia Wilson (Chair); Councillors Tony Clarke, Keith Davies, David Palethorpe and Tess Scott.
- 3.5 Information obtained from the following sources formed the main body of evidence gathered by the Committee:
- Head of Community Engagement, Northampton Borough Council
 - Various organisations that offer facilities for community use
 - Site visits to community centres within the Borough
 - Witness evidence: Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement), representatives from Alliston Gardens Community Centre, Area based Co-Ordinator, Northamptonshire County Council, the Regional Director, the Development Trusts Association (DTA)
 - Public addressees from various Community Centre representatives to the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee One of 25 January 2010
 - Examples of best practice
- 3.6 In considering the evidence the following conclusions were made: -
- 3.7 The Task and Finish Group realises that there needs to be accessibility to community facilities for all Groups.
- 3.8 Community Centres need to look like a Community Centre first and foremost and hirers should return it to that state when their session concludes.
- 3.9 The Task and Finish Group highlights the need for a stated percentage of the usage of Community Centres and the number of Groups hiring the Centre to be documented. It would be advantageous for a monitoring system to be introduced. Other performance related monitoring could be tailored on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.10 The Task and Finish Group emphasises that 'one size does not fit all' and that each Community Centre needs to be looked at differently. When looking at any proposal for Community Centres, there is a need for clear Equal Opportunity Policies to ensure it is open to all. The Community Centre needs to be clearly signposted and look like a Community Centre. The responsibility and ownership of the building, together with booking details, should be clearly displayed on the outside of the Community Centre.

- 3.11 The Task and Finish Group has no objections to a specific Group, for example a Faith Group, taking on the management of a Community Centre but access has to be open to all and it has to be clearly labelled a Community Centre and not the Faith Group's Centre.
- 3.12 If there is a dominant use of a Community Centre, it can change the perception to the rest of the Community of what the Centre is. Some Centres are known as 'the nursery' or 'play group'. The same could happen if a specific Group managed a Community Centre.
- 3.13 The Task and Finish Group acknowledges the need for a clear Policy detailing specific categories for commercial and subsidised hire charges. Categories should comprise local Third Sector Groups, Third Sector Groups and Commercial Groups.
- 3.14 The Task and Finish Group noted that one particular Community Centre is unique in the way that it pays for its own Coordinator.
- 3.15 The current fees and charges for Northampton Borough Council managed Community Centres do not appear to be competitive. It is further realised, however, that there are occasions when the Council needs to subsidise some Groups, such as those known to be of low income.
- 3.16 The Task and Finish Group felt that all commercial businesses should pay commercial rates for the hire of Community Centres.
- 3.17 The Task and Finish Group highlights that there is a huge difference in hire rates between Community Centres.
- 3.18 The Task and Finish Group notes that the majority of Pre-School groups are being charged the community group rate for the hire of Community Centres and conveys its concerns about this charging regime. It has particular concerns, as often Pre-School groups appear to use Community Centres for their exclusion.
- 3.19 The Task and Finish Group has particular concerns regarding the minimal usage at one Community Centre. Due to the fact that a pre-school uses this Community Centre during school hours it cannot be used after 3pm because the Pre School leaves its kit in the Room. The Task and Finish Group felt that this Community Centre is a vital link with the community and it would be advantageous to ascertain whether the room is available for bookings after 3pm. It is further acknowledged that Community Centre is set out as a school.
- 3.20 On its tour of the Community Centres, the Task and Finish Group was provided with examples that some bookings had been turned away. The Community often sees the Community Centre Coordinator as the contact for bookings but the Task and Finish Group realises that it is not within their job description to take bookings. The need for the clear display of contact and booking arrangements was noted.
- 3.21 The Task and Finish Group recognises the need for Centre Coordinators to have ownership of a Community Centre or a clusters of Community Centres.
- 3.22 It is noted that arrangements for providing cover for some Community Centre Coordinators is not consistent. The Task and Finish Group felt that weekends in particular are income-generating and that there is a need for cover to be provided. Community Centres should be available for seven days a week usage.
- 3.23 It was queried why some public bodies were using venues such as Sixfields and Franklins

Gardens for their meetings but not utilising Community Centres. Community Centres are not marketed and there is a strong need for this. Often the image of Community Centres is 'run down' not the ideal place to hold a meeting. The Task and Finish Group appreciates that there are no available resources to market Community Centres. There may be potential for considering the role of Centre Managers.

- 3.24 It is realised that it is not just about acquiring bookings but also about how the Community Centre plays a role in the community, for example how the Community Centre supports the community. The Task and Finish Group concludes that at present, the Council 's role in the management of Community Centres appears to be as a caretaker only.
- 3.25 There is a need to explore the arrangements that the Council has with Management Committees to ascertain whether they require amendment and updating. It is apparent that many of the Legal Agreements are often decades old, most of which have expired.
- 3.26 On the tour of the Community Centres the Task and Finish Group was pleased to note that in the main the standard was high but it is felt that there is a lack of a maintenance schedule, such as. painting of window frames. A number of the Community Centres were built a number of years ago and the Task and Finish Group felt that if there were more modern buildings, they would be easier to let and cheaper to run.
- 3.27 The Task and Finish Group acknowledges the Council has recently approved a Corporate Asset Management Strategy, which recognises the benefits, which can accrue from Community Asset Transfers and is addressing the need for a policy to document its approach to such transfers. It emphasises the need for the Council to give support to organisations and Groups, such as help with business planning. Awaiting confirmation about this Review
- 3.28 It emphasises the need for the Council to give support to organisations and Groups, such as help with business planning.
- 3.29 From the evidence provided, the Task and Finish Group notes the comments that there is a need for more youth groups and youth activities. It is highlighted that Northampton Borough Council has nine community centres, only three of which host youth provision.
- 3.30 The Task and Finish Group agrees that the Equality Impact Assessment for Community Centres is very comprehensive and the majority of areas are covered.
- 3.31 There is a need to ensure that all buildings that the Council has direct or indirect input into have a clear Equality Standards Policy.

4. Options

- 4.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

5. Policy

- 5.1. The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to Community Centres. The Cabinet response will need to consider these issues in detail.

6 Resources and Risk

- 6.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

7 Legal

- 7.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

8 Equality

- 8.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

9. Consultees (Internal and External)

- 9.1 Comprehensive consultation work was carried out as part of the evidence gathering stage of the Committee's work.
- 9.2 The Committee consulted and took evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.10 of this report.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee One's Report – Community Centres (April 2010)
 - Minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee One – 25th January 2010 and 19th April 2010

Report Author and Title: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor John Yates, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee One.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to support the development of policy in relation to: -

- the provision of premises for community use, and
- the role of Northampton Borough Council in such provision
- monitoring any budget proposals in relation to community centres

The Council embarked upon a Review of the Management of its Community Centres and it was agreed that Overview and Scrutiny could assist this piece of policy development work by undertaking research and providing assistance and recommendations to support the Review. The Review commenced in August 2009 as an Appreciative Inquiry and converted to a Task and Finish Group in December 2009 with available resources, to conduct this in-depth piece of work.

A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established comprising Councillor Portia Wilson (Chair); Councillors Tony Clarke, Keith Davies, David Palethorpe and Tess Scott.

The Task and Finish Group agreed that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

- List of all premises currently available (or potentially available) for community use, including Northampton Borough Council's Community Centres, Community Rooms, School Facilities, premises owned and/or run by community organisations and faith groups.
- For the above, location, ownership, patterns of use, charging regime, accessibility, condition and similar
- Costs and income for Community Centres
- Current Northampton Borough Council's Policy, whether explicit or implicit
- Examples of good practice adopted elsewhere

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that: -

- 5.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:
 - 5.1.1 The Task and Finish Group realises that there needs to be accessibility to community facilities for all Groups.
 - 5.1.2 Community Centres need to look like a Community Centre first and foremost and hirers should return it to that state when their session concludes.
 - 5.1.3 The Task and Finish Group highlights the need for a stated percentage of the

usage of Community Centres and the number of Groups hiring the Centre to be documented. It would be advantageous for a monitoring system to be introduced. Other performance related monitoring could be tailored on a case-by-case basis.

- 5.1.4 The Task and Finish Group emphasises that 'one size does not fit all' and that each Community Centre needs to be looked at differently. When looking at any proposal for Community Centres, there is a need for clear Equal Opportunity Policies to ensure it is open to all. The Community Centre needs to be clearly signposted and look like a Community Centre. The responsibility and ownership of the building, together with booking details, should be clearly displayed on the outside of the Community Centre.
- 5.1.5 The Task and Finish Group has no objections to a specific Group, for example a Faith Group, taking on the management of a Community Centre but access has to be open to all and it has to be clearly labelled a Community Centre and not the Faith Group's Centre.
- 5.1.6 If there is a dominant use of a Community Centre, it can change the perception to the rest of the Community of what the Centre is. Some Centres are known as 'the nursery' or 'play group'. The same could happen if a specific Group managed a Community Centre.
- 5.1.7 The Task and Finish Group acknowledges the need for a clear Policy detailing specific categories for commercial and subsidised hire charges. Categories should comprise local Third Sector Groups, Third Sector Groups and Commercial Groups.
- 5.1.8 The Task and Finish Group noted that one particular Community Centre is unique in the way that it pays for its own Coordinator.
- 5.1.9 The current fees and charges for Northampton Borough Council managed Community Centres do not appear to be competitive. It is further realised, however, that there are occasions when the Council needs to subsidise some Groups, such as those known to be of low income.
- 5.1.10 The Task and Finish Group felt that all commercial businesses should pay commercial rates for the hire of Community Centres.
- 5.1.11 The Task and Finish Group highlights that there is a huge difference in hire rates between Community Centres.
- 5.1.12 The Task and Finish Group notes that the majority of Pre-School groups are being charged the community group rate for the hire of Community Centres and conveys its concerns about this charging regime. It has particular concerns, as often Pre-School groups appear to use Community Centres for their exclusion.
- 5.1.13 The Task and Finish Group has particular concerns regarding the minimal usage at one Community Centre. Due to the fact that a pre-school uses this Community Centre during school hours it cannot be used after 3pm because the Pre School leaves its kit in the Room. The Task and Finish Group felt that this Community Centre is a vital link with the community and it would be advantageous to ascertain whether the room is available for bookings after 3pm. It is further

acknowledged that Community Centre is set out as a school.

- 5.1.14 On its tour of the Community Centres, the Task and Finish Group was provided with examples that some bookings had been turned away. The Community often sees the Community Centre Coordinator as the contact for bookings but the Task and Finish Group realises that it is not within their' job description to take bookings. The need for the clear display of contact and booking arrangements was noted.
- 5.1.15 The Task and Finish Group recognises the need for Centre Coordinators to have ownership of a Community Centre or a clusters of Community Centres.
- 5.1.16 It is noted that arrangements for providing cover for some Community Centre Co-Ordinators is not consistent. The Task and Finish Group felt that weekends in particular are income-generating and that there is a need for cover to be provided. Community Centres should be available for seven days a week usage.
- 5.1.17 It was queried why some public bodies were using venues such as Sixfields and Franklins Gardens for their meetings but not utilising Community Centres. Community Centres are not marketed and there is a strong need for this. Often the image of Community Centres is 'run down' not the ideal place to hold a meeting. The Task and Finish Group appreciates that there are no available resources to market Community Centres. There may be potential for considering the role of Centre Managers.
- 5.1.18 It is realised that it is not just about acquiring bookings but also about how the Community Centre plays a role in the community, for example how the Community Centre supports the community. The Task and Finish Group concludes that at present, the Council 's role in the management of Community Centres appears to be as a caretaker only.
- 5.1.19 There is a need to explore the arrangements that the Council has with Management Committees to ascertain whether they require amendment and updating. It is apparent that many of the Legal Agreements are often decades old, most of which have expired.
- 5.1.20 On the tour of the Community Centres the Task and Finish Group was pleased to note that in the main the standard was high but it is felt that there is a lack of a maintenance schedule, such as. painting of window frames. A number of the Community Centres were built a number of years ago and the Task and Finish Group felt that if there were more modern buildings, they would be easier to let and cheaper to run.
- 5.1.21 The Task and Finish Group acknowledges the Council has recently approved a Corporate Asset Management Strategy, which recognises the benefits, which can accrue from Community Asset Transfers and is addressing the need for a policy to document its approach to such transfers. It emphasises the need for the Council to give support to organisations and Groups, such as help with business planning. Awaiting confirmation about this Review
- 5.1.22 It emphasises the need for the Council to give support to organisations and Groups, such as help with business planning.

- 5.1.23 From the evidence provided, the Task and Finish Group notes the comments that there is a need for more youth groups and youth activities. It is highlighted that Northampton Borough Council has nine community centres, only three of which host youth provision.
- 5.1.24 The Task and Finish Group agrees that the Equality Impact Assessment for Community Centres is very comprehensive and the majority of areas are covered. There is a need to ensure that all buildings that the Council has direct or indirect input into have a clear Equality Standards Policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations. The Task and Finish Group therefore recommends to Cabinet that: -

- 6.1.1 All leases for self managed Community Centres are reviewed to ensure that they meet consistent standards; based on a common core document. Leases be on a term of at least 25 years. .
- 6.1.2 In assessing the business cases, Management Committees must be able to demonstrate they are maintaining a local focus and provide evidence to support it can manage a number of Community Centres fitting the set criteria.
- 6.1.3 Northampton Borough Council provides information, such as building surveys, details of running costs to Self Managed Community Centres to aid business planning.
- 6.1.4 Management Committees are charged with ensuring that Community Centres are kept in a good state of repair. Northampton Borough Council provides an allocated sum of money to the Management Committees for general maintenance and repair of the Community Centres. Northampton Borough Council remains the budget holder for major repairs.
- 6.1.5 Suitable Community Groups are given the opportunity to submit an application for the management of a Community Centre(s). Existing Management Committees are given first opportunity to submit proposals for community centre(s) that they currently manage.
- 6.1.6 Where appropriate, Community Groups taking on the management role of the Community Centres, the Council or other partners provide a grant towards running costs, with the proviso that the Groups work in partnership with the Council to achieve community outcomes.
- 6.1.7 Northampton Borough Council works with Community Groups that take on the management of a Community Centre regarding the employment of a Centre Coordinator and/or Centre Manager.

- 6.1.8 The Council works with Management Committees to ensure that the Community Centres meet the needs of the Community.
- 6.1.9 A Policy, containing particular components such as an Equality Impact Assessment, Health and Safety issues, Terms of Access, booking and contact details to be clearly visible from the outside of the building, details of the condition in which the Community Centre should be left when the hirer has concluded its session, be introduced and issued to all Community Centres. The Policy is renewed on an annual basis.
- 6.1.10 Monitoring of the management of Community Centres is introduced, using management tools.
- 6.1.11 Cabinet considers, within appropriate resources, a method of promoting and marketing Community Centres.
- 6.1.12 The Task and Finish Group supports the development of a Community Asset Transfer Policy.
- 6.1.13 Centre Coordinators are responsible for a particular Community Centre/clusters of Community Centres to encourage ownership.
- 6.1.14 Community Centres are available for hire seven days a week.
- 6.1.15 A review of the fees and charges for Northampton Borough Council managed Community Centres is undertaken.
- 6.1.16 New builds for Community Centres achieve the same standard, or better, of the design of the floor space, accessibility and layout of Parklands and Pastures Community Centres.



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	CHANGE OF SCENE PROJECT
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 June 2010
Key Decision:	YES
Listed on Forwarded Plan:	NO
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	NO
Directorate	Environment and Culture
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Paul Varnserry
Wards	Eastfield, Lumbertubs, Ecton Brook and Billing

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet about the Change of Scene project, a three-year youth work project giving young people encouragement and opportunities to engage with the natural environment. The project will benefit teenagers from Bellinge, Blackthorn, Eastfield and Rectory Farm estates and will be principally funded by the National Lottery.
- 1.2 To inform Cabinet of the decisions of the Chief Executive, using delegated powers and following consultation with all four Group Leaders, to accept an offer from the Access to Nature programme of the Big Lottery Fund (managed by Natural England) of £229,338 over three calendar years for the project and to authorise the immediate commencement of project implementation. The project will attract a minimum of £60,000 of match funding (£30,000 in kind), with the Council being the accountable body for all of these funds.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the decisions of the Chief Executive and to take account of the project's aims and objectives.
- 2.2 To note that the Council will be accountable to Natural England (on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund) for the successful execution of this project, including securing the required level of match funding and employing the Project Co-ordinator.
- 2.3 To note the nomination of the Northampton East Area Partnership Co-ordinator as the Council's Lead Officer for the project, with full access to advice from Finance, HR, Legal, Procurement and other professional staff as required.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 *Report Background*

- 3.1.1 The development of the Change of Scene project has been led by the Northampton East Area Partnership Co-ordinator, with the approval and active support of the Northampton East Neighbourhood Management Board. It responds to the widely expressed need for more activities for young people on the estates of East Northampton by creating opportunities and encouragement for teenagers from four estates (Bellinge, Blackthorn, Eastfield and Rectory Farm) to engage with the natural environment, initially through the medium of participation in outdoor sporting pursuits such as cycling, climbing, walking and canoeing. This initial "hook" will then lead to other opportunities to learn more about the natural environment through arts and photography, conservation work and other channels. At the same time, the teenagers will have the opportunity to acquire qualifications in outdoor pursuits, leadership and conservation and to participate directly in the running of the project, both of which would be expected to enhance their eventual employability.
- 3.1.2 The project will run over three years and be funded by £229,338 of Lottery money, matched by £34,500 of in kind contributions and at least £30,000 of cash match funding. This offer of funding has already been accepted by the Chief Executive, with the support of all four Group Leaders, using delegated urgency powers. As the project is focused on the natural environment it was considered important to make immediate progress towards delivery of a full programme of activities during the 2010 season for outdoor activities. Furthermore, the fact that publicity for the grant award was embargoed under election "purdah" rules meant that it was not appropriate to take it through Cabinet as this might very well have led to media interest.
- 3.1.3 The bulk of the in kind match will take the form of staff time. This will principally be contributed by Grendon Hall, where the Manager will oversee the project and make available the Centre's expertise in outdoor pursuits and risk management. Other organisations will also need to contribute; these will include the Council, which will need to make available officer time to oversee the project and fulfil the accountability function.

3.1.4 The majority of the cash match has already been secured too. This includes:

County Councillors' Empowering Councillors allocations	£4,500
Northamptonshire Police Problem Solving Fund	£2,000
Safer Stronger Northampton Partnership	£10,000
The Rotary Clubs of Northampton	£10,000

SSNP's Business Support Group have also agreed in principle to recommend renewal of this level of funding for each of years two and three of the project. Three Northamptonshire Councillors have also made in principle commitments to continue their funding into the second and third years of the project, subject to the continuation of the Empowering Councillors scheme. The Rotary Club's commitment also includes a willingness to provide volunteer input to events and management. Many other sources exist that could be approached over the next three years if sufficient match funding cannot be secured from these sources. Match funding beyond the required £30,000 will be sought to expand the project to further estates and to extend its lifetime beyond the period of Lottery funding.

3.1.5 The project has been developed with the strong and active support of a variety of Neighbourhood Management partners including the Police, Grendon Hall, the County Youth and Rangers Services and the Resident Associations on the four estates. It has also been informed and supported by a group of sixteen young people (two girls and two boys from each estate) who have met at key stages of the project's development.

3.1.6 The project is being overseen by a Project Management Group, to which the Project Co-ordinator will be accountable. The Group is chaired by the Council's Lead Officer and also includes the manager of Grendon Hall and representatives of the Police, NCC's Youth Services (to be replaced by the successful youth services contractor), the four Resident Associations and the Rotary Clubs of Northampton. Other co-optees may be nominated in due course.

3.1.7 A public launch is being planned to take place at Grendon Hall on 1 June. A coach shuttle will convey young people and their families between Grendon and the four project estates. This event will be followed up by a series of drop-in events on the four estates later in half-term week. These will enable young people who cannot get to Grendon to learn about the project and sign up for participate in it.

3.1.8 In parallel, the process has started to recruit a Project Co-ordinator with interviews now scheduled for 22 June.

3.2 Issues

3.2.1 The principal role for the Council is a co-ordinating one, overseeing the project and ensuring that the accountability function on behalf of the Neighbourhood Management partnership is fulfilled.

- 3.2.2 Discharging this responsibility will require the attention of a Lead Officer and a finance support officer and ongoing access to support from other Council staff such as Finance, HR, Legal and Procurement professionals. The Director for Finance and Support has already identified a suitable finance officer who is now supporting the project.
- 3.2.3 The Project Co-ordinator will be based at Grendon Hall and line managed by the Manager there, making available that Centre's enormous experience and expertise in outdoor education and the risk management of such activities.
- 3.2.4 The Co-ordinator will be an NBC employee. This strengthens our ability to discharge the accountability function but does, of course, carry certain potential responsibilities in the event of needing to provide cover for long-term illness or maternity. Redundancy costs are not an issue. Even if the original appointee remains in post until the end of the project, and should neither the project nor NBC more widely be in a position to offer them ongoing employment beyond December 2012, then the fact that the post is known by the employee to be externally funded on a fixed term basis means that redundancy is not payable.
- 3.2.5 At the moment, all but £3,500 of the cash match funding has actually been secured and the rest has been offered in principle (see para 3.1.4 above). This is not a difficult project for which to raise funding, being immediate in its impact, local in its delivery and very human in its appeal. A wide variety of potential funders are available, should current approaches not cover the full requirement. Nevertheless, successful attainment of the match-funding target is a condition of acceptance of this grant offer and as the accountable body the Council will be expected to underwrite the external fundraising efforts.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 As the decision to accept this funding and commence implementation of the project has already been taken by the Chief Executive with the support of all four Group leaders, Cabinet are only asked to note these decisions.
- 3.3.2 The money on offer must be spent as set out in our grant application and confirmed in the grant offer letter from Natural England. There are therefore no decisions to be taken about how to spend the money, assuming that Cabinet decide to accept it.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The decisions do not set policy or have implications for existing policies.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 The project will be fully funded from external sources, other than the designation of staff time (managerial and financial) to oversee the project and ensure the successful discharge of the accountability function.
- 4.2.2 The call on staff resources will not be large, given that the operational management of the project will be undertaken by a dedicated Project Co-ordinator under the supervision of the manager at Grendon Hall. Financial claims will be submitted by the County Council on the basis of spend undertaken and payment would be subject to:
- a) verification of the claim
 - b) satisfactory completion of activity monitoring returns
 - c) receipt of adequate funds from Natural England

These arrangements will be formalised in a written Partnership Agreement signed by all parties, including Natural England. In short, if the County Council do not enable the Borough Council to fulfil the accountability role satisfactorily, then payment may be withheld.

- 4.2.3 The Council will be accountable for the successful discharge of the project and could be rendered liable to a risk of grant clawback should any of these be significantly breached. This is a small risk so long as suitable staff are nominated to supervise, manage and support the project.
- 4.2.4 The accountability function will also require the Council to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to project delivery risks such as staff discontinuity and, less likely, poor take-up. These will be addressed through the Project Management Group, chaired by the Council's Lead Officer.
- 4.2.5 The inherent risks involved in adventure activities will be appropriately mitigated through the use of fully qualified instructors and activity leaders and drawing upon the risk management expertise of Grendon Hall. Public liability will be covered by Grendon Hall's insurance cover.
- 4.2.6 The project budget includes a small element for the insurance of equipment.
- 4.2.7 As Lead Organisation, the Council will in effect be underwriting the match-funding requirement for the project. The in kind contribution to the project is integral to its delivery but the cash match of £30,000 over three years will need to be guaranteed as a condition of accepting the grant. The majority of this is already secured and given the ease of fundraising for such a project the risk of failing to secure the four figure sum remaining over the next three years is considered to be very small.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 Acceptance of the grant offer constitutes a legally binding contract with Natural England to deliver the project as specified in the offer letter and to adhere to the Terms and Conditions appended to it.

4.4 Equality

- 4.4.1 The project specifically addresses the needs of young people and people from deprived neighbourhoods. The use of established community partners suggests, on the basis of early experience, that the project appeals across a variety of ethnic groups and equally to girls and to boys.
- 4.4.2 Provision will be made to ensure that young people with disabilities are able to engage as far as possible with project activities. Evidence suggests that engagement with the natural environment can be positively beneficial to people with mental health issues and learning disabilities.

4.5 Consultees (*Internal and External*)

- 4.5.1 The project has been developed under the aegis of the Northampton East Neighbourhood Management Board. Two presentations have been delivered to the Board and a wide variety of supportive feedback has been given and incorporated into the project design.
- 4.5.2 Elected Ward Members have been highly supportive and the County Councillors have part funded the consultation activities through their Empowering Councillors budgets and have all contributed to the match funding target from their Empowering Councillors funds.
- 4.5.3 Grendon Hall, the Police, the County Youth Service and Rangers Service and Resident Associations on the four estates have been especially actively involved and have been strongly supportive of the development of this project.
- 4.5.4 Young people were initially consulted by means of a questionnaire delivered through youth groups on the four estates. 67 questionnaires were returned and these indicated very widespread support for the project. Following on from this, an advisory group consisting of two girls and two boys from each of the four estates has been convened and has met twice to make an input to the project design. A number of these young people also made a presentation to a meeting for potential partners and funders to say why they wanted to project to be a success.

4.6 *How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes*

- 4.6.1 The project responds to the widely perceived need for more things for young people to do on the estates of Northampton East. As such, it is a key priority in the Area Action Plan adopted by the Neighbourhood Management Board.
- 4.6.2 The project will benefit young people by increasing their confidence and social skills, contributing to healthy lifestyles, enabling them to acquire qualifications that will enhance their eventual employability and by raising their aspirations and widening their horizons, so reducing their vulnerability to undesirable life-choices such as drug abuse, anti-social behaviour and teenage pregnancy.

4.6.3 There are also benefits to the wider community in the form of reduced ASB and improved inter-generational relations. These are the reasons why the project is so strongly supported by the Residents' Associations and Northamptonshire Police.

4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 The project is considered highly likely to create a major ongoing "good news" story for the Council and the wider implementing partnership. A publicity launch took place on 18 May, following the publicity embargo due to the General Election. By the time of this meeting, further publicity will have been generated by the project launch event at Grendon Hall on 1 June.

5. Background Papers

Change of Scene project information sheet

Change of Scene Business Plan

Project Costings template (project budget spreadsheet)

Grant offer letter from Natural England and Terms and Conditions

All of the above background papers are available by contacting Peter Strachan, details below:

Peter Strachan
Northampton East Area Partnership Co-ordinator
pstrachan@northampton.gov.uk
Ext. 8599

Julie Seddon, Director of Environment & Culture, ext 7379

Report Title:	Change of Scene project
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Cabinet Member:

I declare no conflict of interest applies ☐

I agree the report's recommendations ☐

I do not agree the report's recommendations ☐

I agree the report's recommendations subject to the following amendments:

The reason for the decision are as follows:

Cabinet Member For: []

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendices

1

Item No.



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCILS' CHARTER
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 th June 2010
Key Decision:	NO
Listed on Forward Plan:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	NO
Directorate:	Chief Executive's Office
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Paul Varnsberry
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To consider the Northamptonshire Councils' Charter and agree whether Northampton Borough Council should sign up to it at the Local Councils' Conference on the 16th June 2010.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet endorses the Northamptonshire Councils' Charter.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 In 2009, Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (Northants CALC), as the representative body of Local Councils in Northamptonshire, began to develop a draft Northamptonshire Councils' Charter. They invited input from a number of Local Councils and all of the Principal Councils in the

county during the course of last year. The subsequent draft Charter was then issued for consultation with all Local Councils (including Parish Meetings) in Northamptonshire as well as the eight Principal Councils on 18 January 2010. The consultation period ended on 31 March 2010. Northampton Borough Council submitted a response to the consultation, which was considered by Northants CALC. A number of changes were made to the Charter in response to the Council's feedback.

- 3.1.2 The final document has now been shared with Councils across Northamptonshire and Northampton Borough Council has been invited to show its support to the charter by signing up to it at Local Councils' Conference on 16th June 2010.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 Northampton Borough Council supports partnership working across all tiers of local government and recognises the benefit of establishing a set of agreed principles to which all Northamptonshire Councils can be expected to adhere. It also welcomes the opportunity presented by the development of the Charter to engage in further dialogue with Local Councils about their priorities and issues.
- 3.2.2 The Charter is in two parts. The first part describes the relationship between Local Councils and Principal Councils. If Northampton Borough Council signs up to the charter, it will be expected to designate a lead officer to work with the Local Councils in the Borough to develop a Charter Implementation Plan. This will outline in detail the relationship the Borough Council has with its Local Councils and identify actions to improve this.
- 3.2.3 The second part is a list of nine workstreams that are illustrations of priorities for Local Councils, which Northamptonshire Councils could work on together. If the Cabinet agrees to sign up to the Charter, it will be consulted by Northants CALC in order to reassess the appropriateness and viability of each workstream.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 The Cabinet has the option either to agree or to decline to adopt the Charter. In the spirit of partnership working and in recognition of the benefits that the Charter could bring to relationships between Northampton Borough Council and local Councils in the Borough, it is recommended that it agree to sign up to the Charter.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The Charter does not set policy or have implications on any existing policies. Where Local Councils' priorities are communicated through the nine workstreams, it is recognised that this is not a legally binding agreement and further work must take place with key stakeholders (of whom Northampton Borough Council is one) as to which priorities could and should be progressed.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 It is recognised within the Charter that there is currently no new money for implementation. However, it is hoped that by applying a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to issues of mutual concern that waste can be avoided, resources can be deployed more precisely and savings in service delivery can be made. By signing up to the Charter, the Council does not commit itself to any additional expenditure.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 There are no legal issues raised by Northampton Borough Council's adoption of the Charter.

4.4 Equality

- 4.4.1 Whilst the charter does not explicitly make reference to equality and diversity issues, all participating Councils would be expected to adhere to their individual equality schemes and to comply with their public equality duties. If, upon implementation, any equality concerns are raised it is anticipated that these will be reviewed and addressed. Therefore we would propose that the monitoring of the charter considers this factor.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 4.5.1 The development of the Charter was led by Northants CALC with input from all Councils across Northamptonshire.
- 4.5.2 Internally, there has been engagement with the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service and other officers whose services are directly affected by the Charter. All members of the Cabinet were also invited to comment upon the draft consultation.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

- 4.6.1 The Charter contributes to the delivery of the Corporate Priority to have Strong Partnerships and Engaged Communities.

4.7 Other Implications

- 4.7.1 There are no further implications.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 None

Cassie Triggs, Democratic & Chief Executive Services Manager, 7680

2010 - 2013

Produced by:
Northamptonshire
County Association
of Local Councils



Northamptonshire Councils' Charter

End of Consultation Report



[PARISH PARTNERSHIPS]

A Charter to describe the working relationships between Local Councils and Principal Councils in Northamptonshire.

Executive Summary

The Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (Northants CALC) worked with a number of Local Councils and all of the Principal Councils in the county to develop a draft Northamptonshire Councils' Charter. This draft was sent to all Northamptonshire Councils for consultation between January and April 2010. The full text of the Local Council responses is included at Appendix 3. A record of Principal Council responses is included at Appendix 4. A list of those Councils responding to the consultation is included at Appendix 5. Finally, proposed next steps are included at Appendix 6.

Overall there was a 30% response rate from Local Councils and a 100%¹ response rate from Principal Councils. Responses were received from all sizes of Local Council from the largest town councils to the smallest parish meetings. The Charter aims to set a framework within which Local and Principal Councils can work together, without being too prescriptive or restrictive.

Consultation responses identify fundamental issues of concern to Local Councils, which will only be addressed through dialogue and co-operation but the overwhelming response was favourable and supportive.

Principal Councils and Northants CALC on behalf of the Local Council sector must now decide whether to sign up to the Charter on 16 June 2010 at the Local Councils Conference.

Consultation Process

The Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (Northants CALC), as the representative body of Local Councils in Northamptonshire, worked throughout 2009 with a number of Local Councils and all of the Principal Councils in the county to develop a draft Northamptonshire Councils' Charter. The draft Charter was sent out on 18 January 2010 for consultation to all Local Councils (including Parish Meetings) in Northamptonshire as well as the eight Principal Councils. The consultation period ended on 31 March 2010.

Consultation responses were returned to Northants CALC and the results form the basis of this report, which includes:

- Key themes and conclusions
- A copy of the final Charter document, incorporating a clarifying statement and changes proposed through consultation (Appendix 1)
- A record of the changes made to the consultation draft (Appendix 2)
- The full text of the Local Council responses (Appendix 3)
- A record of Principal Council responses (Appendix 4)
- A list of those Councils responding to the consultation (Appendix 5)
- Proposed next steps (Appendix 6)

Response rate and results

Overall there was a 30% response rate from Local Councils and a 100% response from Principal Councils. Responses were received from all sizes of Local Council from the largest town councils to the smallest parish meetings. Of the 79 responses received, 65 contained substantive comments and 14 were returned with simply "no comment" or "nothing to add".

¹ Corby Borough Council's formal response to be received after briefing meeting in May.

Of the 79 responses, and taking the “no comment” responses as neutral, 54 were broadly in favour of the Charter, 4 broadly against and 21 neutral.

The response rate was statistically similar across the county.

District	Total Parishes	Substantive Response	Read - no comment	No Response	% Response Rate	For	Against	Neutral	Blank
Corby	7	3	0	4	43	3			4
Daventry	73	17	4	52	29	16		5	52
East Northamptonshire	51	6	4	41	20	5		5	41
Kettering	26	9	1	16	38	5	2	3	16
Northampton	7	2	0	5	29	1		1	5
South Northamptonshire	78	21	5	52	33	17	2	7	52
Wellingborough	18	7	0	11	39	7			11
Totals	260	65	14	181	30	54	4	21	181

It has not been possible within the timeframe to analyse the reasons for a no response from a parish. The Charter consultation was sent directly to every parish, was advertised on the Northants CALC web site and a reminder was sent out within the consultation period. It can be assumed therefore that any council wishing to comment, in support or against, had sufficient opportunity to do so.

Some responses contained general comments or observations but some contained specific recommendations for changes to the draft document. A record of these recommendations and the changes is included at Appendix 2.

Key Themes

The feedback received was diverse, ranging from complete support, through cautious or partial support, to complete opposition. The majority view is that the Charter is (rightly) aspirational and that it offers a clearer and more strategic way forward, but that its success depends on the will of those involved to make it work, coupled with the resources to make things happen.

Diversity

The enormous diversity of Local Councils is both a strength and a weakness. In Northamptonshire the smallest parish (Althorpe Parish Meeting) has an electorate of just 20, whilst the largest parish (Rushden Town Council) has an electorate in excess of 22,000. Clearly a “one size fits all” approach is neither appropriate nor desirable and Local Councils should have the ability to choose a level of involvement that is proportionate to their size, capacity and aspirations. The Charter aims to set a framework within which Local and Principal Councils can work together, without being too prescriptive or restrictive. Some Local Councils may not have the capacity to take on much more than they currently do, but

nevertheless they want to feel that they can influence the decisions that affect their area. Often a Local Council's input may simply be to provide other authorities with local intelligence, which is fine; the Charter is not about requiring all Councils to do the same things at the same level. The Charter recognises and celebrates diversity.

Cost of Implementation

Several responses recognised that whilst many of the aspirations and proposed actions in the Charter were well-meaning, nothing would be achieved without the correct resources. Some responses cited the prevailing difficult economic climate as a barrier to success. Undoubtedly there will be some resource issues that need to be thought through but some responses picked up that the Charter may encourage Councils to "work smarter not harder". There could be significant savings in doing things right first time, as well as improving satisfaction and providing better services along the way. The workstreams detailed in the Charter will each require a detailed action plan to be drawn up and it is possible that the Charter may enable regional or even national grant funding to be leveraged in to the county, which would ease any financial constraints.

In the final analysis, if resource constraints prevent a workstream from progressing then at least those constraints will be thoroughly understood and the workstream can be put on hold pending any new resources becoming available.

Devolved services

There is much talk about devolved services with very little clarity of what it actually means and what the real implications are. The Charter makes a statement that services should be *"provided by the council best placed to deliver that service, regardless of whether they are a Local Council or Principal Council"* and that must surely be the underpinning principle. The responses did not reveal a huge appetite from Local Councils to take on the delivery of services that are currently being delivered by Principal Councils, with real concerns around the capacity to deliver and also whether a Principal Council would devolve the service but not the corresponding budget to go along with it. The responses make it clear that there needs to be urgent work done to look at this particular issue. Anecdotally, some Local Councils have expressed an interest in taking over services from Principal Councils (e.g. grass cutting, other green maintenance, provision of play space) but there seems to be disagreement as to how this could work. Fundamentally, if a service currently being provided by a Principal Council could be delivered better, cheaper or faster by a Local Council (or vice versa) then it makes sense for those Councils to engage each other in conversation. Local Councils that currently have a fixed view of their capacity (in terms of officer and member time) may be encouraged to review their capacity (particularly officer time) if it made financial sense to do so.

Double taxation

Related to the issue of devolved services is the thorny problem of double taxation. Responses show a fear of creating situations where residents are seemingly paying twice for a particular service. A useful example is policing, where residents pay for a certain level of policing via their council tax to Northamptonshire Police. If a Local Council was to then contribute from the precept towards the cost of a PCSO then this could be seen as double taxation. The reality is far more complex than that, but does require that minimum service levels are defined for each service. If Local Councils then choose to provide, and pay for, an enhanced service over and above the minimum then that is not double taxation – it's paying more for an enhanced service. The important thing to note is that the issue can only be solved through dialogue between service providers, followed by reference to the identified

needs of the electorate, and ultimately leading to the final decision of Council. No Council can be forced in to paying for a service that their electorate does not want or need.

Duplication of existing practice

Several responses were along the lines of “we already do this”. That’s great! The Charter sets out a new way of working but of course recognises that much has been achieved already and there are exemplar services and projects in operation right across the county. In some cases all that is required is to write down and record the things that are being done well. In other cases it may be a case of formalising an existing agreement to ensure that it continues in to the future. Where examples of good practice exist it is a fundamental facet of partnership working that these are shared and adopted where appropriate. Through the process of developing the Charter various innovative schemes and practices have come to light that are being used effectively in one area in the county but could be of enormous benefit to all Northamptonshire Councils. Benefitting from each other’s experiences, trials and tribulations will ensure that costly mistakes are avoided and good practice is shared.

Consultation & communication

Interestingly, responses identified that there was too much consultation and, at the same time, not always enough communication. Undoubtedly Councils of all tiers are bombarded with consultations to the extent where it has often become impossible to read everything, let alone respond in a meaningful way. Certainly there is scope for improving the way in which Northamptonshire Councils consult with each other that would result in less, but more pertinent consultations. At the moment there is a feeling that the really important issue might be buried somewhere in the middle of the snowdrift. Consultations aside, responses identified that day-to-day communications are not always what they could be, and hopefully the Charter and Charter Implementation Plans will go some way to addressing that. By setting out agreed parameters for communications expectations can be set at an appropriate level, whilst providing a framework for performance management and review.

Monitoring & review

Responses indicated that monitoring and review of the Charter and its workstreams is essential to ensuring success in the long term. It was noted that all stakeholders should be part of the monitoring and review process, but that any reports and recommendations needed to be clear and concise. The Charter needs to be a living document that focuses on delivering better outcomes for people in Northamptonshire. It should be an iterative process that adapts to circumstances as appropriate.

Conclusion

The overwhelming response was favourable and supportive. There is a spirit of willingness to work together and a positive view of how the first tier of local government in Northamptonshire can make a real contribution to the overall effort. Consultation responses identify fundamental issues of concern to Local Councils, which will only be addressed through dialogue and co-operation. Northants CALC can play a key role in understanding these issues and facilitating the conversation between partners to help resolve them. For the Charter to be a success it will require all involved to work positively together.

The next step following the consultation is for Principal Councils and Northants CALC (on behalf of the Local Council sector as a whole) to decide whether or not to sign up to the Charter having seen the final draft. The intention is to hold a signing ceremony on 16 June 2010 at the Local Councils Conference at Towcester Racecourse.

Appendix 6 sets out the next steps and the timetable for implementing the Northamptonshire Councils' Charter.

The development and signing of the Charter is not the end of the process – it's just the beginning.

***Danny Moody, Chief Executive, Northants CALC
May 2010***

Acknowledgements:

This Charter would not have been developed without:

- The foresight and leadership of the County Committee of Northants CALC.
- The assistance and leadership of Northamptonshire County Council, particularly the Policy & Partnerships directorate, under Alex Hopkins and Janet Doran.
- The practical support of Graham Ward, Community Regeneration Officer at Northamptonshire County Council.
- The input and co-operation of the county council and the seven district and borough councils in the county, their senior management teams and their elected representatives who took the time to consider the draft Charter.
- The wisdom and insight of Barbara Ding, retired Monitoring Officer and Executive Director at East Northamptonshire Council, who acted as consultant on the Charter development project and whose knowledge of local government was invaluable in producing the consultation draft.
- The thoughtful and useful comments of all the individuals and agencies that have been asked for their opinion on the Charter and have imparted their knowledge willingly and freely.
- The time and energy of the Local Councils in Northamptonshire that considered the Charter consultation and responded to it.

Produced by:
Northamptonshire
County Association
of Local Councils



LOGO	LOGO	LOGO	LOGO
LOGO	LOGO	LOGO	LOGO

*Space to insert the relevant county, district and borough logos as appropriate

[PARISH PARTNERSHIPS]

A Charter to describe the working relationships between Local Councils and Principal Councils in Northamptonshire.

Parish Partnerships

In this document:

“Local Councils” – means the parish and town councils in the county of Northamptonshire and, where appropriate, includes parish meetings (a civil parish without a constituted parish council).

“Principal Councils” – means Northamptonshire County Council (NCC), and the seven district and borough councils in the county of Northamptonshire, namely Corby Borough Council (CBC), Daventry District Council (DDC), East Northamptonshire Council (ENC), Kettering Borough Council (KBC), Northampton Borough Council (NBC), South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) and Wellingborough Borough Council (WBC)

“Northamptonshire Councils” – means Local Councils and Principal Councils together.

“Northants CALC” – means the Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils.

This document is in two parts. The first part is a Charter that describes the relationship between Local Councils and Principal Councils. The second part is a list of nine workstreams that Northamptonshire Councils could work on together.

Whilst the Charter is focused on Northamptonshire Councils it should be recognised that virtually all Local Council activities involve a wide range of public bodies and other organisations, particularly the police and health service, voluntary and community sector organisations, the Society of Local Council Clerks, and the National Association of Local Councils. It is intended that for each workstream the appropriate stakeholders will be identified and included in the process.

Northants CALC, as the representative body of Local Councils in Northamptonshire, has worked with all of the Principal Councils in the county to develop this document. Northants CALC hopes that Local Councils will welcome and endorse it and see it as the start of a new dialogue between Northamptonshire Councils.

Clarifying Statement

1. The Northamptonshire Councils' Charter is not legally binding on any Northamptonshire Council. The Charter uses aspirational language but recognises that ultimately each Council needs to make its own decisions and set its own direction. The important thing is that all Councils strive to work towards the aspirations in the Charter, and that where measurable targets exist these are monitored and performance is assessed against them. For example the Charter's aspiration is to *“Develop a Community Policing Scheme”* for the county but the corresponding target (which may be revised up or down by stakeholders in due course) is *“20% of Local Councils in each Area Command implementing at least one option in the Community Policing Scheme by 2013”*.

2. The Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (Northants CALC) represents Local Councils in the county. It is a membership organisation to which the majority of Local Councils subscribe. The Association has no legal power to sign a contract on behalf of an individual Local Council, so if Northants CALC signs the Charter on 16 June 2010 it will be signing on behalf of the Local Council sector as a whole and will be making a commitment that it will allocate resources and offer leadership to ensure that the Charter is a success. Individual Local Councils can choose to opt out of any involvement with the Charter if they wish. There is no penalty for opting out.
3. The Charter recognises all the former initiatives and examples of good practice and aims to formalise them, build upon them and share them where possible. The Charter will not duplicate anything that already exists, nor create unnecessary layers of bureaucracy.
4. The Charter in itself does not create any new groups or organisations. Workstreams 1.3 and 2.2 could lead to the establishment of new structures to address these critical issues, but the aim is to use existing structures and networks where available.
5. The Charter should be seen as a means, not an end. The process is iterative and it is likely that the Charter and the workstreams will be finessed over time, based upon the monitoring and review process, which will include input from all Northamptonshire Councils. In addition, the whole Charter has been given a lifespan of three years and "Charter II" will be a development and progression of the current document.
6. The workstreams are an illustration of priorities as suggested by Local Councils. Each workstream will require an action plan (Northants CALC to initiate) which will of necessity identify all the stakeholders for each workstream and include them in the final design and implementation of each workstream. It is recognised that the stated desired outcomes may need to be reassessed once all stakeholders have had an opportunity to have their say.
7. The Charter is for all Local Councils, from the very smallest parish meeting to the largest town Council. It is of course recognised that there will be a different level and style of engagement depending on the size, capacity and aspirations of the parish concerned. In addition, the capacity and aspirations of larger Councils cannot be taken for granted, nor should the capacity and aspirations of smaller parishes be underestimated. The Charter uses language that should enable each Council to pick and mix a level of involvement that suits them. It is not about forcing devolution on those Local Councils that don't want it.
8. The Charter recognises that there is currently no new money for implementation. However, it is hoped that by applying a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to some old problems that waste can be avoided, resources can be deployed more precisely and savings in service delivery can be made. Ultimately it is about providing value for money.

PART ONE

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCILS' CHARTER

Introduction

- 1.1. This Charter describes the relationship between Local Councils and Principal Councils. It is not intended to describe the relationship between individual Principal Councils.
- 1.2. This Charter builds on existing work and aims to ensure that
 - When services are delivered in parished areas by Northamptonshire Councils they are efficient and effective.
 - The services are provided by the council best placed to deliver that service, regardless of whether they are a Local Council or Principal Council.
 - Through working together to improve services and reduce costs quality of life will be enhanced for residents in Northamptonshire.
- 1.3. The Charter builds on the fundamental premise that the councils which together form the local government of Northamptonshire will work positively in a spirit of mutual trust and respect for the benefit of those who live and work in the county.
- 1.4. It is acknowledged that some Local Councils simply want to have more effective influence over the services delivered in their areas by Principal Councils, whereas others may seek to take on the management of certain services themselves, or to group with other Local Councils to pick and mix a level of involvement that suits them.

2. Charter Implementation Plans

- 2.1. This Charter sets out the broad principles upon which Northamptonshire Councils will work together. Principal Councils agree to develop, with the Local Councils in their area, a Charter Implementation Plan that adds more detail about how the relationship will work locally. If required, Northants CALC will assist a Principal Council to produce its Charter Implementation Plan.
- 2.2. Principal Councils to appoint a member of their senior management team to lead on developing the Charter Implementation Plan for their area.

3. Working Together

All Northamptonshire Councils will

- 3.1. Advise each other as soon as practical about key personnel changes (for example, the Local Council Clerk or the Head of Planning Services). What constitutes “key personnel” will be set out in each Principal Council’s Charter Implementation Plan.
- 3.2. Make information available to each other, and to the public, in the most suitable formats, including electronically whenever possible and appropriate.
- 3.3. Endeavour to ensure that public enquiries are dealt with “right first time” regardless of where a member of the public first accesses the services of Northamptonshire Councils.

Principal Councils will

- 3.4. As appropriate to the nature of the matter under consideration, seek comments from Local Councils before making decisions which affect the Local Council's residents or the parish generally. Where more than one parish is likely to be affected, all relevant parishes will be consulted.
- 3.5. Allow Local Councils a reasonable time to make comments in response to consultations; this period may be determined by statutory consultation requirements (over which the Principal Council has no control), otherwise a minimum of twelve weeks will be allowed.
- 3.6. Specify a named contact officer with contact details for consultations and ensure all major consultations include an executive summary.
- 3.7. Provide feedback to Local Councils on the results of consultation.
- 3.8. Communicate with a Local Council in the way the Local Council wants (i.e. by e-mail, phone or post).
- 3.9. Organise information events, briefing sessions and, where appropriate, training for Local Councils, at local venues where possible.
- 3.10. Provide venues and specialist trainers for such training events for Local Councils, and for training events organised by Northants CALC.
- 3.11. Arrange for relevant officer(s) or senior/lead Councillor(s) to attend Local Council meetings, when requested and appropriate, at mutually convenient times and dates, subject to diary commitments. In the interest of efficiency, opportunities will be taken to maximise attendance at scheduled meetings, rather than arrange additional ad hoc meetings.
- 3.12. Treat all Local Councils on merit, regardless of their status or size.
- 3.13. Actively involve Local Councils in the Local Strategic Partnership and the development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- 3.14. Consider carrying out a Community Governance Review and create Local Councils in unparished areas where the Community Governance Review indicates that a Local Council would be the appropriate vehicle of neighbourhood governance.

Local Councils will

- 3.15. Adopt arrangements which enable them to respond to Principal Council consultations in a timely way. (Where, exceptionally, it is not possible to meet a particular deadline, advise the consulting organisation as soon as possible).
- 3.16. Endeavour to respond to such consultations, even if only to say there are "no comments".
- 3.17. Get involved (either in a practical or representative way) in the Local Strategic Partnership.
- 3.18. Inform the relevant Borough/District Councillors and County Councillors about Local Council events in their Ward/Division.

- 3.19. Attend training and information events organised for them by Principal Councils and/or Northants CALC.
- 3.20. Where possible, provide venues for training and information events and public meetings in the parish.
- 3.21. Where appropriate, respond positively to requests from Borough and District Councils to serve as parish representatives on Standards Committees.
- 3.22. Invite their relevant Borough/District Councillors and County Councillors to speak at the Annual Parish/Town Meeting.
- 3.23. Hold a meeting to consider all planning applications on which they are consulted.
- 3.24. Make comments on planning applications based on material planning considerations.
- 3.25. Make planning applications available for residents to view locally or signpost residents to online resources.
- 3.26. Publicise Principal Councils' services and events locally and make information available for local residents through local channels.

4. Providing Services

All Northamptonshire Councils will

- 4.1. Where reasonable, engage with each other in advance about proposed changes to the operational services they provide. This includes levels of service and/or frequency of service.
- 4.2. Seek opportunities for economies of scale and value for money through consortium or clustering arrangements, where possible.

Principal Councils will

- 4.3. Where appropriate, develop and publish criteria against which requests for the devolution of services to Local Councils will be considered (as part of the Charter Implementation Plan).
- 4.4. Formally consider and respond to requests from Local Councils for the devolution of services.
- 4.5. Respond to requests from Local Councils to “enhance” a service provided by a Principal Council through payment of a contribution (or other agreed means).
- 4.6. Put in place formal agreements to clarify the arrangements and deliver any enhanced services within the agreed terms.

Local Councils will

- 4.7. Prepare an appropriate business case if seeking to manage local services provided by a Principal Council, or to exercise new powers for the first time. The business case will include evidence of the Local Council’s capacity to finance and deliver the service and set out the benefits this will offer the local community.
- 4.8. Submit formal requests to the relevant Principal Council if it wishes to contribute towards an enhanced service, with sufficient notice to enable appropriate resources to be investigated and costed.

5. Monitoring and Review

- 5.1. Working with Northamptonshire Councils, the Charter and development of the Charter Implementation Plans will be reviewed on an annual basis by the County Committee of Northants CALC. The first review will take place in May/June 2011.
- 5.2. Progress against the nine workstreams will be constantly monitored by Northants CALC and an annual progress report will be published. The first annual report will be published in May/June 2011.
- 5.3. Northamptonshire Councils will be kept informed of progress.

6. Signatories

This Charter is signed by the Leaders and Chief Executives of the Principal Councils and by the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (Northants CALC) on behalf of Local Councils.

Council	Leader	Chief Executive
Northamptonshire County Council		
Corby Borough Council		
Daventry District Council		
East Northamptonshire Council		
Kettering Borough Council		
Northampton Borough Council		
South Northamptonshire Council		
Wellingborough Borough Council		
	Chairman	Chief Executive
Northants CALC on behalf of Local Councils in Northamptonshire		

PART TWO

THE NINE WORKSTREAMS

1. Background

Northants CALC and Principal Councils have developed the Northamptonshire Councils' Charter that defines how the three tiers of local government will work together more effectively. However, no one wants to create a meaningless document that reads well but doesn't work, so to make the Charter "real" Northants CALC, with member input, has identified nine potential workstreams that Northamptonshire Councils can work on together. There are three workstreams in each of three areas, namely:

- 1. Highways**
- 2. Community Development**
- 3. Community Safety & Policing**

The nine workstreams may not suit all Local Councils, or even all Principal Councils. The list is not intended to commit any council to a certain course of action. However, Northants CALC believes that if Northamptonshire Councils work together to achieve the desired outcomes of the workstreams it will be a very significant step forward and will improve the wellbeing and quality of life of the people in Northamptonshire.

2. Objectives of the Charter

1. To write down things that councils can work on together
2. To develop new ways of working together – a new approach to old problems
3. To encourage better communication, more sharing and deeper mutual appreciation
4. To enable Local Councils to contribute effectively to the objectives contained in Northamptonshire's Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Communities Strategies
5. To improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the people of Northamptonshire

3. Methodology

Initial ideas for the nine workstreams were sought from the County Committee (board) of Northants CALC and a number of Local Councils. The ideas are presented below and the document forms the basis for Northamptonshire Councils working together between 2010 and 2013 and beyond.

4. Scope

This document identifies nine workstreams that Northamptonshire Councils can work on together. However, it is not meant to be exhaustive or constraining and assumes that Local Councils will continue their basic development work in terms of governance, procedures, training, communications and community engagement.

5. Funding

It should be noted that there is no new money for implementing the Charter. Rather it is about finding innovative ways to make the best use of limited resources, to reduce wastage wherever possible and to deliver services in the most cost effective way.

The Nine Workstreams

1. Highways

- 1.1. Support and develop the Parish Highways Representative Scheme
- 1.2. Design a new highways Minor Works Programme
- 1.3. Establish area based Operational Services Reviews

2. Community Development

- 2.1. Produce and publish Local Planning Charters
- 2.2. Develop a Parish Planning Champion Scheme
- 2.3. Develop a plan for the parishing of currently non parished areas

3. Community Safety & Policing

- 3.1. Develop a Community Policing Scheme
- 3.2. Review and develop Parking Enforcement Scheme in parishes
- 3.3. Develop a county-wide approach to tackle dog fouling

1.1. Support and develop the Parish Highways Representative (PHR) Scheme

The Problem:

Information does not always flow readily between Local Councils and NCC/MGWSP (the highways contractor). MGWSP needs a point of contact and someone to engage with in every parish. Local Councils need a representative who can attend area/county meetings, represent the views of the Local Council and bring back information and examples of good practice.

The Proposed Solution:

To support and develop the PHR Scheme.

NCC to:

Ensure that the county highways contract recognises the importance of the PHR Scheme and makes provision for management of the Scheme. MGWSP to produce a standard role description and terms of reference for PHRs for Local Councils to adopt.

Local Councils to:

Appoint (e.g. at their Annual Meeting) one of their members to be the Parish Highways Representative, provide them with the support required to enable them to take an active role in the Scheme and pay for their travel expenses to attend meetings as may be arranged. Northants CALC will help promote the Scheme and provide assistance to MGWSP and Local Councils where required to improve the Scheme and make it more effective.

Potential Benefits:

- Improved communications
- More intelligent resource allocation
- Better mutual understanding
- Use of local council resource - eyes and ears
- Better service

Risks:

- Lack of take up by Local Councils
- Scheme not being run effectively or not being run at all

Desired Outcomes:

- 75% of Local Councils appointing a PHR on an annual basis by 2013
- NCC/MGWSP recognise the importance of the Scheme and manage it efficiently and effectively.
- Reduced relevant avoidable contact.
- Increase in Local Councils fairly or very satisfied with highways services

1.2. Design a new highways Minor Works Programme

The Problem:

Minor works not carried out at all, or carried out unsatisfactorily (timeliness, quality, temporary repairs etc.). Waste of NCC's resources when works done to a centrally determined schedule.

The Proposed Solution:

A Minor Works Programme needs to be designed with Local Council input that provides a practical and pragmatic solution to this ongoing issue. The Minor Works Programme needs to build on the experiences of the Lengthsman Scheme and Parish Enhancement Gangs and make use of the knowledge and expertise of Local Councils.

NCC to:

Work with Local Councils and other Principal Councils to design a scheme that is fit for purpose and that will address the issues. Resources will be needed to involve all Northamptonshire Councils in the design of the scheme so that is effective and sustainable. Northants CALC will assist where required in facilitating the discussion between Northamptonshire Councils.

Local Councils to:

Work with NCC to design the scheme. Agree a minimum service level and recognise that delivery beyond the minimum will have to be paid for locally from the precept. Recognise that taking on responsibility for any service delivery will have resource implications (e.g. an increase in staff hours).

Potential Benefits:

- More intelligent resource allocation – reduced wasted effort
- Better use of local council resource - local knowledge and focus
- More Local Councils and more residents satisfied with minor works

Risks:

- Northamptonshire Councils unable to agree on a satisfactory design
- No resources allocated to the design of the scheme

Desired Outcomes:

- A Minor Works Programme that delivers a high quality service, cost effectively and with the minimum possible waste of money and effort.

1.3. Establish area based Operational Services Review Programme

The Problem:

Despite the introduction of area working (the four MGWSP Areas) there still seems to be a communication problem with a lack of mutual understanding between Local Councils and NCC/MGWSP.

The Proposed Solution:

Establish an Operational Services Review (OSR) Programme for each MGWSP Area. OSR meetings would bring together, at least twice per year, representatives from NCC, MGWSP, borough/district councils and Local Councils (represented by the Parish Highways Representative). To avoid a proliferation of meetings existing structures (e.g. LSP sub groups, rural fora) could incorporate OSR meetings if doing so does not dilute the objectives of the OSR meeting. The purpose of an OSR meeting is to address area issues, review works since the last OSR meeting and share information regarding future works/needs.

Principal Councils to:

Provide facilities for OSR meetings led/organised by NCC. Action outcomes/proposals/suggestions, or provide a reason in writing why no action is possible within two weeks of the OSR meeting.

Local Councils to:

Input to and/or attend OSR meetings and take an active part. It is important that Local Councils view NCC/MGWSP as an organisation to work with rather than complain to.

Potential Benefits:

- Improved communications through well-chaired, focused meetings
- Early identification of issues
- Jointly designed solutions
- Understanding of physical, technical and resource constraints
- More Local Councils and more residents satisfied with highways works

Risks:

- OSR Programmes aren't established – or only established in some areas
- OSR meetings aren't effective and become talking shops with no clear purpose

Desired Outcomes:

- OSR meetings are established in all four MGWSP Areas.
- Increase in Local Councils fairly or very satisfied with highways services

2.1. Produce and publish Local Planning Charters (LPCs).

The Problem:

Local Councils sometimes feel distant from the planning process and would like to be involved in it rather than simply consulted on it. There is a need for better mutual understanding of the respective roles of the borough/district council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and the Local Councils in each authority's area. Local Councils would like more influence and to feel that their views are being taken in to account.

The Proposed Solution:

For each LPA to create a "Local Planning Charter" for its area that sets out very clearly what all parties (developer, LPA, Local Council etc) can expect from the LPA and the planning and development control process. A LPC could say, for example, how the LPA will incorporate Community-Led Plans into the Local Development Framework, or procedures for how planning applications will be dealt with when the view of planning officers differs from that of the Local Council.

Local Planning Authorities to:

Commit the resources necessary to develop a Local Planning Charter in consultation with stakeholders. Examples and good practice exist locally and nationally. The LPC may simply involve collating existing documentation.

Local Councils to:

Engage with the relevant LPA in the development of the LPC. Recognise that with increased involvement comes increased responsibility and that there may be issues to address in terms of training, capacity etc. Northants CALC can assist in the development of LPCs and in providing training to Local Councils to enable them to take a more active role in the planning process.

Potential Benefits:

- Improved planning services performance
- Better decision making
- Better mutual understanding
- Use of local council resource - local knowledge
- Better service to applicants

Risks:

- LPCs not developed at all or only developed by some LPAs
- LPAs and Local Councils unable to agree on details of LPC

Desired Outcomes:

- All seven LPAs in Northamptonshire have a Local Planning Charter by 2013.
- Increase in Local Councils fairly or very satisfied with local planning process.

2.2. Develop a Parish Planning Champion Scheme

The Problem:

Local Councils sometimes have limited knowledge of the planning system and how/when/why planning policies that affect their areas are developed. Local Councils feel distant from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and don't feel that their views matter very much.

The Proposed Solution:

To develop a Parish Planning Champion Scheme that operates in a similar way to the Parish Highways Representative Scheme so that each Local Council has an elected member with a particular focus on planning matters and each LPA has a knowledgeable point of contact at each Local Council in their area. Each LPA to hold briefing meetings at least twice per year to bring together representatives from the LPA, NCC, the Northamptonshire Development Corporations and Local Councils.

Local Planning Authorities to:

Organise and host briefing meetings. Recognise the importance of the PPC Scheme and make provision for the management of the Scheme. Produce a standard role description and terms of reference for PPCs for Local Councils to adopt. Action outcomes/proposals/suggestions, or provide a reason in writing why no action is possible within two weeks of the briefing meeting.

Local Councils to:

Appoint (at their Annual Meeting) one of their members to be the Parish Planning Champion, provide them with the support required to enable them to take an active role in the Scheme and pay for their travel expenses to attend meetings as may be arranged. Northants CALC will help promote the Scheme and provide assistance to LPAs and Local Councils where required to improve the Scheme and make it more effective.

Potential Benefits:

- Improved communications
- Better mutual understanding
- Use of local council resource - local knowledge and focus
- Better service

Risks:

- Lack of take up by Local Councils
- Scheme not being run effectively or not being run at all

Desired Outcomes:

- 75% of Local Councils appointing a PPC on an annual basis by 2013.
- Increase in Local Councils fairly or very satisfied with local planning process.

2.3. Develop a plan for the parishing of currently non parished areas.

The Problem:

The three districts in Northamptonshire (Daventry, East Northamptonshire and South Northamptonshire) are fully parished, whereas the four boroughs (Corby, Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough) are only partially parished. Residents in non parished areas may have access to Residents' Associations or Neighbourhood Management Teams but do not benefit from representation by first tier elected councillors.

The Proposed Solution:

To develop a plan for carrying out Community Governance Reviews and establishing new parishes where appropriate.

Principal Councils to:

Consider allocating resources for conducting Community Governance Reviews and be prepared to exercise their new powers under the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to establish new parishes. Northants CALC will work very closely with those Borough Councils wishing to create new parishes and will lead on the development of the county-wide plan.

Local Councils to:

Act as examples of good community governance vehicles. Consider providing mentors/buddies for newly established parishes. Consider providing "seed" councillors where appropriate. Demonstrate the benefits of parishing.

Potential Benefits:

- County-wide strategic approach
- Better mutual understanding
- Better service

Risks:

- Borough Councils not willing to conduct Community Governance Reviews
- Too many new parishes being created too quickly so that Borough Council and Northants CALC stretched too thin

Desired Outcomes:

- The creation of at least five new parishes in Northampton, Wellingborough, Kettering or Corby by 2015.

3.1. Develop a Community Policing Scheme

The Problem:

Perceived lack of visible policing. Poor communications in some instances between the Police and Local Councils. Lack of resources. Poor use of community/local council resources.

The Proposed Solution:

Develop a scheme for community policing that provides a list of options for Local Councils to consider. These could include:

- Nominating an elected member to serve on the Police Joint Action Group (JAG) and and/or attend Safer Community Team (SCT) meetings.
- Start up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme if not already in place
- Recruiting/Deploying a Parish (Special) Constable
- Employing own PCSO.
- Sharing a PCSO with one or more adjoining councils.

The Police to:

Work with Local Councils to design the Scheme and provide information on what works best and what doesn't. Provide recruitment/employment service, and equip and train personnel.

Local Councils to:

Commit to working in partnership. Agree a minimum service level and recognise that delivery beyond the minimum will have to be paid for locally. Recognise that implementing any of the options may have a cost implication.

Potential Benefits:

- Enhanced Local Council contribution to aims of the Northants Community Strategy
- More intelligent resource allocation
- Better mutual understanding
- Use of local council resource - eyes and ears
- Better service

Risks:

- Poor take up of the Scheme by Local Councils
- Resources stretched if Scheme take up is very rapid

Desired Outcomes:

- 20% of Local Councils in each Area Command implementing at least one option in the Community Policing Scheme by 2013.
- An increase in the number of people in Northamptonshire who live in communities where they are safe and feel safe.

3.2. Review and develop Parking Enforcement Scheme in parishes

The Problem:

Illegally parked cars are a hazard to other road users and pedestrians. Principal Councils don't always have the resources to address what is normally a very local issue. Local Councils are "on the ground" and know the local issues but this resource is often not exploited.

The Proposed Solution:

To review and scrutinise the county's Parking Enforcement Scheme, particularly since decriminalisation, and to develop ways in which Local Councils can contribute to enhancing the Scheme.

Principal Councils to:

Review the Parking Enforcement Scheme with reference to Local Council input, seek ways to include Local Council representation, via Northants CALC, on the Northamptonshire Parking Committee and develop an enforcement strategy in partnership with Local Councils for parished areas.

Local Councils to:

Actively contribute towards the review and feed in positive suggestions for how Local Councils can be involved in the Parking Enforcement Scheme by, for example, providing enforcement officers with local intelligence, disseminating information locally, educating road users, and providing facilities locally for enforcement officers to use (e.g. a town hall or community centre).

Potential Benefits:

- More intelligent resource allocation
- Use of local council resource - eyes and ears
- Better service

Risks:

- Resources not available to do more than is currently done
- Unable to make use of Local Council input effectively

Desired Outcomes:

- Increase in Local Councils fairly or very satisfied with parking enforcement.

3.3. Develop a county-wide approach to tackle dog fouling

The Problem:

Dog fouling is a real issue for local people who look to their Local Council to do something about it. There does not appear to be a consistent or fully inclusive approach to tackling the problem in the county. Dog Warden resources are severely limited and the help that Local Councils could offer is often not fully utilised.

The Proposed Solution:

Develop a consistent county-wide approach to tackle dog fouling that harnesses the expertise of the county's Dog Wardens and the local knowledge and resources of Local Councils. The approach should learn from the good practices that already exist both within the county and elsewhere.

Principal Councils to:

Task the County Heads of Environmental Services Group and its sub-group, the Animal Welfare Forum, to work with Northants CALC to develop a consistent and fully inclusive approach to tackling dog fouling. To share good practice, develop training guidance and templates to fully exploit any opportunities presented by the use of powers under the Clean Neighbourhood & Environment Act 2005. To issue and enforce Dog Control Orders and support those Local Councils wishing to act as secondary authorities under the Act. To identify opportunities to extend the range of closely aligned agencies and organisations who could discharge the enforcement powers available under the Act, e.g. Police Community Support Officers and Country Park Rangers.

Local Councils to:

Actively contribute towards the development of this approach and recognise that Local Councils need to play a major part in the implementation of any joined up working, which may have cost implications and may create new training needs (e.g. in enforcement). Consider using powers under the Clean Neighbourhood & Environment Act 2005 to issue Dog Control Orders as a secondary authority. Support the local Dog Warden and other agencies in tackling this problem.

Potential Benefits:

- A more consistent approach through training and guidance
- Improved communications and better mutual understanding
- Optimise resource opportunities
- Extend the range of agencies involved in enforcement

Risks:

- Resources not available to do more than is currently done
- Unable to make use of Local Council input effectively

Desired Outcomes:

- Reduced number of complaints received by all councils regarding dog fouling.
- 10% of Local Councils acting as secondary authorities under the 2005 Act.

Charter Appendix 1 – Example Charter Implementation Plan (Districts & Boroughs)

This Charter Implementation Plan is an illustration for the purpose of consultation only. Charter Implementation Plans will be developed by the Borough/District Councils in association with the Local Councils in their area.

Example Charter Implementation Plan

Example District Council

Example District Council has signed the Northamptonshire Local Councils' Charter and has committed to producing a Charter Implementation Plan (CIP).

Example District Council's lead officer for developing the CIP is *[insert name/job title and contact details]*

The CIP describes the working relationship between Example District Council and the *[insert number]* Local Councils in the district and details how and when the District Council will consult Local Councils in the district, which services Local Councils may consider enhancing by contributing towards improved service levels and what services may be considered for devolution to Local Councils.

Communications

Personnel Changes

Example District Council will notify Local Councils of any personnel changes in the following posts:

Position	Name	Telephone	E-mail
Chief Executive	Jane Smith	01234 567890	Jane.smith@example.gov.uk
Leader	Bob Jones	01234 567891	Bob.jones@example.gov.uk
Head of Planning	Sally Sharpe	01234 567892	Sally.sharpe@example.gov.uk
etc			

Local Councils will notify Example District Council of any personnel changes in the following posts:

Position	Name	Telephone	E-mail
Clerk	Sarah Spring	01234 987654	clerk@thistowncouncil.gov.uk
Chairman	Bob Smith	01234 987653	chair@thistowncouncil.gov.uk

Dates of Meetings

Example District Council and the Local Councils in Example District will tell each other about the date, time and venue for their scheduled Council meetings. The exchange of an annual calendar of meetings will help to avoid calling ad hoc joint meetings on inconvenient dates (although this

can never be avoided completely). Local Councils should send their calendar of meetings to the Chief Executive's Secretary.

Consultation

Example District Council will consult Local Councils on:

The Community

1. The Sustainable Community Strategy and the strategic priorities for Example District
2. Example District Council's corporate plan/vision statement
3. The Community Safety Strategy and the community safety priorities for Example District
4. Anti-Social Behaviour (in association with the local Police, taking into account local arrangements)
5. Electoral and boundary changes
6. Proposals from other bodies or organisations on which Example District Council is consulted which Example District Council considers might affect a particular parish/town or group of parishes.

Development Control and related planning matters

1. Applications for planning permission and related applications, such as Tree Preservation Orders
2. Designation of conservation areas (and changes to existing designations)
3. The Plans, schemes, statements and documents which comprise the Local Development Framework
4. The preparation of development briefs and related documents

Environment

1. Refuse collection and recycling arrangements – significant service changes (or locally specific changes)
2. Street cleansing – significant service changes (or locally specific changes)
3. Waste Strategy
4. Land drainage matters (new village schemes, flood alleviation, water courses, etc)

Finance

1. Special expense budgets charged to town and parish councils
2. Precepting arrangements

Housing (Note: the CIP will need to take into account local housing strategy i.e. where stock is owned/managed by Housing Associations)

1. Housing Strategy
2. Homelessness Strategy
3. Housing Needs Survey
4. Decisions around the future use of sites with the Parish/Town (new schemes)

Leisure

1. Demand for (and location of) facilities, particularly arising from a leisure audit

Local Facilities

1. Provision, or the proposed withdrawal of, local facilities and services (including significant changes in service levels)
2. Management of Example District Council's facilities within a Parish/Town involving significant functional changes, such as changes proposed to the way Example District Council provides (or commissions) a particular facility or service.
3. Operation of markets

Roads and Traffic

1. Temporary road closures under the Town Police Clauses Act
2. Street naming/house numbering
3. Off street car parks
4. Provision and/or relocation of taxi ranks

Devolution

Example District Council will hold an informal discussion with a Local Council interesting in assuming responsibility for a service or contributing towards enhanced service provision in the Parish/Town. The District Council will formally consider requests for devolution of services upon receipt of a written business plan, setting out the Local Council's proposal, that describes how the proposal might improve service quality or reduce costs. Functions/services for consideration will depend on local discussion and may vary significantly; they might include:

1. Dog Control – authorisation to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling under the Clean Neighbourhood Act
2. Recycling arrangements – such as providing local composting schemes
3. Public Conveniences – management, maintenance and repair
4. Management/grounds maintenance of parks, open spaces and woodlands (where there is no legal impediment to the delegation),
5. Management and maintenance of play areas
6. Public Information & Enquiry Points/Centres for residents and visitors
7. Management of common land
8. Street Lighting – other than principal routes
9. Other potential areas under the Clean Neighbourhood Act?
10. Smoking enforcement?

Nb: Northamptonshire County Council to produce a Charter Implementation Plan (CIP) that is similar to the above but appropriate to their county-wide remit. Northants CALC will assist all Principal Councils in the development of their CIPs as required.

Appendix 2 – Record of Changes

Respondent	Section Ref	Proposed Change	Comment	
Boughton	5.1	That Charter be reviewed at each Northants CALC AGM	Agreed. Standing agenda item.	
Brixworth	3.4	Add commitment for LPAs to take note of comments from LCs	Local agreements can be defined through CIP and/or LPC (workstream 2.1)	
Brixworth	Workstreams	Missing - traffic and transport management	For possible inclusion in future.	
Brixworth	3.18	Can't commit resources	Councils to pick and mix a level of engagement that suits them (para 1.4)	
Brixworth	3.22	If appropriate... "Respond positively" might be better	Agreed. Add "Where appropriate..." and "respond positively to" (reorder para)	
Brixworth	w1.3	may not be able to "attend" but could "engage" e.g. send comments by e-mail (general point wherever attendance is required or implied).	Agreed. Change to "Input to and/or attend"	
Cottingham	General	Awareness/Recognition of status of clerk	Local awareness could be highlighted in CIPs where appropriate	
Cottingham	3.26	Clarify	Add "or signpost residents to online resources"	
East Haddon	Workstreams	Missing - improving/extending RoWs	For possible inclusion in future.	
Hinton-in-the-Hedges	3.16	Change advice to advise	Agreed.	
Hollowell	w1.2	Clearer statement regarding funding of agreed projects	Action plans to be created for each workstream that will identify resourcing needs.	
Mears Ashby	3.17	Change "endeavour" to "will"	Agree with the sentiment, but general feedback is to make Charter less prescriptive - no change.	
Roade	5.1	Would be stronger if all Northants Councils were involved in/responsible for annual review	Agree. Add "Working with Northamptonshire Councils the Charter..."	

Rushton	3.4	Add commitment for LPAs to take note of comments from LCs	Local agreements can be defined through CIP and/or LPC (workstream 2.1)	
Rushton	3.7	Provide feedback before making final decision	LCs can be informed (poss. by e-mail alert) when a consultation report is sent to Committee/Cabinet.	
Rushton	3.13	"merit"? On whose judgement	The judgement of whoever is engaging at that particular time.	
Rushton	w1.1	why does appointment have to be at AGM?	Good point - doesn't have to be. Insert "(e.g. At their Annual Meeting)"	
Scaldwell	General	Progress and main points of Charter will have to be reinforced regularly	Agreed.	
Stanwick	General	Expectation that "Champions" are to be Cllrs - whereas it might be better for it to be clerk or volunteer	Agreed. LCs should be able to decide as appropriate.	
Stanwick	w1.2	Grave concerns - won't sign Charter until more information has been received	Action plans to be created for each workstream that will identify resourcing needs.	
Stanwick	w2.1	Define Community-led plans	e.g. Parish Plan, Village Design Statement, Landscape Character Assessment	
Stoke Albany	3.22	Add "wherever possible"	Agreed. Add "Where appropriate..." and "respond positively to" (reorder para)	
Warkton	w2.3	Is parishing needed/desirable?	Outcomes should be based on Community Governance Review.	
Warkton	w.3.3	Too narrow?	Consensus is that a narrow focus is appropriate (could be expanded in workstream is successful)	
Weedon Bec	3.19 (and elsewhere)	Continued call on PCs to attend various meetings - can't attend in day time	Meetings need to take in to account the constraints of attendees.	
Weedon Bec	Workstreams	Missing - Environmental Health (e.g. Littering)	For possible inclusion in future.	
Weedon Bec	3.5	Publish dates of forthcoming consultations	Can be highlighted in CIP	
Weedon Bec	3.1 & 3.9	Are the same!	Agreed - Delete 3.9	

Weedon Bec	3.22	If appropriate... "Respond positively" might be better	Agreed. Add "Where appropriate..." and "respond positively to" (reorder para)	
Weedon Bec	3.26	clarify "to residents"	Add "or signpost residents to online resources"	
Weedon Bec	5.3	How? Needs to be a simple, non time consuming review	Agreed. Simple, short, clear.	
Daventry District Council	Workstreams	DDC believes that some cost analysis would benefit the Charter.	Action plans to be created for each workstream that will identify resourcing needs.	
East Northamptonshire Council	General	The Charter needs to reflect the disparate nature of the Local Councils and the plethora of different approaches that they will wish to take	Agreed. Councils to pick and mix a level of engagement that suits them (para 1.4)	
Northampton Borough Council	3.1	Change to "Advise each other as soon as practical about key personnel changes..."	Agreed.	
Northampton Borough Council	3.2	Change to "Make information available to each other, and to the public in the most suitable formats, including electronically whenever possible and appropriate "	Agreed.	
Northampton Borough Council	3.4	Change to " As appropriate to the nature of the matter under consideration seek comments from Local Councils ..."	Agreed.	
Northampton Borough Council	3.5	Change to "minimum of twelve weeks"	Agreed. Accepting that shorter timescales may be dictated by legislation and/or a Principal Council's constitution.	
Northampton Borough Council	3.7	Delete "i.e. within ten working days of the decision being made"	Agreed.	
Northampton Borough Council	4.1	Change to " Where reasonable engage with ..."	Agreed.	
Northampton Borough Council	4.3	Change to " Where appropriate develop and publish..."	Agreed.	
Northampton Borough Council	w.2.3	Change proposed solution from "develop a plan for creating a 100% parished county" to "develop a plan for carrying out Community Governance Reviews and establishing new parishes where appropriate".	Agreed.	

 Indicates changes made to consultation draft

Appendix 3

Parish Name	What do you think is particularly good about the Northamptonshire Councils' Charter?	Is there anything that your council fundamentally disagrees with?	Is there anything missing from the Charter that your council thinks absolutely should be included?	For local councils, is your council happy for Northants CALC to sign the Charter on behalf of Local Councils in Northamptonshire?	Have you any other comments that you wish to make?
Abthorpe Parish Council					
Adstone Parish Meeting					
Alderton Parish Meeting					
Aldwincle Parish Council					
Althorp Parish Meeting					
Apethorpe Parish Meeting					
Arthingworth Parish Council					
Ashby St Ledgers Parish Meeting					
Ashley Parish Council					
Ashton Parish Council (EN)					
Ashton Parish Council (SN)					
Aston le Walls Parish Council					
Aynho Parish Council					APC discussed the Parish Partnerships document at our most recent meeting. It was well received and we would like to sign up to it.
Badby Parish Council					
Barby & Onley Parish Council					

Barnwell Parish Council					
Barton Seagrave Parish Council					
Benefield Parish Council					
Billing Parish Council					no comments or objections
Blakesley Parish Council					Blakesley Parish Council is generally supportive of the concept of parish partnerships and the Northamptonshire Councils' Charter as detailed in your recent consultation document.
Blatherwycke Parish Meeting					
Blisworth Parish Council					
Boddington Parish Council					
Boughton Parish Council	It documents a framework of working relationships and understandings between Local, District, Borough and County Councils.	Exclusion of relationship and understandings with authorities such as WNJPU, WNDC and EMDA which seem to distort the powers of other authorities.	* Local Councils to be mentioned as being agents (primarily) of District Councils. * Local Development Plans/Frameworks must be kept up to date to avoid planning policy voids. * Relationships and understandings with WNJPU, WNDC and EMDA.* Weighting of Local Councils (as opposed to individuals) responses to consultations.	Yes; providing consultations take place on any subsequent amendments.	* We are becoming concerned at the increasing expectations of Principal Authorities for Local Councils to have more responsibility for local services without funding or reduction in general rate. * <i>We are becoming concerned about Local Councils becoming 'enforcement' authorities.</i> * We are concerned that Principal authorities do not seem to recognise that infrastructures must be sufficient in advance of significant planning developments. * <i>We recommend that the Charter be reviewed and progressed at each NCALC Annual General Meeting and updated on an agreed term basis.</i> * <i>We have a good relationship with DDC at present which seems to be working reasonably well.</i>
Bozeat Parish Council					
Brackley Town Council					Members agreed that you had been obviously working very hard on the document but they felt that Brackley Town Council could not support this in it's present form. The Council feels that the document is a waste of resources and questioned where

					the money was coming from to fund this initiative. It felt that this document is just paying lip service to government directives resulting in increased costs to local authorities.
Bradden Parish Meeting					
Brafield-on-the-Green Parish Council					
Brampton Ash Parish Council					
Braunston Parish Council					
Braybrooke Parish Council					
Brigstock Parish Council					
Brington Parish Council					
Brixworth Parish Council	Whether the adoption of the Charter brings demonstrable benefits to the residents of Brixworth will determine if the Charter is "good". / The sharing of contact details for key functions and notification when these change will be useful.	The PC fundamentally disagrees with any attempt to shift responsibilities and/or tasks from the Principle Councils to the Local Councils without suitable and sufficient funding also being devolved to the Local Councils. It should also be recognised that some existing practices are working well and do not require changing. The Charter should be adapted to make allowances for them. The specific comments made below should also be regarded as the response to these questions	A commitment from the Principle Councils to take any notice of the comments they seek from Local Councils. Traffic and transport management is missing from the 9 workstreams. Traffic in villages is often a key concern for residents. Public transport is particularly important in rural areas. These issues necessarily need to be managed at country level but Local Councils should be engaged with the Principle Councils.	No. We would wish to agree the final version and then the PC to decide whether it is happy to sign it itself.	Part One - Northants Councils' Charter - 3 Working Together / 3.3 This must not be construed to mean that Local Councils are to deliver the responsibilities of the Principle Councils. The PC is happy to signpost the public, where they are able but are not prepared to be committed to ensure that they are able to deal on a "right first time" basis with enquiries that do not relate to the PC's specific responsibilities. / 3.4 Principle Council are to seek comments from Local Councils but there is no commitment to take notice of comments received. / 3.18 The PC has a limited resource and will get involved in the Local Strategic Partnership, if and when, it considers it value for money, in respect of the responsibilities of the PC to do. / 3.20 PC representative will attend training or information events where these are considered by the PC to add value. / 3.22 The PC would support being able to nominate Members to the DDC's Standards Committee but we cannot commit Members to be members of this body. / 3.23 The PC

					<p>does not support giving every District and County Councillor the right to address the Annual Parish meeting. The PC would agree to inviting a representative from the Principle Councils to address the meeting and would invite all relevant Members of the Principle Councils to attend the meeting. / 3.26 This appears to put the onus on Parish Councils and seems to overlook District Council Planning Departments and Information Offices. For a large village such as Brixworth to take sole responsibility for this function effectively it would be best for it to have its own office or weekly surgery. / 3.27 It must be the responsibility of the Principle Councils to make material available to the PC in a form and size determined by the PC. / <u>Part Two - The Nine Workstreams / 1.3 Establish Area Based Operational Services Review Programme / "Attendance"</u> will not always be able or appropriate to be someone actually attending a meeting. The PC may discuss issues with and/or express our views with the OCR prior to the meeting. This may be in person, by phone, by email or in writing. This will apply equally throughout the document where attendance at a meeting is stated or implied. / <u>2.1 Local Planning Charters /</u> Largely this is already achieved by Brixworth Parish Council by fostering successful working relationships with District Councillors. There would be no harm in formalising the arrangements though so that they are enduring, apparent to all and overcome occasional contentious issues such as the decision to suddenly stop making hard copies of planning applications available to the public at Brixworth Information Office without any consultation. The role of Parish Councils and their formal relationship with other policy making bodies such as the West Northants Joint Planning Unit should also be included in this process. / <u>2.2 Develop a Parish Champion Scheme /</u> It should be recognised that the preferred solution for larger Parish Councils is to have a planning committee. Brixworth already has one and the role of Champion is fulfilled by</p>
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					<p>the Chairman of this committee. An added benefit is that other members acquire additional knowledge of the planning system as a result of their regular involvement in the committee. It may be desirable for the LPA to be made aware formally of the role of Chairman of the committee. Formal communications concerning matters which have timetables to be adhered to or require formal responses from the Parish Council however are best addressed to, and responded to by, the Clerk to the Council. Exceptions can be made for holidays, sickness and the like. / Parish Councils can feel distant from the LPA and sometimes their views do not seem to count for much. This is even more so when a Parish is many miles from the District Council Offices with poor roads and no direct public transport links to it. One way in which this feeling of isolation could be recognised and addressed would be for the / L P A to hold some of its meetings locally. This would be particularly appropriate if a large or very controversial application was on the agenda or their were numerous applications to be dealt with a limited area. An afternoon of site visits could perhaps be followed by a relatively local meeting. / The charter should also encompass Section 106 Agreements. / <u>3.1 Develop a Community Policing Scheme</u> / It is the police's responsibility to provide suitable and sufficient resources to meet the needs of the local community. If the community wants a level of service that is over and above their basic needs, then the PC may consider precepting to provide this. It is not appropriate for the PC to subsidise the day-to-day work of the police. The police often give too little priority to anti-social behavior and low-level criminality which can have a disproportionate adverse impact on residents' quality of life.</p> <p>Brixworth Parish Council supports close working between the PC and Daventry District and Northamptonshire County Councils. / The Charter does not appear to</p>
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					appropriately "fit" with Northamptonshire County Council's Customer Promise: / help you to help yourself / help you when you can't help yourself / ask you what you think and give you opportunities to be involved in developing services / listen to and learn from what you tell us / be open and honest about what we can and can't do and explain why / ensure we don't waste your money / make Northamptonshire a positive place where everyone can live and work in an environment that is safe, enjoyable and respectful. / The Council believes that the Charter needs to be reviewed in totality to ensure that it is consistent and supportive of NCC's customer promise.
Brockhall Parish Meeting					
Broughton Parish Council	Very difficult to assess what particularly enhances our Parish Council by this Charter. Certain aspects are already being implemented or can easily be introduced without the need for a Charter. Difficult to see what weight will be given to this Charter.	The increased costs that Parish Councils will be involved in a) devolution of services to Local Councils b) Parish Enhancement Gangs - Local Councils to pay for minor works c) Dog Fouling d) PCSOs. With the financial situation being what it is how can we sign up to these extra costs being implemented?	There is no mention of the part played by Parish Plans which have been adopted by our Local Authority (Kettering Borough Council). Difficult to say what is missing as it is difficult to see what is driving the need for this Charter. It seems to be another layer.	No. Are we authorized legally to give away our signature for you to make decisions on our behalf which could be binding? Could we remove ourselves? Also what about Parish Councils who do not sign or who are not members?	We find many of the proposals to not only involve a cost but also an increase in the volunteering aspect. Parish Councils and other organisations find attracting volunteers to take on responsibilities very difficult and if we are not careful we will lose those Parish Councillors who are unable to devote the time necessary to fulfil this increased commitment. The Grant System run by Kettering Borough Council affects the services that the Parish Council is responsible for together with the many services that KBC run to enhance our village. This situation has an influence on this Charter. Whilst we have the Grant System at the present we do not know what will happen from 2013. Regarding a Planning Champion we find the present system implemented by KBC to be more than adequate. They run meetings to inform Councillors on the Planning Process and to give updates. The existing Dog Warden System runs well with the Warden visiting our Village on a regular basis and taking up any concerns. We are invited to meetings regarding local highway issues or are informed at Rural Forum Meetings. Parish Councillors attend these meetings on an ad hoc voluntary basis and

					we find this to be a successful practice. JAG and SCT Meetings are attended on a similar basis. Also we question whether this Charter is more relevant to Town Councils than to Parish Councils who operate on a much smaller scale.
Bugbrooke Parish Council					Our comments on the Charter are that the principle is accepted and that, subject to the parish council being able to control any additional costs which might arise from, say, additional works being done, they are willing to proceed with the Charter. More time is needed, however, to enable us to consider fully the implications of the charter on individual councillors.
Bulwick Parish Council					
Burton Latimer Town Council					Whilst Burton Latimer Town Council considers that the Northamptonshire Council's Charter has some good points it requires further development over time
Byfield Parish Council					Seems a good idea.
Canons Ashby Parish Meeting					
Castle Ashby Parish Council					
Catesby Parish Meeting					I am pleased to see reference to Policing, Parking and Dog fouling. As a rural community we suffer greatly with litter - no doubt thrown from vehicles. Anything that can tackle this issue in a reactive and proactive manner would be appreciated; at present I personally litter pick the verges when I can but prevention has to be better.
Chacombe Parish Council					
Charwelton Parish Meeting					No comment.
Chelveston-cum-Caldecott Parish Council					

Chipping Warden and Edgcote Parish Council					
Church with Chapel Brampton Parish Council					
Clay Coton Parish Meeting					
Clipston Parish Council					
Clopton Parish Meeting					
Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council					Coucillors of Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council have read the Councils' Charter and feel that a "no comment" response would be appropriate as most of the suggested practices are already adopted.
Cold Ashby Parish Council					
Cold Higham Parish Council					
Collingtree Parish Council					
Collyweston Parish Council					
Cosgrove Parish Council					Cosgrove Parish Council members were of the opinion that we already carried out the required indications. They are however supportive of any commentary or 'charter' that benefits the Council and residents of Cosgrove. Cosgrove Parish Councils response is therefore positive and supportive.
Cottersbrooke Parish Meeting					
Cotterstock Parish Meeting					
Cottingham Parish Council	The style of presentation - clear of local govt. Jargon. Identifies the need to improve service delivery by all levels of local govt.	Undertaking any function with no financial support.	Greater awareness of position/role of clerk to the town/parish council.	Yes.	A small working party of councillors considered the document and I give below its comments: (page refs/section refs) 4 (3.6) - Despite being named Borough Council officers still ignore us / 5 (3.26) Needs to be

					made clearer / 12 (Proposed) "Have lived in Parish for 34 years and not seen any evidence" / 17 (Proposed) 'Doubt whether any councilor's view will be given credence / 17 (NWS) Partial coverage of village but poor support / 17 (Parish Const) The cost of employment of constable would be excessive and may be engaged beyond the parish's boundary / 17(PCSO) As above but even greater burden as they are full time officers / 17 (PCSO) Sharing would spread the cost of engagement / 18(Parking) Problems reported many times but all in vain! / 16 (Planning) Local Councils should have greater involvement in planning decisions within / beyond village boundary / 18 (Parking) Will Local Councils be expected to pay more? / 19 (Dog Fouling) More bins readily available would help. The Document appears to be concise and written well in "plain English". It is hoped that in the case of devolved powers the finance will follow. In the case of communication with Principal Councils there should be a recognized code of good practice stating , for example the period in which correspondence will be answered. It would also help if "who does what" could be made clearer. Finally it was felt that "Clustering" was good but asked how it was to be monitored.
Courteenhall Parish Meeting					
Cranford Parish Council					The document is circulating around the councillors and the current response, including that of the Chairman, is that it is one of the more worthwhile 'pieces of paper' to do the rounds. He thought there were many useful parts in it.
Cransley Parish Council					
Creaton Parish Council					No comment.
Crick Parish Council	The identification of the nine criteria. It is to be hoped that	No	A greater awareness of infrastructure needs i.e.	Yes	This Parish Council through its involvement with the electorate via village needs surveys

	resources will be maintained to fulfill these ambitions.		Local bus services, rail users and canal potential. All as a means of transportation and reduction in carbon footprint.		and open days implements some of the objectives highlighted.
Croughton Parish Council					No comment.
Culworth Parish Council					
Daventry Town Council	The Charter promotes good working practice within and between councils. It encourages councils to review their processes and procedures and consider more cost effective and value added solutions that benefit the community.	It may be worth noting that the Charter could provide Principle Councils with a process to transfer services and costs to a local council resulting in cost savings for the Principle Council, increased costs for the Local Council which ultimately results in an increase in the precept and little or no savings for the electorate.	The Charter may benefit from the inclusion of a section on how all Council's consult with the electorate and disseminate and share information gained through the consultation process.	Yes.	The document has been extensively researched and well-written and lays down a strong foundation for efficient and effective partnerships.
Deanshanger Parish Council	Nothing	Local Councils should have been consulted before the work on the Charter began. Many duplications of what is already in place.	There needs to be less jargon and more plain English.	No.	There are no additional benefits, only extra work for unpaid Parish Councils.
Deene & Deenethorpe Parish Council					
Denford Parish Council					
Denton Parish Council					
Desborough Town Council					No comment.
Dingley Parish Council					The Charter was discussed by Dingley Parish Council; and we acknowledge and applaud the intentions. However it was felt that the we are unable to commit this or future councils to the Charter. Dingley Parish Council endeavours to respond to Consultation documents, participate

					in relevant training events, briefing sessions and forums but Councillors are already stretched to cover everything expected of them and any extra undertakings may be a move too far. It is already difficult to recruit prospective candidates to maintain a full and representative Councils in small villages. This could be a further disincentive.
Dodford Parish Meeting					
Duddington-with-Fineshade Parish Council					The Parish Council was generally supportive of the draft document.
Duston Parish Council	The possibility of all tiers of Councils working together a simpler way of consulting. If the work streams could work by having NCALC as the voice of the parish councils to get these done, this would be welcome.	They do not agree that this will improve local services, as the main result of many outstanding issues is the result of central government not putting money on the table to allow work to be done. Parish Councillors who are Borough/County Councillors advise that they are constantly striving to get improvement done in Duston by their Authority but the requests constantly fall on deaf ears as it all falls back on the lack of budget to carry these out. At this moment in time Northampton Borough Council are under a massive review and once again there will be cuts as there is just not the money. Would create a lot of work for Local Councils.	How the local councils are to fund these suggested streams? Will Principal/Unitary Authorities pass on money collected through Council Tax for these services to Parish/Town Councils or will they reduce the Council Tax by the amount they would collect for this service expecting the Parish/Town Councils to increase their precept by the amount, ie 3p off council tax 3p on precept.	NCALC needs to be put firmly in the position that Yes we like you, yes we like you as an advisory body for when our clerk needs to get advice and we are very happy to pay our fees for this. We do not want you to take control of us. Charter designed by NCALC.	We appreciate the hard work gone into producing the charter and identifying ways forward. It will be very relevant if a new government chooses to delegate more responsibilities to Parishes. At my SLCC conference out of 200 Parish Councils represented not one had joined up to work in partnership with their principal authorities as they felt they were looking for a cheap way out.
Earls Barton Parish Council					The first point that Earls Barton Parish Council would like to make is that all of our members are volunteers and most work either full or part time. Therefore, it would be beneficial if any future consultations could be condensed down to make it easier to read,

					maybe with a summary of bullet points to highlight the main objectives. / On the whole, Earls Barton Parish Council would view the charter favourably. The only down side is if the Parish Council was found to suffer financially due to taking on additional obligations/services. We already take on a major part of maintenance work around the village and our Precept is already in excess of £100,000. Therefore, we would not wish to increase our Precept significantly so as to ensure our residents keep their outgoings as low as possible. Therefore, the details of how services would be funded if they were passed down from principle councils should be investigated to ensure Parish Councils are not penalised for providing a more local service. If some arrangement can be agreed regarding costs to ensure Earls Barton are not out of pocket, we would be willing to sign up to the charter.
East Carlton Parish Council					
East Farndon Parish Council					
East Haddon Parish Council	It gives Parish Councils a stronger, clearer voice on those issues that concern parishioners most - covers many of the major ones highlighted in our recent Parish Plan - and the planned levels of participation promise real improvement re these concerns.	No.	Improving and extending the rights of way network was a top priority in our recent Parish Plan – could rights of way be included somewhere in the highways section?	Yes.	An excellent initiative in strengthening local democracy at the parish level – should make parish councils much more relevant and enable them to be more pro-active in tackling parish issues.
Easton Maudit Parish Meeting					
Easton Neston Parish Meeting					
Easton on the Hill Parish Council					
Ecton Parish Council					

Elkington Parish Meeting					
Evenley Parish Council					
Everdon Parish Council	It aims to promote more transparency and democratic decision making with member input and improved channels of communication between principal and local councils.	Small parishes such as ours being treated same as principal and larger PCs as we don't require the same level of involvement and it would place unnecessary strain on our budget and resources with only one employee.	No.	Yes.	In principle we agree with the objectives and principles.
Eydon Parish Council					
Farthinghoe Parish Council					
Farthingstone Parish Council					
Fawsley Parish Meeting					
Finedon Parish Council					
Flore Parish Council					Seems a good idea.
Fotheringhay Parish Meeting					
Gayton Parish Council					
Geddington Newton & Little Oakley Parish Council					
Glapthorn Parish Council					
Grafton Regis Parish Meeting					
Grafton Underwood Parish Council					
Grange Park Parish Council					
Great Addington Parish Council					

Great Doddington Parish Council					
Great Harrowden Parish Meeting					
Great Houghton Parish Council					
Great Oxendon Parish Council					
Greatworth Parish Council					
Greens Norton Parish Council					The Council broadly supports the concept of Parish Partnerships and the Councils' Charter.
Grendon Parish Council	Grendon Parish Council agree that the charter includes things that are important to Councils that Councils have asked for.	No.		Yes.	
Gretton Parish Council					
Guilsborough Parish Council					
Hackleton Parish Council					No comment.
Hannington Parish Council					
Hardingstone Parish Council					
Hardwick Parish Meeting					
Hargrave Parish Council					
Harlestone Parish Council					
Harpole Parish Council					
Harrington Parish Council	It brings the three tiers together as a team. It identifies that communication	No.	No.	Very happy.	Looking forward to more about the Charter's developments.

	should improve which is a major problem at the moment. Many county/town council officers seem to operate in an area of secrecy and do not believe in sharing information. Openness should be a key word in the Charter.				
Harringworth Parish Council					
Hartwell Parish Council					Local planning charter is needed, however the Parish Council is not the planning authority it is their job. Planning champion also a good idea. I think we are doing our part already (to work together). Dose still retain an independent view. Planning policy cannot be left to one person. Planning decisions are made by independent planning committee, having been advised by planning offices. Proposed will only lead to stagnation and nimbi attitude we have suffered in past. HPC is already implementing a very democratic stance on planning issues. Dog fouling, unless Dog Wardens start to take offenders to court and get hard nothing proposed will be effective. Excellent idea, theory is good Theory is good and it is to be hoped that by getting sign up from the relevant bodies' co-operation will be improved. Being cynical I suspect that not everyone will be as committed as the rest. Very good idea lets hope it all goes well and works together. Some good ideas here, especially on highways and dog fouling. I hope it doesn't get too swallowed up by red type. There are some good features like the highway representative schemes and a parish special constable; certain representative roles such as a local parish planning champion are problematic.
Haselbech Parish Meeting					
Hellidon Parish Meeting					

Helmdon Parish Council					Helmdon is willing to support the Charter as long as the cut in services provided by SNC/NCC is accompanied by a corresponding drop in their share of the precept.
Hemington/Luddington & Thurning Parish Council					
Higham Ferrers Town Council					No comment.
Hinton-in-the Hedges Parish Meeting	I think this all looks like a very sensible document and I hope most of the points can be implemented.			Can NCALC sign this on behalf of Parish Meetings? A Parish Meeting has no standing or monetary commitment to NCALC so I'm not sure you can sign for us. I see the response form asks for NCALC to be allowed to sign on the Parish Council's behalf, but how are the Parish Meetings covered and what happens to the NCALC signature if only a few Parish Councils fill this bit in? By default are you assuming 'no signature' is agreement?	Part 1, Page 4 section 3.16 – it should be 'advise' rather than 'advice'. / Under, I think, Part 1 section 3.4, consultation, I would like to see that District Councils consult with a parish on road or house naming. There have been three recent occasions where South Northants (SNC) have sent out an e-mail to about 30 organisations declaring the name of a road in Hinton-in-the-Hedges which the village has called 'silly' and objected to. BUT because it has already gone to all these organisations then SNC will not change their decision. Consultation beforehand would have avoided this conflict. / One problem under Part 2, section 2.1, is something that I suspect these proposals cannot do much about. A parish may object to a planning application and these reasons appear to be ignored because 'legally' the planning officer cannot take them into account. It is not supposedly a 'valid reason' to reject them just because a parish wants it refused or changed – and I (together with a good few other parishes I suspect) think it should be – or some real reason for ignoring a parish is supplied, At present these type of objections just go into a 'black hole' and a parish never hears any feedback on its objections.
Holcot Parish Council				Not until the Parish Council is convinced that the main Councils would carry out their part of the bargain	It is asking a lot of Parish Councils with no extra money.
Holdenby Parish Meeting					

Hollowell & Teeton Parish Council	It offers the opportunity to address some of the areas of concern that currently exist in regard to Parish and County / District Council working practices and the financing of work projects within the parish.	No.	A clearer statement, particularly within the Highways section, regarding the funding of agreed projects and feasibility of Parishes being able to budget for and contribute to works within the parish.	Yes.	This Charter should formalise some existing practices and make a substantial contribution to developing those and new practices to the benefit of all participating councils and the general public.
Irchester Parish Council					They felt that they are a proactive council and communicate with the Borough and County Councils on a regular basis, especially regarding Highway issues. They also work well with the local police in solving and the prevention of crime within the village. They felt that the Charter was an excellent idea and felt that the other Councils should notify the Parishes in greater depth and detail and consult with them and take the Parish Council views into consideration before decisions are made.
Irthlingborough Town Council					No comment.
Isham Parish Council					
Islip Parish Council	Better communication with principal councils will be possible.	No.	Don't think so.	Yes.	No.
Kelmarsh Parish Meeting					
Kilsby Parish Council					
King's Cliffe Parish Council					No comment.
King's Sutton Parish Council					No comment.
Kislingbury Parish Council					
Lampport & Hanging Houghton Parish Council					
Laxton Parish Meeting					
Lilbourne Parish					

Council					
Lilford cum Wigsthorpe & Thorpe Achurch Parish Council					
Litchborough Parish Council					
Little Addington Parish Council					
Little Harrowden Parish Council					The council felt it was a good way forward. They felt they had communication with NCC Highways but that the Borough were slow to help with some problems, the police also seemed to have limited ability within the village. The Council hoped that other organisations would be more proactive with the Parishes and involve them more with decision making.
Little Houghton Parish Council	It seeks to create a level of communication between all tiers of local government in Northamptonshire that has hitherto been sketchy.	In principle no.	None that can be thought of at present.	Yes, subject to us having sight of the document to be signed beforehand.	None that can be thought of at present.
Loddington Parish Council					
Long Buckby Parish Council					
Lowick & Slipton Parish Council					
Lutton Parish Council					
Maidford Parish Council					
Maidwell with Draughton Parish Council					
Marston St Lawrence Parish Council					We agree with all the statements in the new charter and our main concerns are to continue working together to ensure continuous flow of information from County, District and local levels.

Marston Trussell Parish Meeting					
Mawsley Parish Council					
Mears Ashby Parish Council	This is a very good wish list.	It was felt that an index summary would have been helpful as many councillors found too detailed as a stand alone document.	Common sense and change the words "endeavour" to "will" (see 3.3. of the Charter and 3.17)	yes	This is a whole new culture for local government, particularly at the higher level. How will it be monitored?
Middleton Cheney Parish Council					
Middleton Parish Council	Starts the process of devolving responsibility down to local level to benefit community	no	no	yes	Timescale?
Milton Malsor Parish Council					
Moreton Pinkney Parish Council					
Moulton Parish Council					I have read this charter in great detail and in theory think it's an excellent idea and long overdue. All parties need to be completely committed to the process in order for it to be effective. / The following are comments i made against the item number: / 3.3 - vital that responsibilities are defined especially for parishes that are near to the border of 2 councils i.e. NBC/DDC. / 3.12 -excellent point - ideal opportunity to improve relationships between councils and open channels of communication will create a greater understanding between councils - important to know of personnel changes within councils. / 3.16 - 3.23 - fine for larger councils but i think smaller councils will find this hard to manage unless administration hours are increased / 3.24 - 3.26 - parish council's are consultees only in planning process. / Recent experience would suggest that principal authorities do not fulfil their role in the planning process and can disregard p c comments / 4.3 - 4.6 – good / 4.7 - 4.8 good - what training/assistance will be given

					to Clerk/ Councillors in order that these services would be provided professionally/effectively. Role of Clerk is changing all the time - review needed of job description/specification/title/salary scale etc this charter changes the role of Clerk even further. / 5.1 - will parish councils be asked for their views/comments? / 5.2 additional work for NCALC / Workstreams: / Some older parish councillors will find it difficult to accept change in pc remit. P.C's need to adopt a far more businesslike approach. P.C's could spend a lot of time and money on training and implementing / the Charter but have no guarantees that services will be maintained or improved. / 3 Community Safety and Policing / 3.2 - excellent idea / 3.3 include litter/graffiti removal/ fly tipping/vandalism of street / furniture/signage etc / 1.2 Design a new highways Minor works Programme / What are minor works? / Paid for from precept - cannot be good - who determines what the minimum standards are? / What recourse is there if one council doesn't deliver - assurances are / needed before Northants Calc sign agreement on pc behalf / Jane.
Naseby Parish Council					No comment.
Nassington Parish Council					
Nether Heyford Parish Council					
Newbottle Parish Council					
Newnham Parish Council					
Newton Bromswold Parish Meeting					
Norton Parish Council					
Old Parish Council					
Old Stratford Parish Council					Old Stratford Parish Council members are supportive but are themselves uncertain as

					to who it will affect this Parish Council as it was thought that we carry out and are involved in the various suggestions and streams. The response is therefore positive and supportive.
Orlingbury Parish Council					
Orton Parish Meeting					
Oundle Town Council					No comment.
Overstone Parish Council					
Overthorpe Parish Council					
Pattishall Parish Council					
Paulerspury Parish Council					Members considered it to be a prudent way forward.
Pilton, Stoke Doyle & Wadenhoe Parish Council					
Pitsford Parish Council					
Polebrook Parish Council					
Potterspury Parish Council					
Preston Capes Parish Council					
Pytchley Parish Council					
Quinton Parish Council					No comment.
Radstone Parish Meeting					
Raunds Town Council					Councillors noted a Draft NCALC Parish Partnership's Charter. Members were advised that if they had any suggestions, they could be submitted via the Clerk or directly to NCALC.

Ravensthorpe Parish Council					
Ringstead Parish Council					
Roade Parish Council	<p>It brings everything together in one comprehensive document that, <u>if commitments are honoured</u>, will make a real difference to local governance in Northants through the creation of proper 'joined up working'. But, never forget that 'the primrose path to hell is paved with good intentions' and effective arrangements for monitoring and review are crucial if this Charter is to avoid becoming a 'one-off commitment' that fades over time. To that end, the arrangements described in Section 5 would be stronger if there was representation from <u>all</u> parties that were signatories to the Charter rather than just the CC of NCALC. Monitoring and review should perhaps be delegated to one of the Joint Working Groups between NCALC and Councils that already exist with that Group reporting back to NCALC; if no suitable Group exists, an ad hoc one should be created. We fear that a lack of ongoing involvement in the M & R process by those who operate it and benefit from it will result in the Charter becoming diluted over time.</p>	No fundamental disagreement.	No, other than mentioned above.	Yes.	No.
Rockingham Parish Meeting					
Rothersthorpe Parish Council					

Rothwell Town Council					
Rushden Town Council					
Rushton Parish Council					<p>Much better than I expected – there is some quite good stuff in it. / Basic problem as I see it is that parish councils feel that they are not listened to and have little power. There is also a feeling of mistrust not of the borough councillors but of the officers who seem to set the policies and agendas i.e. who is really running the borough. This can only be addressed through two way communications both with our local borough councillor and with the council officers. This charter might help. / A good local example is of course the wind farm application where both Rushton Parish Council and Wilbarston Parish Council opposed it but views, which were valid planning objections were ignored. No one has told us why they were ignored. / Para 3.4: this is excellent but we have got to be assured that they will take heed of our views or explain to us why they cannot take them into account. / Para 3.5: does this include planning applications? Borough Council should have given us much longer to consider the wind farm application. / Para 3.7: Provide feedback before a decision is made not afterwards. / Para 3.10: Not more meetings. / Para 3.13: don't know what "on merit" means in this context. On whose judgement is this? / Para 3.24: Don't think this is necessary: our system seems to work. / Para 3.26: Good idea. / Part 2, Section 1.1: Why does the appointment have to be at an AGM? / Section 1.2: Most minor works are surely "ad hoc" and it would be difficult to devise a scheme to incorporate these. / Sections 2.1 & 2.2: Hear hear to the recognition of the problem and the solutions seems to be sensible also. / Section 3.1: Nice sentiments but impractical solution. / Section 3.2: Again nice sentiments but no real solution offered just words. Just give us a few official notices to slap on offending cars! / Section 3.2: The document seems to be running out of steam as it gets to the end!</p>

					What on earth is a fully inclusive approach to dog fouling? Again there is no real solution offered. We need a dog warden here from time to time to talk to offending dog owners.
Scaldwell Parish Council	It aims to improve closer working relationship between local councils and district/county councils. / It shows a wide range of areas that councils can work together on which should provide thought for some local councils about areas that they could influence that are currently neglected or overlooked. / Improving communication between local councils and Highways is an area that really needs to be worked on. Very poor/complete lack of communication from Highways to our council about work in our village or nearby area has been a cause of frustration for our council. / The Charter shows that communication has to be two-way between the councils. / Parish Planning Champion is a good idea that I've not heard of before. Similarly promoting the importance of existing roles e.g. Highways representative will be beneficial.	No.	Not that I can think of.	Yes.	Thanks to NCALC in putting this together. For it to be effective in practice on the local council level, the main points of the charter will have to be reinforced to local councilors regularly e.g. through NCALC's Update otherwise it's unlikely that local councils will consider its implications and put things into practice to meet the desired outcomes.
Shutlanger Parish Council					Broadly support the concept of Parish Partnerships and the Charter but consider that they are too small a Parish for it to be a feasible option.
Sibbertoft Parish Council					
Silverstone Parish Council					

Slapton Parish Meeting					
Southwick Parish Meeting					
Spratton Parish Council					
Stanford Parish Meeting					
Stanion Parish Council					
Stanwick Parish Council	<p>1.3 Operational Services Review - The proposal is a positive move as it will address the issue of the Parish Council not being aware of scheduled works within the village e.g. the Parish Council was not advised that the kerbs on Spencer Parade were to be altered or that the sign posts were to be refurbished.</p>	<p>There is an expectation that the 'Champions' will be councillors. In Stanwick the Highways rep is a 'civilian' and this situation has worked well over a number of years and the Councils feels that there should be scope to continue this arrangement. The Council has grave concerns regarding the future of the Minor Works Programme. It would not be prepared to sign any Charter until more detailed information has been received.</p>		<p>No – see Minor works Programme above.</p>	<p>Community Development: 2.1 A definition of Community-led plans would be beneficial. It should be noted that the Planning Inspector rejected East Northamptonshire Council proposals to include consideration of parish plans in the Rural North Plan. There is clearly a conflict here. The Council welcomes the proposals for how planning applications would be dealt with, especially receiving greater feedback where planning decisions differs from that of the view of the Parish Council. Community Policing: Overall the proposal appears to reflect the arrangements already in place in this area. Parking enforcement: the Parish Council would welcome an opportunity to take part in a review. Dog fouling: the Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to tackle the issue. However it should be noted that small parishes are unlikely to take on enforcement powers at it would not be a beneficial use of resources. This includes Stanwick. There should be a mechanism to report back on the success of the dog warden. This could be a parish by parish report emailed out to the whole area as the police do with monthly crime figures. The report could be quarterly or half yearly depending on the levels of activity.</p>
Staverton Parish Council					
Stoke Albany Parish Council					<p>Concerns that some elements are very prescriptive, particularly 3.22 - appointment of Planning Champion should be "wherever possible". 3.26 may be impractical as Stoke</p>

					Albany does not have a suitable public display area and in any event they are readily available elsewhere or at the PC meeting to discuss them.
Stoke Bruerne Parish Council					
Stowe IX Churches Parish Council	Good interaction between the principal and Local Councils which should considerably improve the current position.	No.	No.	Yes. on the basis that we retain the right to opt out if we have fundamental disagreement with the final version.	Why will it take until 2013 to achieve target objectives?
Strixton Parish Meeting					
Sudborough Parish Council					
Sulby Parish Meeting					
Sulgrave Parish Council					
Sutton Bassett Parish Meeting					
Syresham Parish Council					References: A. Syresham P Clerk email to D Moody dated 31 Mar 2010 / B. NCALC Parish Partnerships 2010-2013, under cover of D Moody email dated 20 Jan 2010 / Further to Ref A, herewith is our response to Ref B and the delay is regretted. / The Parish Council thanks NCALC for the preparation of this paper, Ref B, and appreciates the work which has gone into it. The PC would like to give it a fair wind, since it represents, as said in Ref A an ideal situation which should have been operating for many years. / The PC's specific comments are at Annex to this letter . However, certain questions arise, mentioned here, which are begged by the formation of the Parish Partnerships Charter. These include: / Is this an exterior imposition from central government? Or, what has driven it's formulation? / What are the definitions of communication and consultation? / What is the authority to execute the charter? / What degree of commitment is demanded from the three levels of council? / What are the general

					<p>relationships and responsibilities between NCALC, NCC, district councils and PCs? / What executive authority does each have? / What powers of enforcement does each have? / All these require, in our opinion, clarification, possibly outside the paper and are considered as important. / Annex A / The following observations are offered by Syresham Parish Council on the draft paper issued by NCALC in January 2010. / 1. The preamble needs to acknowledge the neglect, even abandonment of the village infrastructure in the County for several years, and this topic brought to the fore in the forthcoming Local Councils Conference in June 2010. / 2. PART 1. The Charter a. Para 1.4 Account needs to be taken of the fact that parish councils have neither the funds nor the administrative knowledge, expertise, insurance or personnel to employ directly the people to carry out local work. Nevertheless, direction by PCs of work done by NCC and SNC employees at local level would be welcomed. It should be a given that a concomitant decrease in council tax would be allowed against any increase which might be required in the parish precept. / b. Para 3.2 Electronic communication is still sloppy and should not be the primary method of formal communication. / c. Para 3.9 In this context 'key personnel' are those who can and will resolve a question or problem and put in train a solution and should be so defined. / d. Para 3.14 What are the Local Strategic Partnership and the Sustainable Communities Strategy? Do we have them? By whom are they published and do we have copies? / e. Para 3.22 What is a Standards Committee? / f. Para 3.25 What is a material planning consideration? / 3. SIGNATORIES. / How binding will this document be? It is an admirable project but is, we think, a set of rules which should have applied for many years. Since Principal Councils dance to the tune of central government and seem to have little time for, or point of reference with local councils, can it be expected that it will work? This sounds cynical, even hurtful, but</p>
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					<p>reflects the perception of at least one local council. / 4. PART 2. The Workstreams. / a. Para 1. Should not Education, Public Health and Transport be introduced here? They can each be argued as a national responsibility but they too have local significance and must be consuming local budgets. / b. Para 2.4 What are Local Area Agreements? Are we copied them? / c. Para 2.5 These are surely objectives of the councils, not the charter? / d. Para 4 Re 'Community Engagement'. Does a definition exist? We would be pleased to know it. Does it not encompass all aspects of the work of all councils? / e. Para 5. Add 'and at the same time to remind councils of their responsibilities'. / f. Page 10, 1.2 Add 'with timescales' / g. 1.3 What are these; do parish councils have knowledge of them? / h. After 3.3 Add: Disaster/Emergency Planning and Flood Planning? / i. Page 11 Under Potential Benefits, in place of 'Better service' insert 'Better response, explanation and execution'. / j. Page 11 Under Desired Outcomes add 'A swift response to needs, e.g. repairs and renovations'. [This will then link more directly with Highways Minor Works Programme. If the one does not link with and have an effect on the other then the PHR is of no value]. / k. Page 12 Under 'NCC to'; first sentence – add after '...the issues' add 'that works and will be followed.' / l. Page 12 For 'Local Councils to' Note that a minimum service level must be set somewhat above what is currently being achieved. Note also our comments in Ref A and this Annex para 2a. We would not be prepared to allow the Principal Councils to be absolved from employing and paying their employees. We have plenty of minor works which fall well within a minimum service level waiting to be done and enumerated in our infrastructure paper to, inter alia, NCC and SNC Leaders and Chief Executives and our more recent programme of works for the Parish Enhancement Team. / m, Page 12 Under 'Desired Outcomes' amend to read "delivers a high quality, timely service" / n Page 13 This proposal is agreed, but comes</p>
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					<p>down to communication. We have been trying to establish communication with NCC/SNC and others for several years with little effect. We rarely get an acknowledgement, let alone a response to questions and requests and we often are unsure to whom we should be addressing our correspondence. (Is this our fault?) / o. Page 14 This is agreed but is also a communication problem. We are preparing a Village Design Statement, which it is intended will include the Parish's views and preferred building constraints. These would be expected to be taken account of by planning officers when processing applications. / p Page 15. Agreed. / q. Page 16.No comment. / r. Page 17. The need here is for a presence and a rapid response, which are provided by area PCSOs. Not ideal, as we would welcome more frequent visits but the system does work. No other comments. / s. Page 18. Our problems are narrow roads and insufficient off street parking space, together with the advent of larger and wider vehicles (use of sat nav routing?) and some speeding. Yellow lines would be inappropriate. No further comment, other than the VDS (page 14) will consider the parking problem. / t. Page 19.Secondary authority powers might be useful and useable. No other comments. / u. Page 20. CIP. Suggest the date of taking post is added to each position, every person heading each stream is included and the lists are updated regularly.</p>
Sywell Parish Council	1.2 & 3.2			Yes.	
Tansor Parish Meeting					
Thenford Parish Meeting					
Thornby Parish Meeting					Any approach that fuses a closer working relationship between County, District and the Parishes is important and to be very much welcomed. This should mean improved and agreed planning and co-ordinated delivery of some key services leading to an

					improvement in meeting local priorities as well reductions in wastages of all kinds. We realised that there is a caveat that the Charter only applies to parish meetings, <i>where appropriate</i> but some services such as Highways and Policing are closely interlinked between Local and the Principal Councils. We in Thornby therefore support the Charter and its approach. The caveat that we hold, as one of the very small Parishes with a very small budget and no paid officers at all, is the time and resource available locally as part of any Partnership arrangement. We would participate in key aspects prioritised by the Parish Meeting where resource can be found.
Thorpe Malsor Parish Council					
Thorpe Mandeville Parish Council					
Thrapston Town Council					Thrapston Town Council discussed the Northamptonshire County Charter and agreed that they would support it unreservedly.
Tiffield Parish Council					
Titchmarsh Parish Council					
Towcester Town Council	Generally in accord with the principles that this council would be happy to operate within.	No fundamental points of disagreement.	Seems to generally to cover the fundamental points.	Yes.	
Twywell Parish Council					
Upper Heyford Parish Meeting					
Upton Parish Council					
Wakerley Parish Meeting					
Walgrave Parish Council	We welcome this initiative and the Charter works well as a memorandum of				We also note that there is likely to be greater delegation to local councils for the provision of further services. Our Council, whilst

	<p>understanding between Local Councils for broad principles of working together. The Charter notes ways of working which are consistent with our ways of working, and our Council welcomes the invitation for us to become more involved in Local Strategic Partnerships. It will however be interesting to see what impact any changes in Central Government may have on current structures, and what changes may thus ensue.</p>				<p>welcoming the ability to be able to influence and have an impact on its own environment and services, is deeply concerned that delegation of responsibility comes with ongoing adequate resources to provide quality. Particularly at this time of economic stringency, when cuts in local authority budgets are happening, we can foresee a passing of responsibility without the where with all to be able to take action. / Regarding the Nine Workstreams, Walgrave Parish Council is reassured that its outputs are consistent with the benchmarking outlined. However, although it is about to engage in community consultation and development of a Parish Plan, it remains sceptical as to the credibility of this owing to the recent Village Design Statement process, which, whilst finalised last September 2009, is still with Daventry District Council, bogged down in local authority bureaucracy. Without feedback to our community, it will be hard to re motivate people to further develop a Parish Plan. / 1. Highways We accept the need for Highway Representatives. We are not clear on the legal responsibility and liabilities that may rest with the Highway Representatives and clarification should be provided. It is our preference that our Proper Officer, our Parish Clerk, sends and receives all communications with MGWSP/NCC This has not always been recognised by MGWSP/NCC and flexibility should be retained. Regarding a minor works programme, resources must be delegated and local councils need to be able to contract independently for such works and not be tied into NCC proscribed contractors. Communications regarding Operational Reviews. As noted in the past, meetings have become talking shops, and just an opportunity for MGWSP to lead the agenda with no clear decision making. This has to change. / 2. Community Development No particular comments other than above / 3. Community Safety and Policing - We welcome further development of the Community Policing Scheme, but again are</p>
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					<p>concerned that there would appear to be a move to finance these officers through local council precept. Funds need to be delegated to enable council to pay for these services without increasing the precept disproportionately. We would wish to add some concerns to be addressed through this scheme being in particular: speeding; large vehicles travelling through restricted village zones; anti social behaviour. Regarding tackling dog fouling, Walgrave Parish Council has this high on its agenda. However, we need to be sure that sufficient resources are attached to this development. Our experience so far has taught us that there are NOT enough resources. We are currently unable to provide extra bins in the village, since DDC are unable to commit resources to emptying them. On a more general note, our Council would hope to see published responses to this consultation and then to see a redrafted version before final adoption. The complex way in which service provision is delivered across the County Council and the 7 district councils is complex and potentially wasteful. Such real and perceived waste may be countered through this combined strategic approach to working arrangements. Furthermore it has the potential to bring clarity to what otherwise is completely confusing to many members of our community.</p>
Wappenham Parish Council					No comment.
Warkton Parish Council		<p>Section 2.3 - To Parish everywhere is not thought to be necessary, advisable or particularly workable. There will be vast cost, both financial and human - more Clerks, more training and awareness, new Clerks in new Parishes will be inevitable. Dividing up Towns into areas - using Ward boundaries, e.g.? -</p>			<p>Section 3.3 - Much too narrow - referring "only" to dog fouling. Needs to be more on the lines of: Develop a county-wide approach towards the maintenance of all public (green) spaces. Dog fouling will then be one of the problems to be addressed. Overall, the Warkton Parish Council is pleased to see this initiative going forward, and looks forward to the benefits it will bring.</p>

		will not create meaningful and cohesive communities.			
Warkworth Parish Meeting					
Warmington Parish Council	<p>Warmington Parish Council has always been very keen to work together with other Councils. We thus welcome the Charter with its aim of formalising the relationship between Councils. The Charter stresses the need to work together communicating , making information available and consulting, all of which the Parish Council thoroughly endorse. We consider the identification of key personnel to be of particular value. In the past we have often found it difficult to ascertain who is actually responsible for certain key areas. There are a number of elements within the 9 potential workstreams that Warmington Parish Council currently undertake and which they have found to be very beneficial. They include appointing a Parish Highways Representative, trialling the Parish Enhancement Gang Scheme, setting up an enhanced Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and inviting the Police to attend our meetings. We consider the identification of the workstreams to be particularly useful and feel that we could also benefit in other areas particularly in the area of Community Development with Local Planning Charters and the Parish Planning Champion Scheme.</p>	No.	No.	Yes.	No.

Watford Parish Council					
Weedon Bec Parish Council	Good idea - but is it measurable to determine its success?	Yes, the continued call on PC's to attend various "representative meetings". You must recognise that many Councillors are in full time employment and cannot attend in day time hours.	Yes, Environmental Health Issues.	Only if comments are considered, including in the document and sent back around to Parish Councils prior to being signed.	[See letter in file with detailed comments] Overlapping parish councillors with additional commitments and making recruitment of new councillors difficult due to restraints on their free time.
Weekley Parish Council				Certainly not before having seen the final document.	Section 2.3 - Usually new parishes are formed because residents feel a desire or need to express their sense of togetherness for the common good. Lumping together sections of towns does not seem at all the same thing. And then the cost in time, money and human resource! Section 3.3. - Although everyone has an opinion on this, it cannot merit a whole section of its own, surely. Better to have a wider remit of which dog fouling would form a part, e.g. Develop a county-wide approach to care for open spaces and the environment (this would also include dealing with fly-tipping, litter, vandalism and other antisocial problems).
Weldon Parish Council	The concept is fine but it is important that the Charter is not treated by Borough and District Councils in a tokenistic way.		It is important to use the opportunity to strengthen the ability for Parish Councils to comment meaningfully – and be listened to - on planning issues, whether within or around their villages and communities. It is difficult knowing where lines should be drawn but occasionally more detail might be appropriate e.g. references to embodied energy when addressing sustainability issues.	Yes.	
Welford Parish Council					
Welton Parish Council					
West Haddon Parish Council					

Weston & Weedon Lois Parish Council					
Weston by Welland Parish Council					
Whilton Parish Council					
Whitfield Parish Meeting					
Whittlebury Parish Council					Whittlebury Parish Council is broadly in favour with the concept of Parish Partnerships and the Councils' Charter but considers that it would be of limited value to a small parish.
Wicken Parish Council					
Wilbarston Parish Council					
Wilby Parish Council					
Winwick Parish Meeting					
Wollaston Parish Council	If the charter encourages councils to communicate better this will benefit all parties. If we are all working together towards a common goal then it will be much less frustrating than at present, certainly where the county council is involved.	The pc are concerned there may be extra financial obligations for them.	Over time extra things may come to light that will need incorporating.	In principal yes.	None at present.
Woodend Parish Meeting					
Woodford Parish Council					
Woodford-cum-Membris Parish Council					
Woodnewton Parish Council					
Wootton & East Hunsbury Parish					

Council					
Yardley Gobion Parish Council					
Yardley Hastings Parish Council	Improving communications between parties to tackle problems with a strong desire to implement solutions.	No.	Community policing is included but would like to see action regarding "anti social behaviour"	Yes.	Some members of our council believe it has all been tried before without too much success.
Yarwell Parish Council					
Yelvertoft Parish Council	Recognising that there are common problems, working together	Seems that we will have a lot more cost and this is already what our parishioners pay taxes for.	No.	Yes.	3) Establish area based Operational Services Review Programme - The problem with this would be that Highways own the path/road etc so only they can carry out the works. They have always refused in the past e.g. moving of the speed signs, reinstating the cobbles etc. 4) Produce & publish Local Planning Charters (LPCs): We believe this is what the VDS does and we need to get those adhered to 5) Develop a Parish Planning Champion Scheme (PPCS) Problem - We have limited knowledge of the planning process No! 6) Develop a plan for parishing of currently non parished areas - N/A to Yelvertoft

Appendix 4 – Principal Council Responses

The Principal Council responses are included in their public committee papers, which are available online and so not repeated in full here. If any of the links below cease to operate copies of the responses are available from info@northantscalc.gov.uk.

Principal Council	Date of Meeting	Deciding Body/Committee	Web Address
Northamptonshire County Council	13 April 2010	Customers & Communities Scrutiny Committee (17 March), Cabinet (13 April)	http://tinyurl.com/3xvhjmk
Corby Borough Council	11 May 2010	One Corby Policy Committee	http://tinyurl.com/38pr8ub
Daventry District Council	11 March 2010	Strategy Group	http://tinyurl.com/34ls72f
East Northamptonshire Council	15 March 2010	Policy and Resources Committee	http://tinyurl.com/347lhry
Kettering Borough Council	16 March 2010	Research and Development Committee	http://tinyurl.com/35ovyit
Northampton Borough Council	12 April 2010	Council (April)	http://tinyurl.com/36329be
South Northamptonshire Council	2 March 2010	Social and Community Review and Development Committee	http://tinyurl.com/38h6zaz
Wellingborough Borough Council	15 March 2010	Communities Committee	http://tinyurl.com/34w7rcr

Appendix 5 – List of Councils Responding

Principal Councils

Northamptonshire County Council
Corby Borough Council
Daventry District Council
East Northamptonshire Council
Kettering Borough Council
Northampton Borough Council
South Northamptonshire Council
Wellingborough Borough Council

Local Councils – Substantive Response

Aynho Parish Council
Billing Parish Council
Blakesley Parish Council
Boughton Parish Council
Brackley Town Council
Brixworth Parish Council
Broughton Parish Council
Bugbrooke Parish Council
Burton Latimer Town Council
Catesby Parish Meeting
Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council
Cosgrove Parish Council
Cottingham Parish Council
Cranford Parish Council
Crick Parish Council
Daventry Town Council
Deanshanger Parish Council
Dingley Parish Council
Duddington-with-Fineshade Parish Council
Duston Parish Council
Earls Barton Parish Council
East Haddon Parish Council
Everdon Parish Council
Flore Parish Council
Greens Norton Parish Council
Grendon Parish Council
Harrington Parish Council
Hartwell Parish Council
Helmdon Parish Council
Hinton-in-the Hedges Parish Meeting
Holcot Parish Council
Hollowell & Teeton Parish Council
Irchester Parish Council
Islip Parish Council
Little Harrowden Parish Council
Little Houghton Parish Council
Marston St Lawrence Parish Council
Mears Ashby Parish Council

Middleton Parish Council
Moulton Parish Council
Old Stratford Parish Council
Paulerspury Parish Council
Raunds Town Council
Roade Parish Council
Rushton Parish Council
Scaldwell Parish Council
Shutlanger Parish Council
Stanwick Parish Council
Stoke Albany Parish Council
Stowe IX Churches Parish Council
Syresham Parish Council
Sywell Parish Council
Thornby Parish Meeting
Thrapston Town Council
Towcester Town Council
Walgrave Parish Council
Warkton Parish Council
Warmington Parish Council
Weedon Bec Parish Council
Weekley Parish Council
Weldon Parish Council
Whittlebury Parish Council
Wollaston Parish Council
Yardley Hastings Parish Council
Yelvertoft Parish Council

Local Councils – “No comment” Response

Byfield Parish Council
Charwelton Parish Meeting
Creaton Parish Council
Croughton Parish Council
Desborough Town Council
Hackleton Parish Council
Higham Ferrers Town Council
Irthlingborough Town Council
King's Cliffe Parish Council
King's Sutton Parish Council
Naseby Parish Council
Oundle Town Council
Quinton Parish Council
Wappenham Parish Council

Appendix 6 – Proposed Next Steps

Date	Action	Comments
Jan 2010 – April 2010	Consultation with Northamptonshire Councils.	
May 2010 – June 2010	Northamptonshire Councils and Northants CALC make final decision as to whether to sign the Charter on 16 June 2010.	
16 June 2010	Local Councils Conference at Towcester Racecourse – incorporating signing ceremony.	
June 2010 – September 2010	Principal Councils initiate development of Charter Implementation Plan.	Lead officer to be identified at each Council. Northants CALC to assist with CIP development where required.
June 2010 – July 2010	Action Plans drawn up for each of the nine workstreams, including stakeholder analysis.	
July 2010 – March 2011	Development of CIPs.	Aim to have them in place by end of March 2011.
July 2010 – March 2011	Workstream action plans finalised and workstreams initiated.	
December 2010 – March 2011	Working with Northamptonshire Councils, Northants CALC to produce first Charter Annual Report that draws out experiences, lessons learnt and examples of good or developing practice.	As part of the monitoring and review process.
March 2011 – March 2013	Full implementation of CIPs and workstream action plans.	

Appendices

[Insert number]



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No.

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Housing Strategy 2010 - 2015
---------------------	-------------------------------------

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 th June 2010
Key Decision:	Yes
Listed on Forward Plan:	Yes
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	Yes
Directorate:	Housing
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Sally Beardsworth
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

1.1 This report summarises the main priorities of the Housing Strategy 2010-2015.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To approve the Housing Strategy 2010-2015

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1 The 2006-2011 Housing Strategy focussed on the Council's role as the largest landlord in the Borough and did not give sufficient consideration to the private sector. The Council's landlord function and investment plans are now covered in a separate document, the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010 - 2015.

- 3.1.2 The Housing strategy recognises the wider strategic role that Northampton Borough Council has in place shaping, and the co-ordination role to facilitate the delivery of future housing growth and the maintenance of existing dwellings.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) want to see authorities working in partnership to inform the 'Single Conversation', and this strategy will help provide the evidence and priorities for Housing in Northampton. This will help shape the West Northamptonshire Local Investment Agreement and Local Investment Plan with the HCA by March 2011.
- 3.2.2 As part of the wider strategic vision for housing in Northampton, this Housing Strategy will encapsulate the key housing issues from the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, and also the Council's Central Area Action Plan. This document will provide the detailed actions to help deliver the growth identified in the Joint Core Strategy, in addition to the Affordable Housing and regeneration that is required to transform the town centre area of Northampton.
- 3.2.3 With a new change of Government, there are possibilities that National housing priorities may change, and this could affect the current priorities set in the Housing Strategy. Until any new announcements, the existing priorities will continue to be progressed. The Housing Strategy Steering Panel will monitor the strategy and part of the terms of reference is to update the Housing Strategy on an annual basis following any changes by Government nationally.

3.3 Priorities

- 3.3.1 The priorities for the Housing Strategy 2010-2015 are as follows:
- Managing supply and growth for the future of Northampton;
 - Create resilient and cohesive communities;
 - Deliver well-designed, high quality homes, neighbourhoods and services; and
 - Improve customer access, opportunity and choice

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 This strategy pulls together all the main strategies within the Housing Directorate, and assists in understanding the links between the National, Regional and Sub-regional issues. From a housing perspective the key documents it relates to are the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010-2015 and the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013.

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 All of the key objectives within the Housing Strategy have financial budgets in place to deliver them or have external funding to support them. Certain key objectives will be delivered with existing staffing budgets.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 There are no legal issues arising from the development of the Housing Strategy

4.4 Equality

4.4.1 A Full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and the actions are contained within the Housing Strategy Action Plan.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 As part of the development of this strategy and the consultation process, the following have been engaged:

- Portfolio Holder for Housing (Copy of Draft Strategy)
- Director of Housing (Copy of Draft Strategy)
- Director of Planning & Regeneration (Copy of Draft Strategy)
- Director of Finance (Copy of Draft Strategy)
- Borough Solicitor (Copy of Draft Strategy)
- Managers (Visioning Days at Managers Session in March 2009)
- Members of the public (Housing Strategy Launch Event, 12-week consultation period)
- External Stakeholders (E-mailed a copy of the Draft Strategy, but also used the workshop events before the 12-week consultation period started)

4.5.2 In Appendix 4 of the Housing Strategy, there is a detailed section on the consultation process, with a table of the comments received as part of the entire consultation period.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 Priority 2 – Housing Health and Wellbeing
Priority 4 – Partnerships and Community Engagement

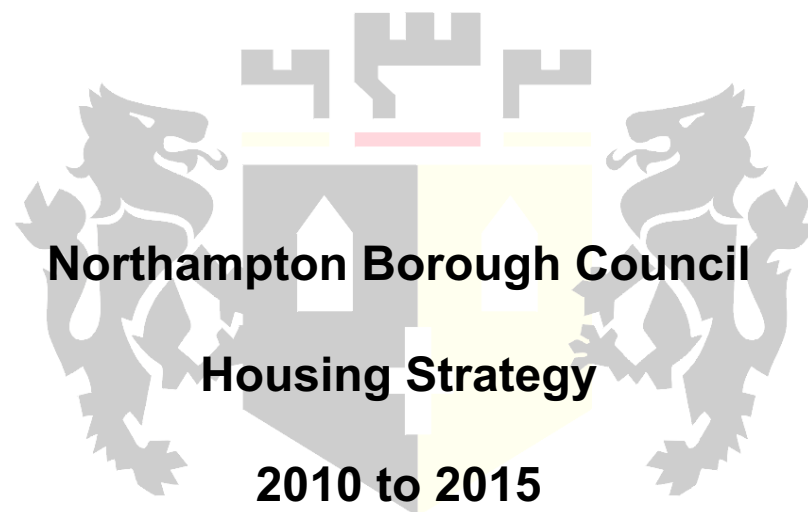
4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 None

5. Background Papers

5.1 Northampton Borough Council Housing Strategy 2010-2015

Gary Parsons, Housing Strategy Manager, x7970



NORTHAMPTON
B O R O U G H C O U N C I L



NORTHAMPTON
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CHINESE

這資訊可用其它語言和格式，根據需要與我們聯繫

GUJARATI

આ માહિતી બીજી ભાષાઓ અને રૂપમાં નીચે આપેલા ફોન નંબર પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરીને વિનંતી કરવાથી મેળવી શકાય છે

BENGALI

এই তথ্য অন্যান্য ভাষায় এবং পদ্ধতিতে আমাদের সাথে নীচের ফোন নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করে অনুরোধ করে পাওয়া যেতে পারে

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Foreword

Welcome to our new Housing Strategy, which sets out the Council's plans for housing in Northampton over the next five years. This strategy recognises the wider strategic role that Northampton has in place shaping, and the co-ordination role to facilitate the delivery of future growth and the maintenance of existing dwellings.

During the last 18 months, the Council has developed a new strategic approach to housing issues. This has included a significant restructure to create one Housing Directorate; development of a Housing Asset Management Strategy, the first one of its kind in Northampton; attracting PFI credits of £100m to enable a transformational change in Northampton East; success in bidding for HCA challenge fund resources to build Council homes again; and continued high performance levels on reducing homelessness and improving housing options. This includes having one of the first and most successful mortgage rescue schemes in place in the Country.

This approach should allow and attract additional investment, both public and private to help deliver the priorities of this Housing Strategy.

As part of the wider strategic vision for housing in Northampton, this Housing Strategy will encapsulate the key housing issues from the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, and also the Council's Central Area Action Plan. This document will provide the detailed actions to help deliver the growth identified in the Joint Core Strategy, as well as the Affordable Housing and the regeneration that is required to transform the town centre area of Northampton.

Moving forward, there is clearly a lot to be done and with the help of a range of private and public sector partners, we have identified four priorities, which are:

- Managing supply and growth for the future of Northampton;
- Creating resilient and cohesive communities;
- Delivering well-designed, high quality homes, neighbourhoods and services; and
- Improving customer access, opportunity and choice

Foreword

By 2015 we will have continued to improve our properties to meet the Decent Homes Standard. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) will be underway to transform Northampton East, the Central Area Action Plan will have commenced delivery, and fundamental changes to the town centre will be evident. We will also have assisted more people to access housing, enabled the delivery of much needed affordable family accommodation to meet the needs and the identified growth required by the Regional Spatial Strategy, and continued to reduce homelessness numbers and use of temporary accommodation. We will also have made inroads to improving the Energy Efficiency of our own Council Accommodation and private rented and owner occupier accommodation.

We hope that you find this document informative and easy to understand. We welcome any comments or suggestions from our communities and stakeholders about any improvements we can make.



Cllr Sally Beardsworth
Portfolio Holder for Housing
Northampton Borough Council

Chapter 1 – Setting the scene – Local, Regional & National Strategies

Summary of Chapter 1

This section of the strategy explains why we are reviewing our strategy, and how it links into the Council's local development documents and corporate plans. This section will also discuss the links with National, Regional and Sub-regional policy and the level of partnership working we have. It will continue by illustrating the priorities of this housing strategy.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Housing Strategy has been produced from a culmination of research, including stock condition data, housing need data and consultation on what the priorities for housing should be within Northampton. National, Regional and Sub-regional plans have been considered as part of informing the Housing Strategy priorities, and through the consultation process, public and private sector partners have helped shape the objectives that meet our priorities.



For further information on the priority and objective setting process, please refer to Appendix 4, p100

1.1.1 Why does Northampton need an updated Housing Strategy and what is wrong with the 2006-2011 Strategy?

The 2006-2011 Housing Strategy focussed on the Council's role as the largest landlord in the Borough and did not give sufficient consideration to the problems of the private sector. The Council's landlord function and investment plans are now covered in a separate document, the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010 - 2015.

This strategy recognises the wider strategic role that Northampton Borough Council has in place shaping, and the co-ordination role to facilitate the delivery of future growth and the maintenance of existing dwellings.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) want to see authorities working in partnership to inform the 'Single Conversation', and this strategy will help provide the evidence and priorities for Housing in Northampton that will help shape the West Northamptonshire Local Investment Agreement and Local Investment Plan with the HCA by March 2011.

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1.1.2 When will the Housing Strategy start and finish and when will it be reviewed?

This strategy will cover the next 5-year period for Northampton from 2010-2015. The strategy will be reviewed each year to monitor the progress of the action plan, and to add any new actions, arising from legislation or policy development, Nationally, Regionally and Sub-regionally.

Chapter 6 '*Monitoring & Review*', p80 offers more detail to the strategy review timetable.

1.1.3 How easy is it for me to access information I want from this document

This strategy has been designed to be reader friendly. There is a separate easy read document that summarises the whole strategy. At the beginning of the document, there is a comprehensive contents page that clearly shows the reader where to find tables, charts, figures and maps that have been referred to in the document.

Throughout the document, abbreviations have been used. A full explanation of these words can be found in *appendix 3 'Glossary of Terms'*. The electronic version of this strategy and the downloadable version will have hyperlinks (direct connections once clicked on) that will take the reader to other information within the strategy, such as specific chapters of interest.

Throughout the strategy document you will see the following symbol;



This symbol is to direct the reader to additional information or provide details of the relevant team to contact at Northampton Borough Council.

1.1.4 Progress to Date

Since the previous Housing Strategy 2006-2011 was published; significant progress has been made towards delivering the actions within the action plan. Out of 54 actions, 40 have been delivered, with the remaining targets to be carried forward to this Housing Strategy for delivery as part of *Appendix 1, p81*.

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Assessment Period	Completed Actions	Actions still to be achieved and Carry Forward	Actions not completed or not relevant	Total
September 2009	40	11	3	54

Table 1.1 – Housing Strategy Action Plan Progress 2006-2011

In terms of progress, the actions below under each of the old Housing Strategy priority headings, lists the key achievements;

Increase the supply of Affordable Housing

- Utilised Section 106 funding and use of own land for development of 8 council owned dwellings
- Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 required on all affordable housing
- Achieved 35% affordable housing on most new developments

Create Sustainable Communities

- Draft Central Area Action Plan developed

- RSL Partnership Agreement established in 2007
- Introduced Neighbourhood Walkabouts

Improve the Housing Service

- Housing Options Service launched
- Housing Service Improvement Plan 2008-2010 developed

Provide support to the most vulnerable people

- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) completed in 2008
- Reduced use of Temporary Accommodation from 195 households to less than 10

Meet the Decent Homes Standard

- Developed a Draft Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010 – 2015

For a detailed analysis of what actions were delivered in the previous strategy, *please see Appendix 2, p89*

Chapter 1 – Setting the scene – Local, Regional & National Strategies

1.2 CORPORATE CONTEXT

1.2.1 Northampton in Context

Northampton Borough Council is one of seven Borough and District Council's in Northamptonshire, in the southern East Midlands area. Although the town of Northampton sits in the East Midlands Region, it is also part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth area and has an important role to play in developing and delivering the West Northamptonshire Local Development Framework in partnership with West Northants Development Corporation and the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit.

Northampton is primarily an urban housing market area with small areas on the fringes of the town that still maintain a more rural feel, although still come within the town boundary, such as Hardingstone in the south and Moulton Leys in the North.

The Borough is part of the “Milton Keynes – South Midlands Growth Area”, and as such there are expected to be 40,375¹ new homes constructed between 2001 and 2026 the majority

of which are to be constructed within the Northampton Implementation Area (NIA). The majority of new homes required will be provided on the sustainable urban extensions (SUE's).

Northampton Borough Council is the largest district in Northamptonshire with a population of approximately 205,200² living in 90,850 dwellings³. The population is expected to grow by more than 100,000 people up to 2026.

Within this total number of dwellings, 12,270 are managed and owned by the Council, with a further 700 leasehold flats. This represents just under 14% of the total dwelling stock in the Borough. The largest form of tenure within Northampton is attributed to Owner Occupiers at 71% of the total stock. Private rented forms 8% of the stock, with the remaining percentages shared between Shared Ownership (1%), other Social rented (4%) and living rent free (2%).



For further information on population figures and breakdown of tenure, please refer to Chapter 2 or contact the Housing Strategy team on 01604837146

¹ East Midlands Regional Plan March 2009

² Office of National Statistics (ONS)

³ The Valuation Authority Office. 29th March 2009

Chapter 1 – Setting the scene – Local, Regional & National Strategies

1.2.2 Corporate Plan

The corporate plan sets out Northampton Borough Council's ambition and priorities for 2009-2012 and the partnership vision for Northampton to 2031. The Council's ambition is *'To be one of the best councils in terms of service delivery by 2013'*

The five corporate priorities are:

- Safer, greener and cleaner communities;
- Housing, Health and wellbeing;
- A Confident, Ambitious and Successful Northampton;
- Partnerships and community engagement; and
- A well managed organisation that puts customers at the heart of what we do

The Housing Strategy will aim to have an impact on all of these corporate priorities, however the most impact will be related to the Housing, Health and wellbeing priority.

1.2.3 Sustainable Community Strategy

The Northampton Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the vision and aims for the communities of Northampton up to 2031. The vision is to *'become a City by 2021 and by 2031 be a major regional cultural and economic centre'*. In order to achieve this, the strategy has four clear themes:

- Living and Thriving;
- Fit and Healthy;
- Safe and Secure; and
- Children and Young People

The Housing Strategy will particularly impact on the Living and Thriving theme.

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1.2.4 Northampton Economic Regeneration Strategy 2007-2026

This strategy sets out that by 2021, Northampton will be a European City of Vitality known for its distinct quality of life, history, culture and green living, enjoyed by all. The strategy aspires to:

- Create the right environment to attract diverse and entrepreneurial business to invest in Northampton;
- Provide a focused framework to help secure public sector investment;
- Promote a diverse and adaptable skilled workforce, stimulate ambition, and ensure that these people are retained in the Northampton economy;
- Develop Northampton's infrastructure including retail and leisure facilities to aspire to quality that aids the attractiveness of Northampton with amenities second to none;
- Enhance and promote the creative facilities, the unique historic character and niche retail offer in Northampton; and

- Promote strong partnership working across all sectors for genuine commitment to the sustainable development of Northampton.

1.2.5 Corporate Asset Management Strategy

This strategy covers the Council's land and property assets and endeavours to ensure that the corporate property base of the organisation is optimally structured in the best overall interest of the Council.

The purpose of this document is to provide a strategy basis for decision making regarding this Council's corporate land and property assets, to achieve the best and most cost effective utilisation of those Assets, whether through working alone or in active collaboration with other partners. This strategy does not relate to Housing Revenue Account (Council Housing) as this is covered in the Housing Asset Management Strategy, however the Housing Strategy team will work closely with colleagues in Corporate Asset Management to ensure there is a joined up approach to the three regeneration priority areas within this Housing Strategy through the Strategic Business Review of Land and Property Assets.

Chapter 1 – Setting the scene – Local, Regional & National Strategies

1.2.6 Central Area Action Plan

The Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) is the emerging strategy for the Town Centre of Northampton. Once adopted in May 2011, it will become a Development Plan Document (DPD) that sits within the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the Local Development Framework (LDF). The vision for the Town Centre is *'By 2026 Northampton City Centre will be firmly established as the economic and cultural hub for Northamptonshire. It will be the destination of*

choice for people within the County and beyond for living, employment and leisure. The City Centre will be using its strengths, in particular, its architectural heritage, its riverside, a distinctive retail offer and its cultural offer as a key to its success'. In supporting the strategy for the Town Centre, there are 8 important strategic objectives, which are;

- Sustainability;
- Regeneration;
- A well designed city centre;
- A destination of choice;
- A walkable city;
- Public Transport and cycling;
- Quality places; and to
- Repopulate the centre

The Housing Strategy has clear links with objective 7, which is *'Repopulate the centre'*. This objective is looking to increase the resident population through redevelopment of redundant industrial areas and the regeneration of Spring Boroughs. This will be further discussed in *Chapter 4, p61*

1.2.7 Supporting People Strategy

Supporting People funding is provided by Northamptonshire County Council, and the existing Supporting People Strategy is for the period 2005-2010. Within this time period, the following priorities were identified:

- Releasing value from 'Legacy Funding', services that existed at April 2003;
- Ensuring that services are focused on supporting and maintaining independence;

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- Ensuring that services offer housing related support; and
- Ensuring that services are effective

A review of this strategy is currently underway.

1.2.8 Housing Asset Management Strategy

This strategy is for the period 2010 – 2015. It is the first time in many years in which the Council has published such a document. The Council's objective is to provide good quality homes in neighbourhoods where people want to live. An examination of our investment needs has estimated that the Council has a shortfall of £72m⁴, for the total amount of investment required to bring all the Council's stock up to the Decent Homes Standard (DHS).

As part of identifying how Decent Homes can be achieved, there is a review of the options available to our tenants and the Council to secure the investment required. This strategy describes the Council's plans for spending the resources known to be available over

the next 5 years and the processes for review of investment needs at a local level.



For more detail on the resources available in the next 5 years, please refer to the Housing Asset Management Strategy.

1.2.9 Homelessness Strategy

The current Homelessness Strategy is for the period 2008-2013, and replaces the previous 2003 version. Following the Homeless Review and consideration of Government priorities, this strategy identified three themes:

- Prevention;
- Supply; and
- Support

The evidence from the review highlighted significant actions in order for Northampton to have a big impact on preventing homeless, which were:

⁴ Northampton BC Cabinet Paper 15th July 2009 'Future Housing Investment Options'

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- Provide services to decrease the number of cases of homelessness arising from 16 and 17 year olds;
- Concentrate resources to reduce the number of households losing their tenancies;
- Improve partnership working with the private sector to provide a wider range of housing solutions;
- Take steps to improve the level of customer service experienced by the service user; and
- Improve and strengthen partnership working between NBC and third parties.

1.2.10 Housing Strategy Priorities 2010-2015

As part of our consultation with public and private partners, the priorities in *Figure 1.5, p34* were felt to be the most important issues to tackle for housing in Northampton. The priorities also reflect national, regional and sub-regional priorities.

1.2.11 Bringing it all together

This Strategy together with the emerging West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy, will ensure that the appropriate level of private housing together with social rented and intermediate housing will be delivered in and on the edge of town, to coincide with the establishment of increased employment opportunities in the area. *Figures 1.2 and 1.3, p25 & p26* illustrate the strategic policy fit between our own policies in Northampton and the Sub-regional/regional policies.

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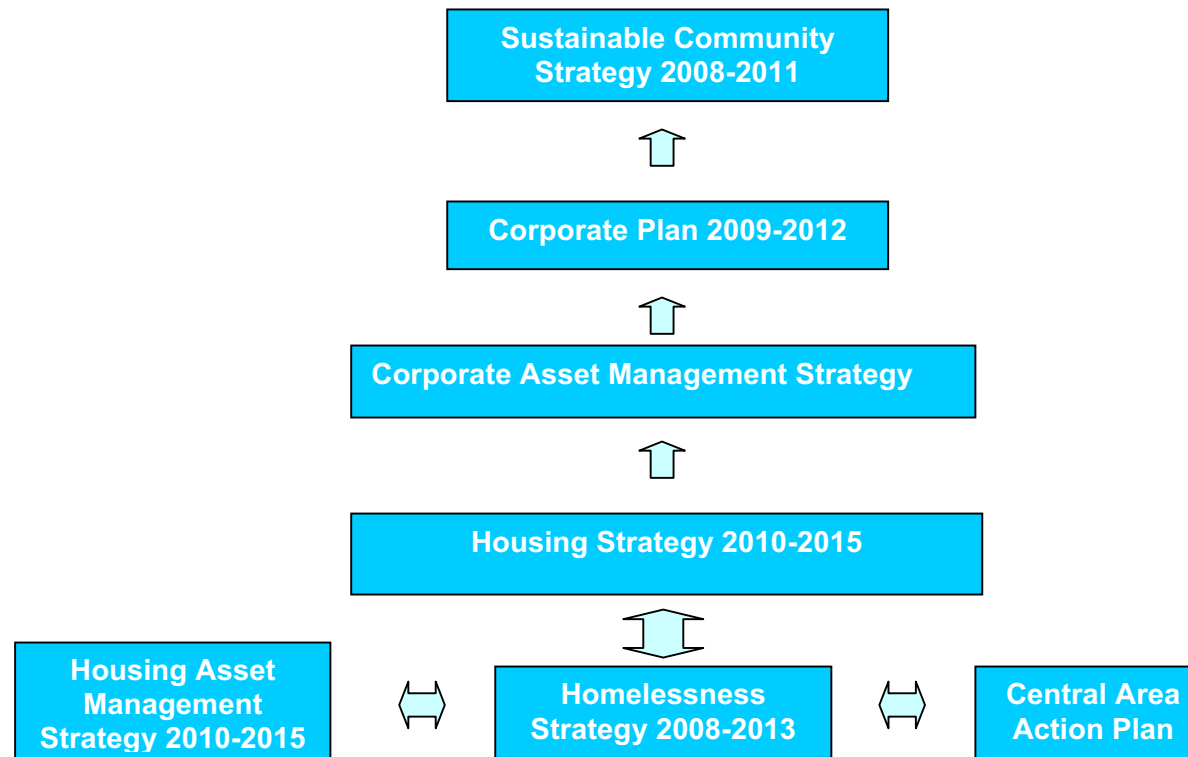


Figure 1.1 – Northampton Borough Council Corporate Policy links with the Housing Strategy

Chapter 1 – Setting the scene – Local, Regional & National Strategies

1.3 NATIONAL CONTEXT

Since the development of the previous Housing Strategy in 2006, national policy has changed significantly, with housing delivery and affordable housing high up on the Government's agenda. There has been a mixture of new legislation and policy. The most recent policy and consultation is discussed below.

1.3.1 Consultation & Funding Changes

Reform of Council Housing Finance Consultation

The Right Hon. John Healey MP, Minister for Housing and Planning, launched a consultation paper on the 21st July 2009, which sought the views of local authorities on dismantling the HRA Subsidy System, and allowing local authorities to finance their own businesses from their own rents and revenues in exchange for a one-off allocation of the National Housing Debt. At the time of developing this strategy, the consultation period had just closed on the Government's proposals to reform council housing finance.

The problem for Northampton Borough Council in responding to this consultation is that the implications of the favoured reform are unclear for all councils.

Scrapping the subsidy system and letting all housing authorities with retained council housing retain all their rent incomes, hinges on the amount of national housing debt allocated to each local housing authority. Whilst the Council favour the reforms in principle, at May 2010 we remain unclear whether the Government's proposals are affordable to Northampton in the long term.



For more information on the reform of council housing finance, please visit www.communities.gov.uk

Local authority New Build

In May 2009 the Homes and Communities Agency announced the 'Challenge Fund'. This was £250m nationally and was split into two bidding rounds. The fund was open to local authorities who had retained their housing stock and wanted to build housing again. In Round one, 49 local authorities were successful in sharing £125m of grant funding. Northampton was

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one of these authorities, successfully obtaining £451,913 of grant funding to build eight family homes on an old garage site at Woodside Way in Kings Heath. This is a real achievement for Northampton Borough Council and means that new Council homes will be built here again for the first time in 30 years.

1.3.2 Policies and Legislation

Green Paper

In July 2007, the Government published its Housing Green Paper – *‘Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable’*. This paper sets out proposals for tackling housing supply. The paper proposed a significant increase in new homes with an additional 3 million homes by 2020, which equates to 240,000 per year. Affordable housing features strongly within the paper with proposals to increase affordable homes by 70,000 per year up to 2010/11, of which 45,000 will be social rented units. The Green Paper also introduced a new housing and planning delivery grant to encourage Councils to identify land for housing development and increase supply in their areas and to set a requirement for all new homes to be carbon neutral by 2016. The links

between Strategic Housing and planning will be critical in Northampton to ensure sufficient land is available to deliver the increase in new homes as highlighted in the East Midlands Regional Plan.

Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

The Housing & Regeneration Act received royal assent on 22nd July 2008. It will help to deliver the commitments set out in the Housing Green Paper of July 2007 to provide more affordable, greener homes in mixed and sustainable communities.

The Act established the Homes and Communities Agency, which focuses on delivering more new and affordable homes across all tenures and will drive and invest in regeneration. It will support regeneration and provide decent places as well as decent homes, eg by grant funding social housing and investing in infrastructure. It implements the changes proposed in the Green Paper to give councils more freedoms and incentives to build new homes, and makes rating against the Code for Sustainable Homes mandatory for new homes. The Act establishes the Tenant

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Services Authority to help provide more regulation of the sector and accountability to tenants.

Tenant Services Authority (TSA)

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the new regulator for social housing, dedicated to raising the standard of housing services by putting tenants first.

Taking over the Housing Corporation's responsibility for regulating housing associations and social landlords, the TSA will set high standards of management across these areas and, later, local authority social homes.

Tenants are being given more choice and a voice over how their homes are managed, by reforming social housing regulation, giving tenants a stronger say in stock transfer decisions by making a tenant ballot mandatory.

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the Government's new single national housing and regeneration agency for England. It brings together the development and regeneration expertise of English Partnerships, investment functions of the Housing Corporation, and the Academy for Sustainable Communities, with major delivery programmes of Communities and Local Government.

Part of the HCA's role is to develop the 'Single Conversation' with local authorities at a Housing Market Area level. In Northampton, we have worked in partnership with Daventry and South Northamptonshire local authorities to successfully acquire funding from the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) to fund a Sub-Regional Housing Strategy post to develop a sub-regional Housing Strategy for West Northamptonshire. This piece of work will demonstrate what the priorities for housing are in West Northamptonshire and compliment the Joint Core Strategy work.

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Warmer Homes, Greener Homes: **A strategy for household Energy Management**

This document sets out the Government's strategy to help people make their homes more comfortable in cold weather, reduce energy use and save money, and make greater use of small scale renewable and low carbon sources of energy.

The strategy aims to deliver 29% carbon reduction in our homes by 2020. The Government are looking for Energy companies to make new partnerships with Local Authorities and start to deliver increased energy efficiency measures in all our homes.

This document also introduces the new Warm Homes Standard, which the social housing sector is expected to lead on retrofitting homes to improve their energy efficiency by 2020. All Social Housing tenants will be categorised as a 'priority group' and will be entitled to 100% subsidy for energy saving measures until at least 2015. Northampton Borough Council corporately already have a Carbon Reduction Programme Board that is looking at ways to reduce its carbon footprint corporately, however this Housing Strategy recognises the need for a co-ordinated

approach in Housing and will be looking at developing an Affordable Warmth Strategy that will address our approach to tackling Energy Efficiency and carbon reduction in all forms of housing tenure over the next three years.

National Strategy for Older People

In February 2008, the Government published its strategy for an ageing society – *'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods – A national strategy for housing in an ageing society'*. This strategy sets out how we can prepare for an ageing society through new provision and existing resources. By 2026 older people will account for almost half (48%) of the increase in the total number of households, resulting in 2.4 million older households than there are today.

The main issues for Northampton to consider will be the Lifetime Homes standard to incorporate into new build provision through the planning system and the increased funds and flexibility that the Disabled Facilities Grant system will provide. The funding for Disabled Facilities grants will increase by 31% by 2011 and will be £166 million nationally in 2010/11.

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Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

This planning policy statement was developed to underpin the key messages and respond to the 'Barker Review' of Housing Supply in 2004. It replaces the previous Planning Policy Guidance 3, which was published in March 2000.

The planning policy statement gives local planning authorities guidance on thresholds of affordable housing, and sets the national target at 15 or more homes on any particular site would trigger for negotiations on affordable housing.

The West Northamptonshire Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document takes into account this guidance from PPS 3 and requires developments in Northampton with schemes larger than 15 homes or 0.5ha in size to provide 35% affordable housing, consisting of 70% social rented and 30% intermediate tenure.

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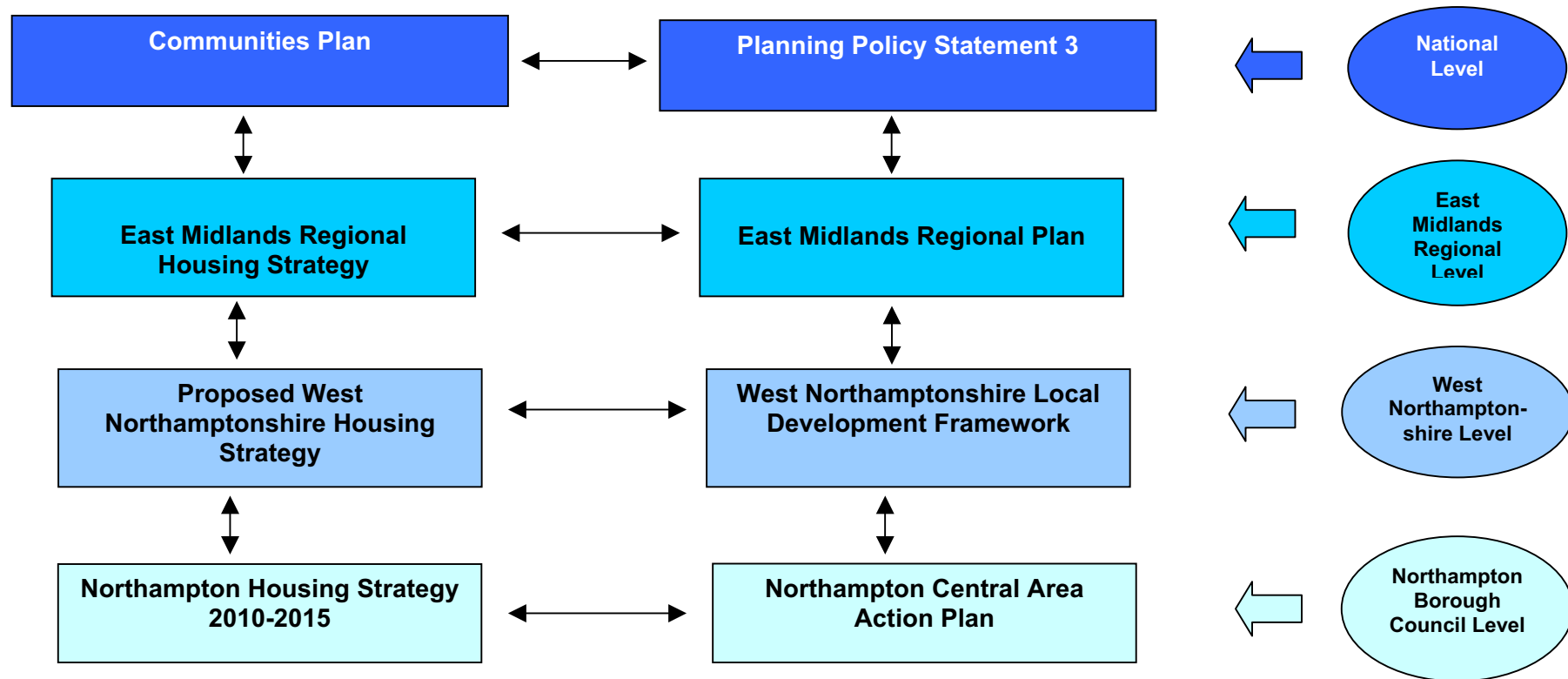


Figure 1.2 – National, Regional and Sub-regional Policy links with Northampton Borough Council Policies

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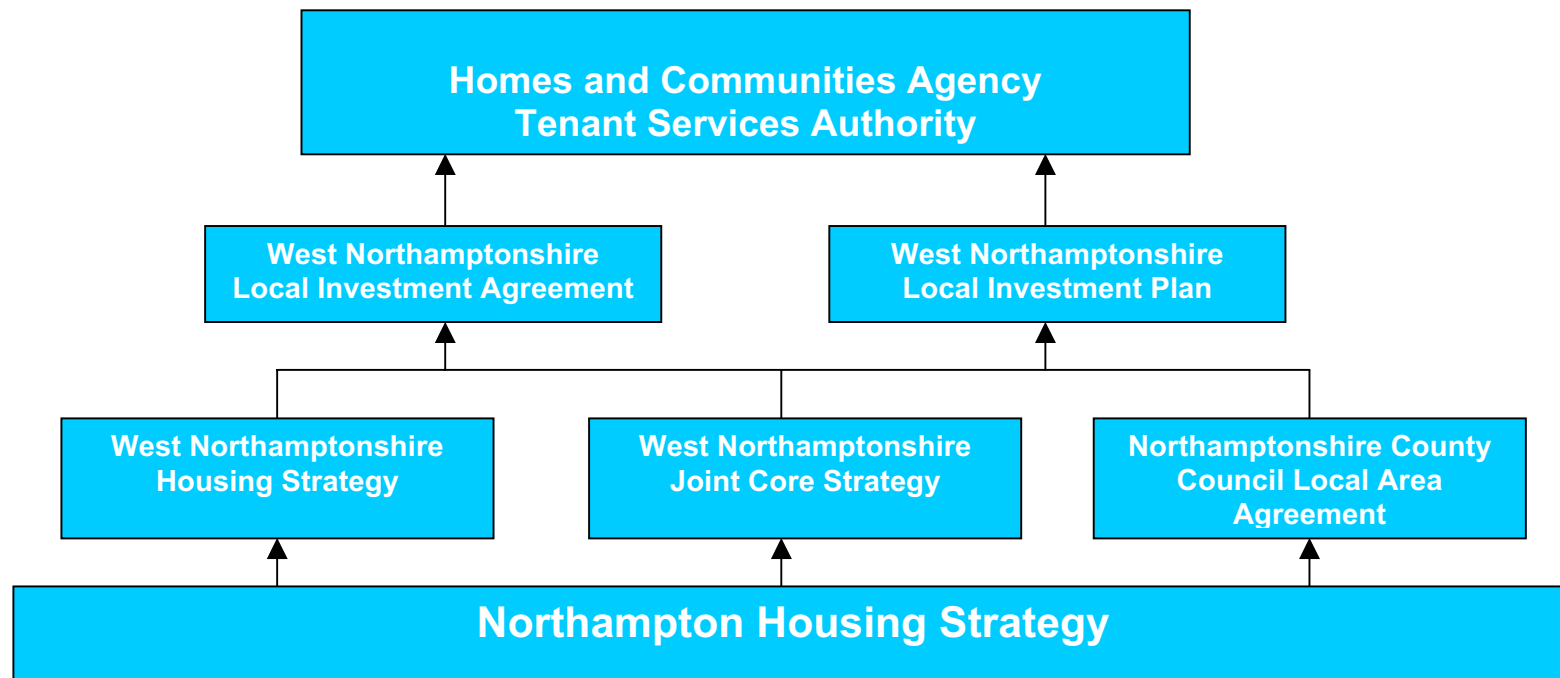


Figure 1.3 – Policy links between the HCA/TSA and the West Northamptonshire Policy Framework

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1.4 REGIONAL CONTEXT

1.4.1 East Midlands Housing Strategy

The East Midlands Regional Assembly updated their strategy in 2008, which replaced the 2004-2010 version. The 2008-2016 strategy has 6 key themes, which are supported by 8 objectives. The table below highlights the themes and objectives, and how the priorities of this Housing Strategy fit with them.

1.4.2 East Midlands Regional Plan

The East Midlands Regional Plan sets out the housing requirement for West Northamptonshire as a Housing Market for the period of 2001-2026. In total 62,125 dwellings are to be provided across the area, which will require a significant step change in past annual build rates. For the Northampton Implementation Area (NIA), which covers Northampton and parts of Daventry and South Northants (*see Chapter 4 under growth section*), a minimum of 43,375 dwellings are required up to 2026.

1.4.3 East Midlands Regional Economic Strategy

This strategy is now part of the Single Regional Strategy. 'A Flourishing Region' covers the period 2006-2020 and supports the ambitions of the major cities and towns – Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham and Northampton, aiming to help them tackle pockets of deprivation and achieve individual and collective success.

The strategy is underpinned by three main themes which are;

- Raising productivity;
- Ensuring sustainability; and
- Achieving equality

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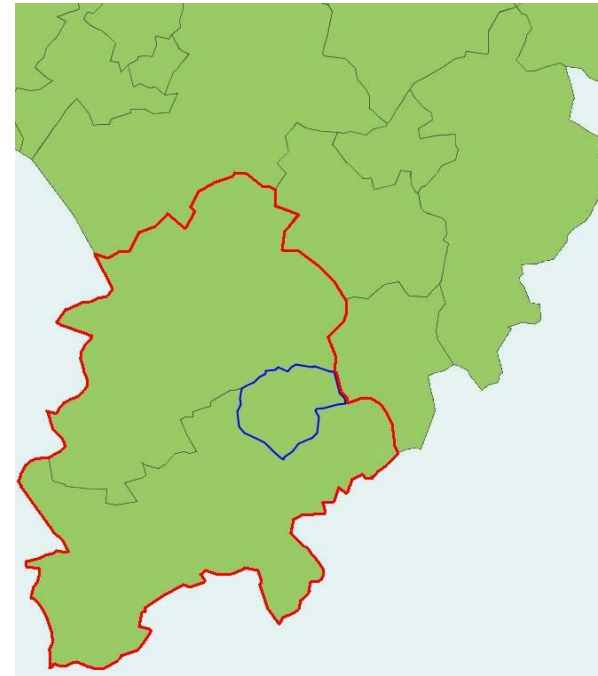
NBC Housing Strategy Priorities	East Midlands Housing Strategy Key Themes	Objectives
Manage Supply & Growth for the future of Northampton	Affordability & Access to Housing	Objective 1 – To ensure that regional housing and planning policy are informed by a robust understanding of need and housing market conditions in the region.
Improve Customer Access, Opportunity and Choice		Objective 2 – To ensure that everyone in the region is able to both access and afford suitable housing to meet their needs
Deliver well-designed, high quality homes, neighbourhoods & services	Design Quality & Sustainable Homes	Objective 3 – To improve the co-ordination of housing's contribution to economic development within the region
Create Resilient & Cohesive Communities	Sustainable & Cohesive Communities	Objective 4 – To contribute to raising the quality of design in housing, and the creation of sustainable homes
-	Rural Housing	Objective 5 – To develop a framework within which regional and local partners can develop sustainable and cohesive communities
-	Housing for Vulnerable People	
-	Planning for an ageing population	Objective 6 – To ensure that rural affordable housing need is correctly addressed through the regional affordable housing programme
		Objective 7 – To improve the co-ordination of provision which meets the housing needs of vulnerable people
		Objective 8 – To ensure the region provides a robust response to the housing implications of our ageing population

Table 1.2 – East Midlands Housing Strategy Priorities 2008-2016

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1.5 SUB-REGIONAL CONTEXT

Following a study in 2005 by DTZ Pida⁵, Northampton together with Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council were identified as a Housing Market Area. The Housing Market Area is known as West Northamptonshire, and the sub-regional policies and plans are now reflective of the geographic area.



Map 1.1 – West Northamptonshire Housing Market Boundary
Source: Hometrack

⁵ Identifying the Sub-regional Housing Markets of the East Midlands. DTZ Pida, 12th April 2005

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1.5.1 West Northants Joint Core Strategy

The Emergent Joint Core Strategy was published for consultation in the summer of 2009 and proposed a number of potential locations around Northampton for Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE's). These extensions would augment the supply of housing required to 2026 some of which had already been built, was already allocated, had planning permission or represented additional urban capacity. The West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit has revised the timescale for submission of the Joint Core Strategy and other elements of the LDF and is awaiting a response from the Government Office East Midland (GOEM) in this regard.

For the period up to 2026 land is identified within the Northampton Implementation Area (NIA), which will accommodate 19,288 dwellings through the sustainable urban extensions (see chapter 4, for locations). Three of the extensions have the capacity to accommodate an additional 15,000 dwellings between them, beyond 2026.

1.5.2 West Northants Affordable Housing SPD

An Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was published for consultation in April 2009. The programme for completion of this SPD is being reviewed so that it can take account of the new evidence provided by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The timetable for adoption of the SPD will reflect the programme for the Core Strategy. The table below illustrates the current affordable housing requirements from the 2004 Affordable Housing SPD, which requires affordable housing contributions on sites of 15 or more dwellings.

Area	Level of Affordable Housing	Social Rented Tenure	Intermediate Tenure
Northampton Implementation Area (NIA)	35%	70%	30%

Table 1.3 – Affordable Housing Requirements in Northampton
Source: West Northants Affordable Housing SPD 2004

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1.5.3 West Northants Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

The West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009 suggests that Northampton, including the Sustainable Urban Extensions to form the Northampton Implementation Area (NIA) needs to provide 8900 affordable homes between now and 2026. This equates to 33% affordable housing out of 31,000 homes required by 2026. This means that the annual supply of affordable homes will need to be 529 homes per year.

The SHMA also covers viability and suggests that in certain parts of Northampton, 40% affordable housing can be achieved and 25% in other areas. The Council will be continuing to use the existing policy of 35% affordable housing, but will be conducting viability assessments on a site-by-site basis.

If a developer proves that a site is not viable, through a viability assessment, then the Council will use a cascade mechanism through the Section 106 agreement to seek additionality from the Homes and Communities Agency and use Grant to change the tenure mix or improve the standard of the homes.

The SHMA completed in April 2010, and made a series of recommendations:

- Strive to achieve minimum targets for new build housing in order to widen the choice of housing available to household groups;
- Monitor delivery against mix of size targets and periodically adjust targets to take account of delivery and updated SHMA targets;
- Prioritise new social rented family housing to address backlog need and overcrowding;
- Provide incentives for tenants to downsize in order to release family housing;
- Adopt planning policies that encourage building of market housing particularly suited to the needs of elderly people and special needs groups;
- Work with RSLs and the HCA to produce a new model for intermediate rented housing; and
- Plan for a growing private rented sector

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1.6 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Northampton Borough Council requires that this strategy is inclusive and must gain the support and backing of our key partners and stakeholders. There are challenging times ahead. We will experience significant change in Northampton over the next 5 years if we want to achieve the vision and priorities of this Housing Strategy. It is therefore extremely important that we value our working relationships with our stakeholder partners and look to improve on this in the future.

Northampton Borough Council has partnership working arrangements at each level within local government, which includes local, sub-regional and regional working. *Figure 1.4, p33*, highlights the various groups that Northampton has with its many stakeholders and partners.

1.6.1 Moving Forward

National policy for sometime now has been advocating that local authorities work together on a variety of issues.

In 2008, the organisations of English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation merged together to form the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). This new organisation has developed what is referred to as the 'Single Conversation'. This means that the HCA want to have a formal relationship with local authorities at a Housing Market level. This level of working is often referred to as sub-regional partnerships. In section 1.5 of this chapter, we discussed the West Northamptonshire sub-regional working. Northampton Borough Council is classed as being within the West Northamptonshire Housing Market, which includes Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Borough Council.

The aim of the HCA is to have what is called a Local Investment Agreement (LIA) and a Local Investment Plan (LIP) in place by March 2011 with each Housing Market area within the Country. Northampton Borough Council along with its local authority partners in West Northamptonshire will be looking to create a sub-regional Housing Strategy by the end of 2010, to help inform the LIA and the LIP at the West Northamptonshire level. *Figure 1.5 p34* illustrates the relationship between West Northamptonshire and the HCA.

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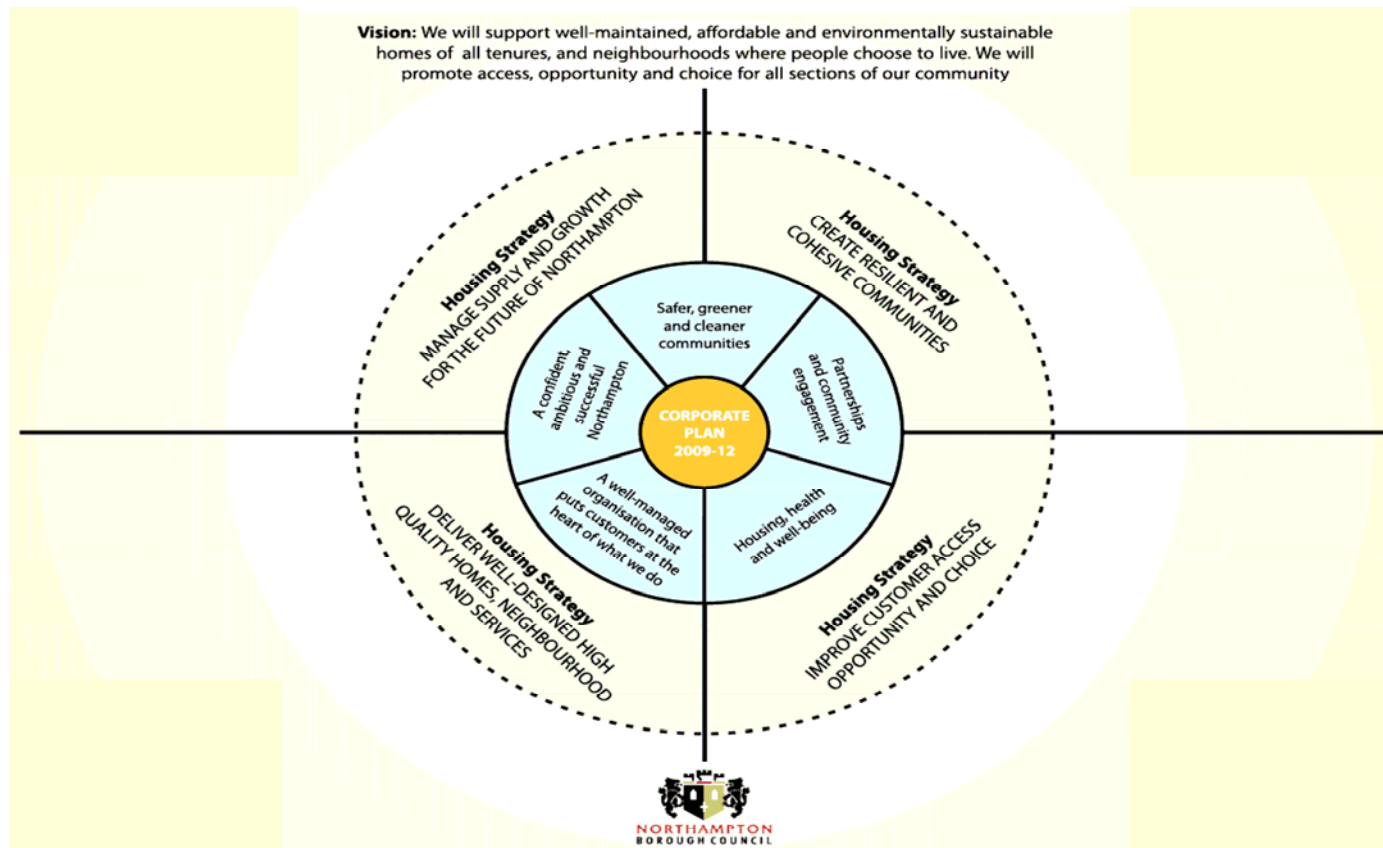


Figure 1.4 – Housing Strategy Priorities strategic fit with the Corporate Plan priorities

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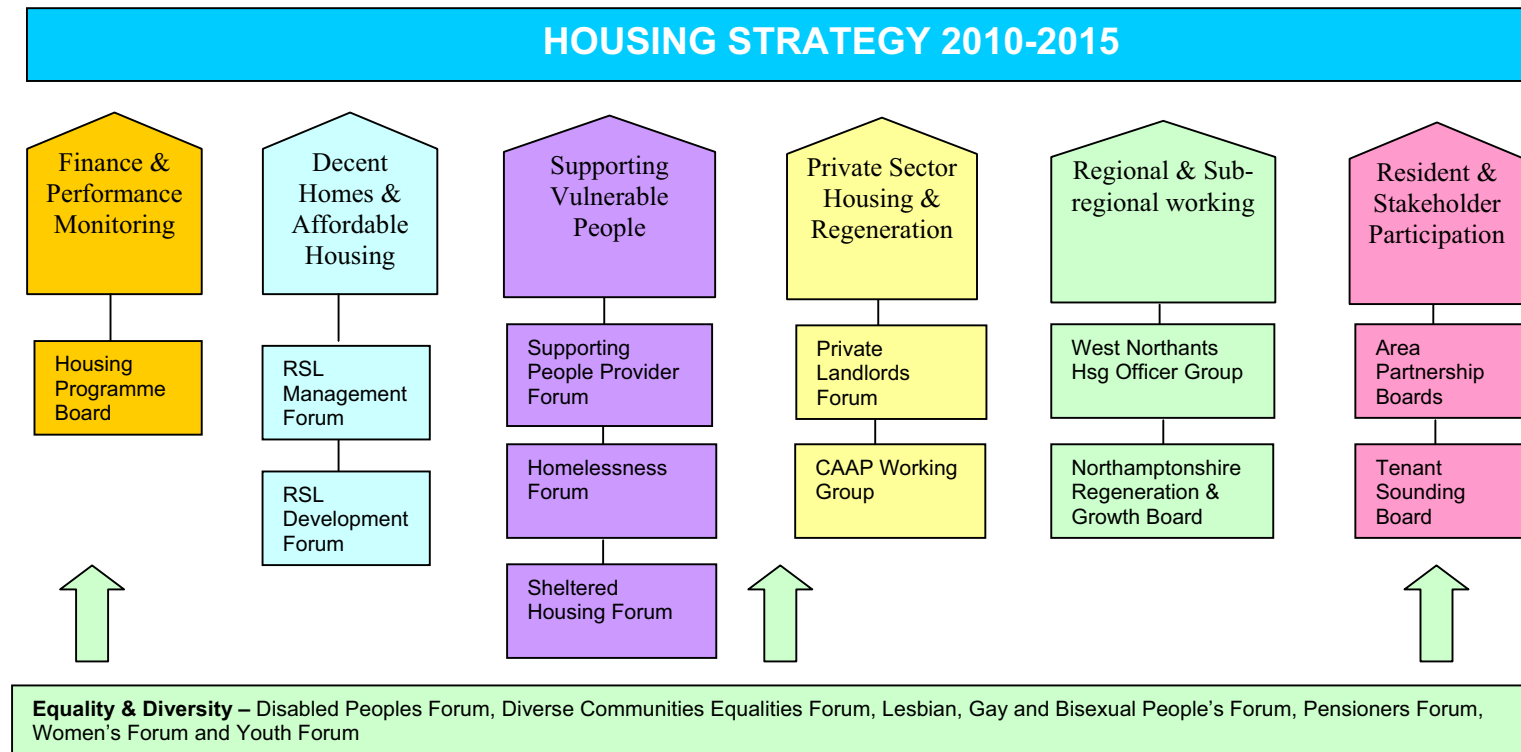


Figure 1.5 – Partnership Working Groups in Northampton

Chapter 2 – Understanding our Housing Market

Summary of Chapter 2

This section explains what the current issues are within Northampton's Housing Market. It looks at the demand for housing within Northampton, and what the supply of housing is like, to ensure housing need and demand is addressed.

2.1 THE CONTEXT

Northampton is in a period of significant change. The Borough is faced with an agenda to tackle housing growth as part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area, but it also faces a significant challenge with the stock it has in the private and public sector. Maintaining the existing stock is going to be as equally important, as identifying land for future growth of the town.

One of the aims of this Housing Strategy is to ensure that as part of the growth agenda, Northampton maintains a balanced housing market, which will help cater for all the people in Northampton regardless of their social or economic position.

2.2 NORTHAMPTON'S HOUSING MARKET IN DETAIL

2.2.1 Property Tenure

Compared to the national figures over the period 1991-2001, Northampton had a slightly higher percentage of owner-occupiers, with lower private rented and RSL stock. Within Northampton in the same period, private rented and RSL tenures have experienced increases of 1.7% and 1% respectively, whereas owner occupation decreased by 0.9% and rented from the council decreased by 4.8%.

Tenure	Northampton		England	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Owner Occupier (%)	71.1	70.2	67.6	69.9
Rented from Council (%)	21.9	17.1*	19.5	13.6
Private Rented (%)	5.2	6.9	9.7	10.3
RSL (%)	1.8	2.8	3.2	6.6
Total	100.0	100.0*	100.0	100.0

Table 2.1 – Tenure percentages for Northampton & England 1991-2001
Source: 1991 & 2001 Census

* Census figures for LA stock were 12354, however this was not accurate compared with RTB data, and therefore used HSSA 2001 figure of 14205. This means that the total changed from 80882 to 82673

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Table 2.2 below illustrates the current levels of tenure within Northampton.

Tenure	Northampton 2008	
	Number	Percentage
Owner Occupier	63,888	72.2
Rented from Council	12,334	13.9
Private Rented	6,812	7.6
RSL	3,205	3.7
Other	2,299	2.6
Total	88,538	100.0

Table 2.2 – Tenure figures & percentages for Northampton 2008
Source: Housing Strategy Statistical Appendices (HSSA) 2008

Compared to table 2.1 on p35, Northampton has witnessed an increase in owner occupation of 2%, with further reductions in Council tenancies of 3.2%. This means that since 1991, the authority has lost almost a fifth of its stock (3,080 dwellings) primarily as a result of the Right to Buy process. Private rented and RSL tenures have continued to increase, and it will be important that the authority continues to work with private landlords and RSL partners to ensure the housing needs of the Borough are tackled.



For more information on how we work with private landlords please contact the private sector housing team on 01604 837225. For further details on how we work with RSL partners contact the Housing Strategy team on 01606 837146.

2.2.2 Stock Type

Table 2.3 below highlights that terraced housing is significantly higher in Northampton at 34%, but other house types reflect the national breakdown.

House Type	% of Households living in House Types	
	Northampton	England
Detached	23	23
Semi Detached	29	32
Terraced	34	26
Flats	14	19

Table 2.3 – Northampton house type percentages compared to England
Source: Census 2001

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2.2.3 House prices & sales

The average house price in Northampton is currently £158,000⁶. This is compared to a regional average house price of £161,755. The average price of a new build house in Northampton is £350,000, compared to the regional average of £157,900. *Chart 2.1* opposite illustrates the average house price trends over the last 10 years. House prices increased rapidly from 2000 – 2007 in Northampton, when in December 2007 the height of the market was achieved with an average house price over £165,000. Since December 2007, prices have started to decline. However, as the graph shows, there has been a slight increase in prices over the last 6 months.

Despite the fact that house prices have fallen, affordability still remains an issue. This is primarily due to the current economic climate. Whilst prices have fallen, more people have become unemployed. This means the affordability gap in the short term has increased, and the numbers on the Council's housing register have also increased.

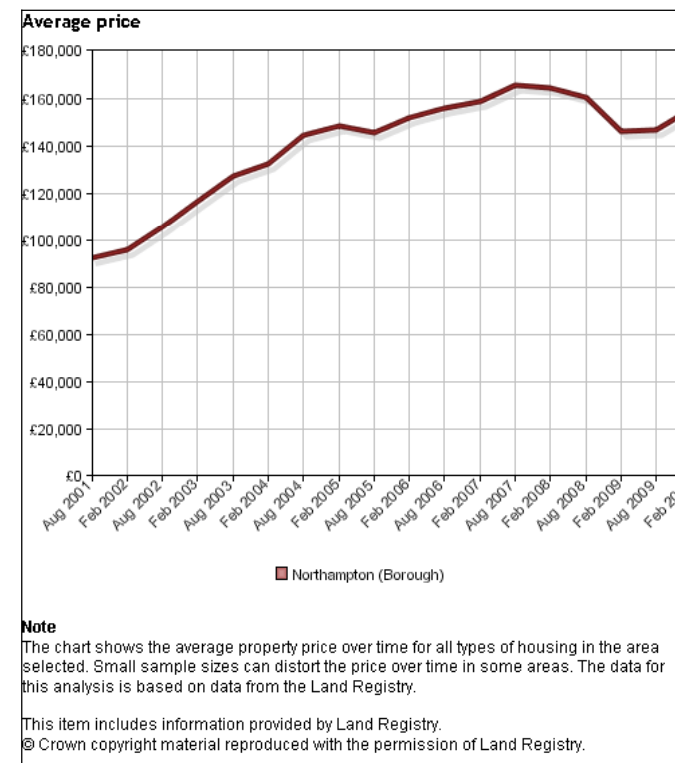
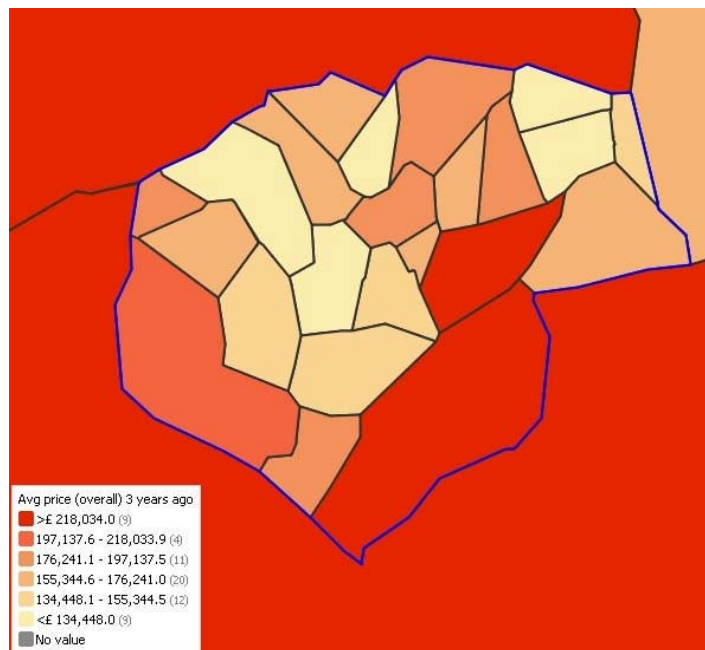


Chart 2.1 – Average House Prices in Northampton 2000-2010
Source: Hometrack

⁶ Land Registry 2010 House Prices

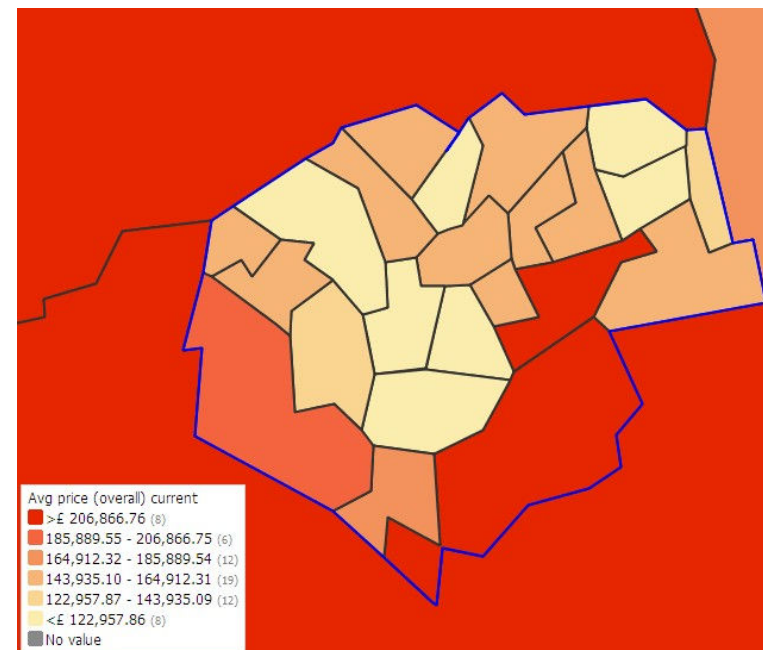
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Maps 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate the average house prices from 2006 compared to what they are now in 2010.



Map 2.1 – Average House Prices in Northampton 2006
Source: Hometrack

In 2006, Nene Valley and Weston wards displayed the highest average house prices in the Borough, in excess of £206,866.



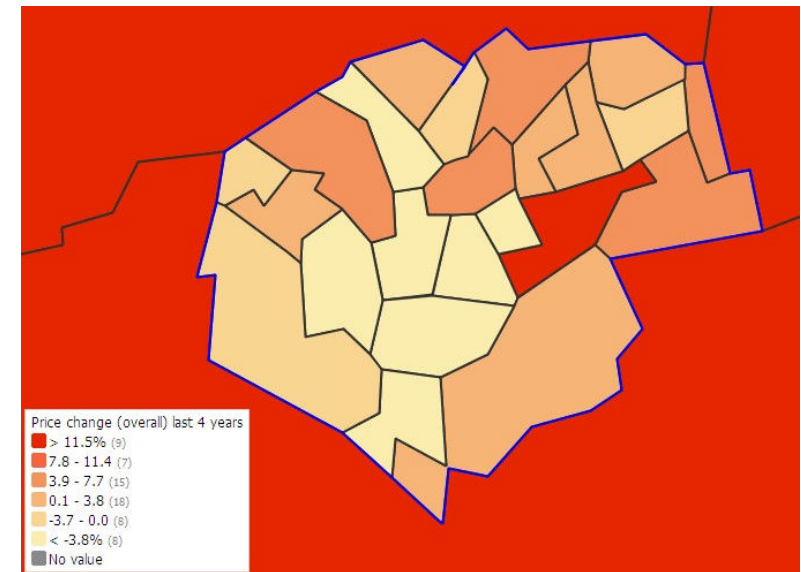
Map 2.2 – Average House Prices in Northampton 2010
Source: Hometrack

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Map 2.2 highlights that there has not been too much change in terms of the highest priced areas in Northampton, even though the ward boundaries have changed slightly in that time. Nene Valley and Weston wards remain the most expensive areas, but the average house price has fallen from in excess of £218,000 to in excess of £206,866. Over the four-year period this reflects a drop of £11,314, which is just over a 5% fall in these areas.

Other areas with noticeable drops in house prices have been the Parklands, Kingsley and Headlands ward areas. In 2006 these three areas commanded average house prices between £176,241 - £197,137. In 2010 the average house prices ranged from £143,935 - £164,912.

Map 2.3 highlights the percentage change in house prices from 2006-2010.



Map 2.3 – House Price Percentage Changes 2006-2010
Source: Hometrack

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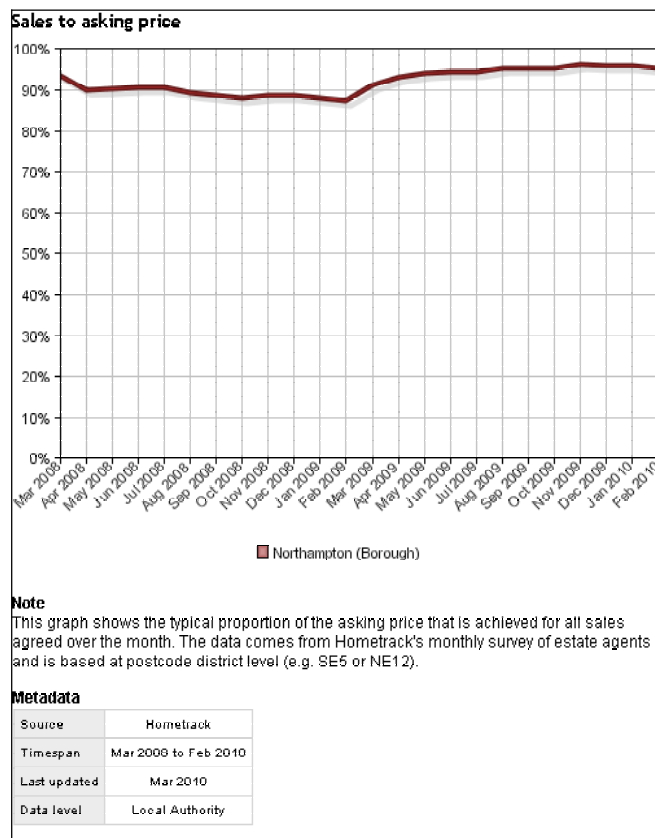


Chart 2.2 – Sales compared to asking price May 2008- Feb 2010
Source: Hometrack

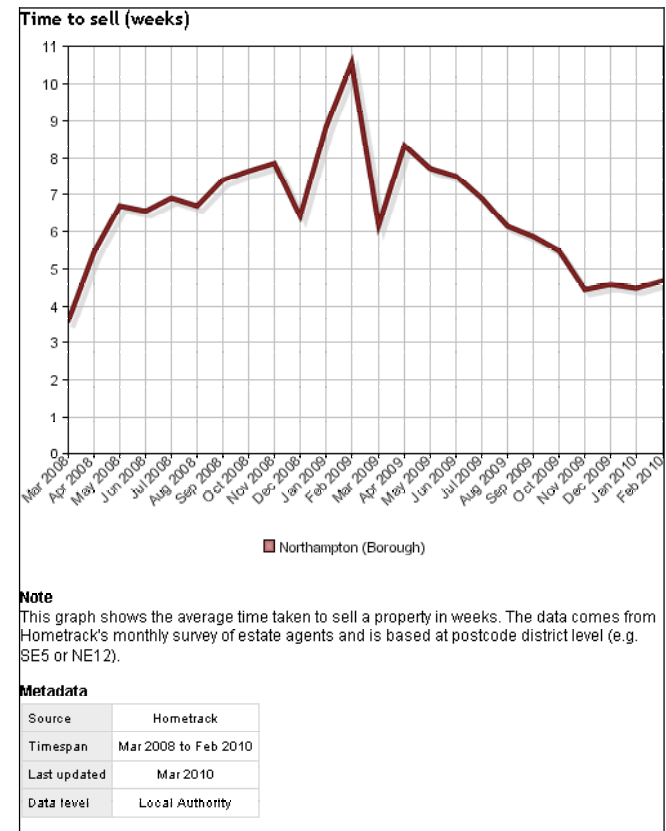


Chart 2.3 – Average time to sell dwellings May 2008-Feb 2010
Source: Hometrack

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Chart 2.2 and 2.3 above illustrate that there is some evidence that the market has started to pick up slightly in the last six months of 2009. A higher percentage of sellers are achieving their asking price and the time it is taking to sell properties is reducing.

The slow down in the development industry and the lower levels of new build dwellings being built, will clearly have an impact on house prices. With supply reducing and demand still high, prices are likely to remain constant or slightly increase. This will have an impact on affordability.

2.2.4 Stock Condition

Northampton Borough Council has a robust stock database, which is updated through major works programmes and annual 10% sample surveys of the stock. The process of annual sample surveying however, has led to the possibility that some survey information is getting out of date. As part of the Housing Asset Management Strategy, a new survey is being proposed, which updates information in relation to the Decent Homes Standard.

From the information from Major Works updates and annual sample surveying, it is calculated that

approximately 46.15% of the Councils housing stock failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard at the end of March 2009. The stock condition survey further identifies that this will rise to 62% by 2010. This position will improve with the Phase 1 of the Decent Homes programme due to be finished by June 2010.



For more detailed information on the Decent Homes Programme, you can contact the Asset Management Team on 01604 838316. For a breakdown of the Decent Homes Funding over the next 5 years, please refer to the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010-2015.

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2.2.5 Vacancy Levels

During the last 5 years, vacancy levels in Northampton have remained constant, but are still slightly higher than the national average of 3.3%. *Table 2.4* below highlights those dwellings vacant for more than six months account for just under half of all vacant dwellings in Northampton in 2009.

A key objective of this strategy as part of helping to improve existing stock and supply of more quality affordable housing will be to develop an empty homes strategy.

Year	Total Dwellings Vacant	Dwellings Vacant > 6 Months	% of vacant stock > 6 months	Total Dwelling Stock	% of total stock vacant
2005	3081	1294	42%	86210	4%
2006	2522	1117	44%	86959	3%
2007	2606	1013	39%	88472	3%
2008	3366	1272	38%	89826	4%
2009	3958	1821	46%	90850	4%

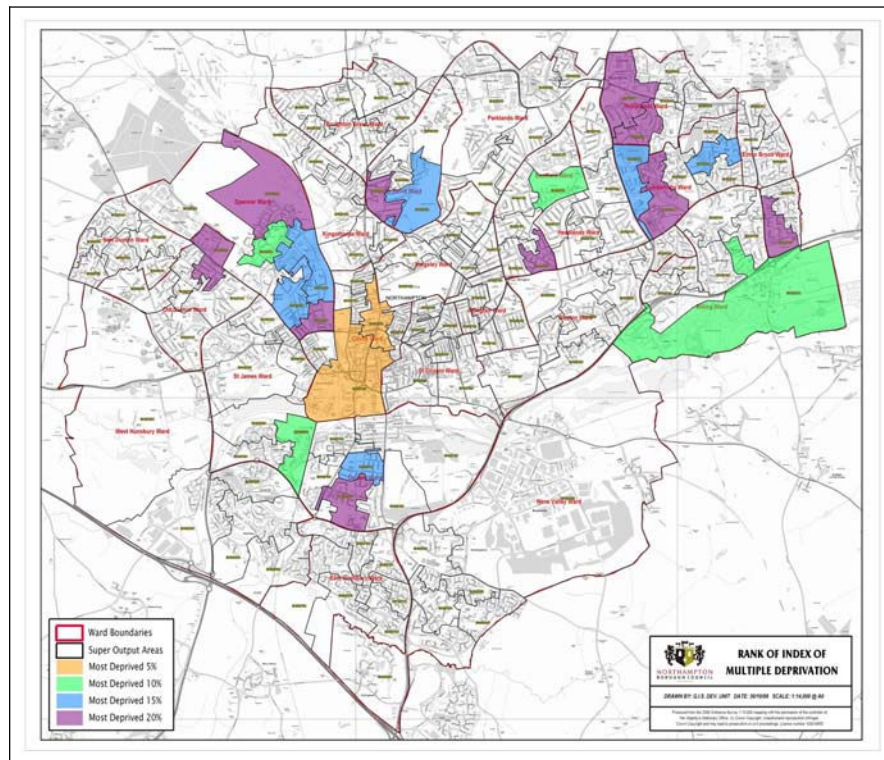
Table 2.4 – Vacancy levels in Northampton 2005-2009
Source: Housing Strategy Statistical Appendices 2005-2009

2.2.6 Deprivation

The index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 analyses information at a geographical layer called a Super Output Area (SOA). From the SOA's in Northampton, 24 are ranked as the 20% most deprived in the Country. This represents 18.6% of all Northampton's SOA areas.

Map 2.4 demonstrates that Northampton has 2 SOA's that fall within the 5% most deprived areas in the Country. Both these SOA's fall within the Castle Ward, which is part of the Central Area Action Plan area.

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Map 2.4 – Northampton Rank of Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007
Source: Northampton Borough Council

2.2.8 Demographic Analysis

The current figures from the Office of National Statistics show that the population stands at 205,200⁷. Since 2001, this represents an increase of 5.2%. Table 2.5 below illustrates how the demographics of Northampton have changed since 2001.

Population Age Groups	2001 Population	2008 Population	% Change in Population
0-14	37,900	37,200	-1.8
15-24	26,600	29,200	9.8
25-44	59,900	62,000	3.5
45-64	43,300	49,000	13.2
65-74	13,600	14,200	4.4
75 and over	12,900	13,800	7.0
Total	194,400	205,200	5.2

Table 2.5 – Population Estimates in Northampton 2001-2008
Source: Office National Statistics

Overall there has been an increase of 11.4% in the population of a retirement age. The biggest increase within this has been the 85 and over age group. This age cohort has increased by 18% in the last seven years.

⁷ ONS 2008 Estimated population projections

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In 2001, the Census estimated the population of the BME community to be 16,341. Compared to the 1991 Census, this represents an increase of 51%. The biggest increase in BME communities within these figures was from the Black African community, who saw their population quadruple in size between 1991-2001. The next largest increase was from the Chinese community who increased by 82% to 1278.

Following a recent Needs Survey report in April 2010, it is estimated that the overall BME population in Northampton has increased from 12% in 2001, to 16% now. This is a further 25% increase on 2001.

Housing Need Category	Number of Households
Overcrowded	1,745
Mobility/health problems	1,327
Harassment	1,232
Need to give/receive care/support	904
Subject to major disrepair/unfitness	713
Difficulty maintaining home	686
Accommodation too expensive	613
Need to live closer to employment	573
End of Tenancy	282
Family unable to live together	212
Lacking kitchen, bathroom or WC	63
Sharing kitchen, bathroom or WC	46
Total	6,642

Table 2.6 – Housing Need Categories in Northampton
Source: Northampton Housing Needs Survey 2002

2.3 HOUSING NEED AND DEMAND

The most up to date housing needs survey⁸ estimated that a total of 6,642 households were in some form of housing need. The biggest housing need was related to overcrowding, with 1,745 households stating this was a problem.

Table 2.6 illustrates the differing levels of need by unsuitable housing categories.

2.3.1 Affordable Housing Need

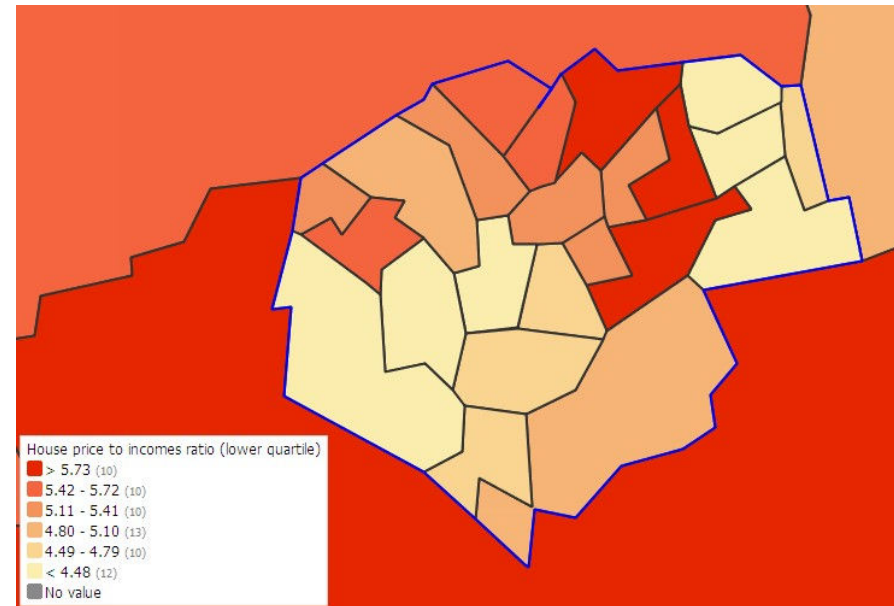
The West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009 suggests that a total of 8,900 affordable homes are required between now and 2026 for the Northampton Implementation Area (NIA). This equates to 33% affordable housing out of a total of 31,000 homes required by 2026. The annual supply of affordable housing will need to be 529 dwellings per year in order to achieve 8,900 by the end of 2026.

⁸ Northampton 2002 Housing Needs Survey, Dec 2002

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At the time of writing this Housing Strategy, affordability is a major concern. Although house prices have fallen between 15-20% typically, with only a slight rise recently, affordability has not increased proportionately. This is because mortgage lenders have tightened up on their lending criteria, and most now require a 20% deposit. Given the fact that most purchasers are first time buyers, it is unlikely that the majority of people have 20% deposits. Map 2.5 highlights the areas in Northampton with the highest house price to earnings ratios.

With a house price to earnings ratio of more than 5.7:1 the wards of Headlands; Parklands and Weston demonstrate the areas where affordability is most acute within Northampton.



Map 2.5 – House Price to Earnings Ratios by Ward2010
Source: Hometrack

Chapter 2 – Understanding our Housing Market

2.4 HOUSING SUPPLY

2.4.1 Right to Buy

During the period 2002 to 2008, Northampton Borough Council lost a total of 1,771 dwellings through the Right to Buy (RTB) process. This is almost 13% of the total dwelling stock from 2002 (13,749). *Chart 2.4* highlights the levels of RTB over the six-year period. Due to the current economic climate and the fact that house prices increased during this period, the RTB numbers have reduced year on year except in 2004, when there was a slight increase.

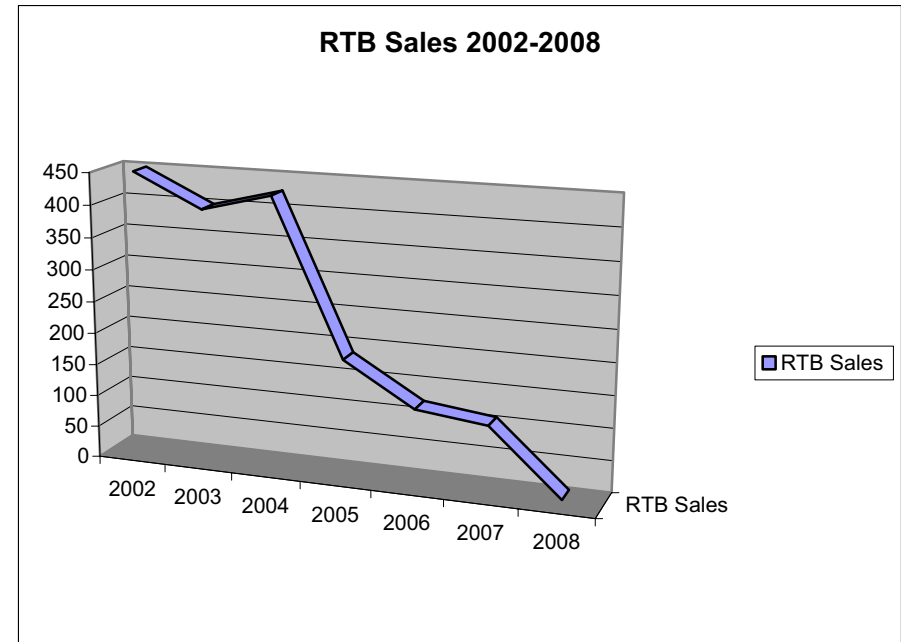


Chart 2.4 – Northampton RTB Sales 2002-2008
Source: Communities & Local Government

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2.4.2 Affordable Housing Stock & Completions

Despite the loss of Council owned stock over the last six years, the overall level of social housing has remained the same, with new build RSL dwellings compensating for the loss of social rented units through the RTB process.

Since 2002, Northampton overall has lost just over 3% of its affordable housing supply. Chart 2.5 highlights the levels of affordable housing in Northampton over the period 2002-2008.

Table 2.7 illustrates the number of affordable dwellings that have been built in Northampton over the last eight years. New build affordable housing levels reached a high in 2006/07 at 470, but have since reduced to 288 in 2008/09. This is primarily due to the current economic downturn.

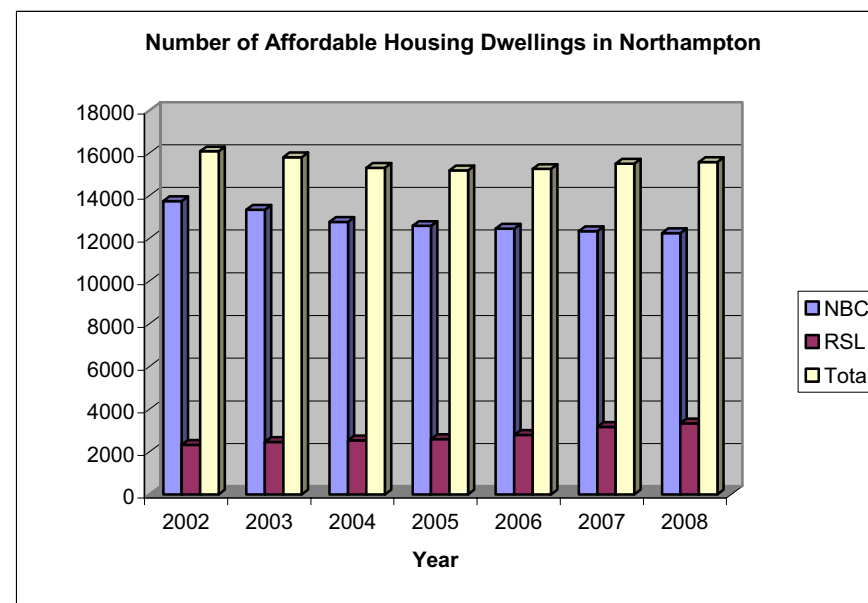


Chart 2.5 – Number of Affordable Housing Dwellings in Northampton 2002-2008

Source: HSSA & RSR 2002-2008

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Year	Affordable Housing Tenure		Total
	Social Rented	Shared Ownership	
2001/02	147	-	147
2002/03	133	-	133
2003/04	68	42	110
2004/05	68	56	124
2005/06	152	53	205
2006/07	334	136	470
2007/08	168	282	450
2008/09	136	152	288

Table 2.7 – Affordable Housing Delivered in Northampton 2001/02-2008/09

Source: HSSA 2001 – 2009

2.4.3 Future Housing Supply

It is clear that Northampton is going to have to expand over the next 10-15 year in order to accommodate increased housing numbers as part of the Growth agenda. The East Midlands Regional Plan and the West Northants Emerging Joint Core Strategy indicate that by 2026 43,375 homes are required in the Northampton Implementation Area (NIA).

As mentioned previously, the Joint Core Strategy illustrates that there is sufficient land available to achieve the residual housing figures of 17,444 by 2026. In fact the land supply identifies potential for 19,288 dwellings, which are mainly through the Sustainable Urban Extensions.

From a Northampton Borough Council perspective, as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), a five-year land supply has been identified. The capacity of this land supply is 16,744 dwellings, but the five-year supply from April 2009 to March 2014 will provide 9,299 dwellings. The difference is due to the phasing of some of the larger sites, such as Dallington Grange and Nunn Mills as part of the existing Local Plan policies.

The five-year supply is broken down in *table 2.8* below.

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Year	Number of Completions
2009/10	916
2010/11	1031
2011/12	2591
2012/13	2741
2013/14	2020
Total	9299

Table 2.8 – Northampton 5 year Land Supply

Source: Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

The West Northants Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates that Northampton will need to build 529 affordable dwellings per annum over the plan period to 2026. For the five-year land supply, this equates to 2,645 new affordable homes over the same period of 2009 – 2014. This will be a challenge for the Borough Council as current NI 155 (Number of new affordable dwellings) targets are set at 200 per annum from April 2010. We will need to improve our partnership working with our RSL Partners and also work closely with our local authority partners through the Sustainable Urban Extensions (identified land for growth) to achieve the levels of affordable housing that are required.

Chapter 3 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable People

Summary of Chapter 3

This section explains what the main issues and needs are for certain vulnerable groups that need support in various ways to help them lead an independent life.

There will be increased demand on our housing solutions and housing advice team over the next year. Homeless presentations continue to rise, and the need for suitable accommodation for an ageing population will also increase. Northampton Borough Council will continue to work in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council and our voluntary organisations to provide appropriate housing solutions, such as the forthcoming *Places of Change* Scheme.

3.1 THE CONTEXT

Northampton Borough Council supports independent living for all. The population is ageing and planning for future housing needs in the properties we build today will ensure independent living can be a real option without the stress of moving home and the expense of adapting properties.

The current economic climate means that further households in Northampton may experience loss of jobs and struggle to manage existing mortgages. This strategy aims to provide the support to these groups and continue to deliver an excellent housing solutions and housing advice service.

3.2 SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN NORTHAMPTON

The Supporting People programme was introduced by central government in April 2003. Northamptonshire County Council manage the Supporting People programme and Northampton Borough Council work very closely with them to ensure that vulnerable households in Northampton are provided with the right package of support to enable them to live an independent life. The current Supporting People programme in Northampton is worth £15m. The Supporting People team are currently looking at developing an updated strategy from the 2005-2010 version. This will include looking at updating the evidence base and establishing what the needs are of differing client groups.

Chapter 3 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable people

3.3 HOMELESSNESS

Northampton Borough Council has the highest homeless presentations in Northamptonshire. The current economic climate, with significantly lower numbers of homes being built, and the loss of jobs resulting in households struggling with their mortgages, means that more and more households are becoming vulnerable and require housing advice.

The Housing Register currently has 8,169⁹ households waiting for a property through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. This is an increase on the 2008 Housing Register figure (5,578) of 46.4%. The overall amount of affordable housing has decreased over the last 5 years, which is largely attributable to the Right to Buy process. Despite the loss of much needed affordable housing, the Housing Solutions teams have been working very closely with the private sector, to make optimum use of the increasing number of private rented properties available in Northampton.

In June 2009 the Council began advertising private sector rented properties as part of its Choice Based Lettings scheme.

By the end of September 2009, 100 private sector rented properties had been advertised and allocated to customers on the Housing Register. This is the first example of advertising such properties through CBL in the Midlands.

Since the establishment of the Housing Solutions Teams, the Council has demonstrated excellence in a number of areas, and has been recognised by Communities and Local Government (CLG) as providing best practice on some initiatives. Some of the more notable achievements over the last 12 months have been:

- Reduction in Temporary Accommodation from 195 households down to less than 10;
- Regarded as National Champions by CLG for our Rough Sleeping work linked to the personalisation agenda;
- Selected as best practice by CLG for Youth Homeless work and asked to undertake Peer consultancy work for other Council's in England; and
- First Council in the East Midlands to complete the first Mortgage Rescue and the 8th Council nationally.

⁹ Northampton Choice Based Lettings Data April 2010

Chapter 4 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable people

3.3.1 Homelessness Performance

The following tables and charts illustrate the progress that is being made within Northampton, and the excellent service that Housing Solutions and Housing Advice are providing.

2006	2007	2008	2009
400	336	353	270

Table 3.1 – Northampton Homeless Acceptances 2006-2009
Source: P1E Statistical returns 2006-2009

The level of acceptances has been falling over the last 3 years, and in the 2009, 270 homeless preventions were recorded, which was the best in Northamptonshire. This figure supports the decrease in the number of acceptances, as the Council focuses more on early intervention and prevention of homelessness through its advice and options service.

2006	2007	2008	2009
89	47	40	8

Table 3.2 – Use of Bed & Breakfast Accommodation 2006-2009
Source: P1E Statistical returns 2006-2009

3.3.2 Key priority areas

In section 1.2.7 on p16, we discussed the three priority themes of the Homelessness Strategy as Prevention, Supply and Support.

The following objectives will help achieve these three themes and will be reflected in the Action Plan in *appendix 1*.

- Improve prevention of youth homelessness by working in partnership with NCC and partner agencies
- Work in partnership with all Accredited Landlords and Lettings Agencies to increase the supply of Private Rented Accommodation for all households
- Continue to reduce the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation
- Improve access to services by undertaking evening and weekend surgeries
- Improve the service offered via our Gateway Service
- Continue to provide excellent homelessness prevention services and increase new initiatives in this area

Chapter 3 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable People

3.4 MANAGING THE NEEDS OF GYPSIES & TRAVELLERS

As part of the East Midlands Regional Plan¹⁰ and the Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), Northampton is required to provide 24 pitches (plus 5 transit pitches) over the period 2007-2012. The table below highlights the housing need from 2007-2017.

Period	Pitch Requirement	Housing Requirement
2007-2012	24	7
2012-2017	8	8
Annual Supply	3.2	1.5
Total Supply	32	15

Table 3.3 – Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Housing Needs 2007-2017
Source: Northamptonshire GTAA March 2008

In identifying the sites required in the table above, Northampton Borough Council will use the following criteria:

Site Criteria

- 1 – The site has safe and convenient vehicular access from the public highway, together with provision for parking, turning and servicing on site
- 2 – The size of the site does not dominate the scale of the nearest settled community, and does not place undue pressure on local infrastructure
- 3 – The site is accessible to local services such as health and education, and local community facilities, infrastructure and services by public transport, on foot or by cycle
- 4 – The site is not located within an area at high risk of flooding
- 5 – The site can be landscaped and planted with appropriate trees and shrubs to help the site blend into its surroundings, give privacy, and maintain visual amenity
- 6 – The site is capable of being provided with adequate on-site services for water supply, power, drainage, sewage disposal and waste disposal facilities
- 7 The number of pitches to be provided on the site will not normally exceed 11-15 pitches
- 8 – In the case of travelling showpeople sites, the site includes sufficient space for storage and maintenance of equipment and the parking and manoeuvring of all vehicles associated with the occupiers

Table 3.4 – Gypsy & Traveller Site Selection Criteria
Source: West Northants Emerging Joint Core Strategy

¹⁰ East Midlands Regional Plan, Policy 16, (March 2009)

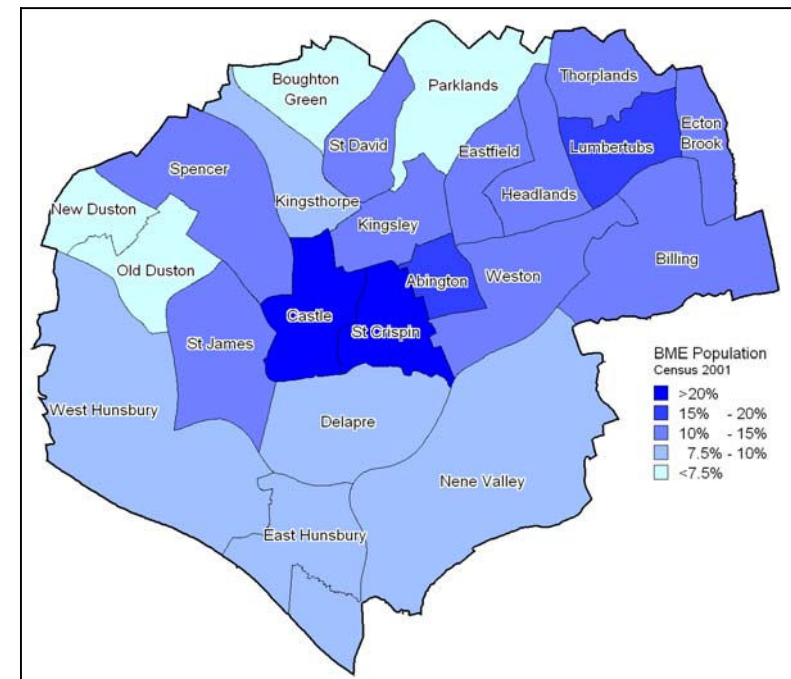
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3.5 MANAGING THE NEEDS OF BME HOUSEHOLDS

In April 2010, a Black Minority Ethnic Housing Needs Survey report was completed. Over 210 face to face surveys were conducted and followed up with focus group sessions and telephone interviews. The BME population in Northampton is increasing, and the majority of groups have seen increases of over 80%, however the white Irish and black Caribbean population have seen small declines.

Chart 2.6 on p55 illustrates that the BME population in Northampton has increased from 12% in 2001 to 16% of the total population in 2009.

Map 3.1 opposite, highlights the wards of Castle, St Crispin and Lumbertubs as having the highest concentrations of BME Households.



Map 3.1 – BME Population at ward level
Source: Census 2001

Chapter 3 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable people

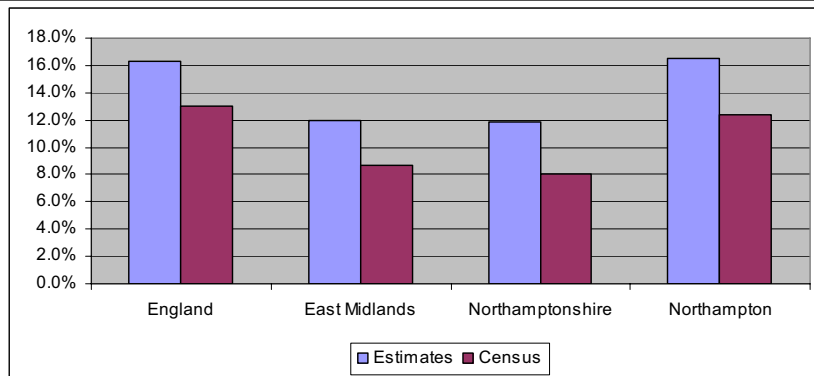


Chart 3.1 – Estimated BME Populations
Source: Office National Statistics 2009

The BME Housing Needs Survey report key conclusions were:

- Some 45% of BME residents are in properties which they do not feel fully meet their needs and the proportions are higher for the newer Black African and White Other communities;
- More than half would like to move and most of them are content to remain in Northampton. Their reasons for wanting to move are primarily to have a larger property and/or to move to a better area;
- Northampton has a growing BME population both in respect of numbers of the BME population and the increasing diversity of that population;
- The proportion of housing applicants from a BME background is higher than the percentage of current tenants and the percentage of the population as a whole;
- In terms of help and support with housing issues there is clearly a high expectation of the role of the Council;
- Those most likely to aspire realistically to home ownership are the younger BME residents, families and households with two incomes. Renting from the Council is a more acceptable alternative than private renting;
- The BME communities are likely to create a significant number of new households in the coming years. Most of these new households will be young people becoming independent; and

Chapter 3 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable people

- Contact with the Council and its Housing Officers has been of variable standard but the overall impression is that satisfaction is reasonably high.

The recommendations from the report, which will need to be delivered through the updated BME Housing Strategy and the action plan of this Housing Strategy, are:

- The development of Planning policies which ensure that the proportion of new developments provided as larger (3 bed and larger) properties is maximised whilst protecting economic viability. In addition, the development of BME sensitive design briefs for application to all future affordable housing schemes;
- Increasing the awareness of housing support and advice services amongst BME communities and the promotion of Council housing advice services specifically targeted at BME residents;
- The development of specialist housing advice services to support BME households in the private rented sector and provide guidance to landlords
- The promotion of low cost home ownership schemes to BME households via targeted publicity campaigns and the production of BME group-specific literature;

- A review of the standards to be achieved before Council properties are offered for re-letting and the publication of these to all housing applicants; and
- A review of any staff training needs created by the changing and increasing demands on the service from BME households.

3.6 MANAGING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people often have specific needs and difficulties in accessing good quality housing. This is demonstrated through lack of life skills and the ability to sustain a tenancy once obtained. As part of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013, one of the Council's main priorities are to improve services to young people in order to reduce the number of homeless acceptances by this age cohort. Table 3.5 below illustrates the significance of the youth homeless in Northampton.

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	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Homeless Acceptances	439	475	378	423	307
16/17 yr old Homeless Acceptances	225	220	202	205	153
% of Homeless Applications attributed to 16/17 yr olds	51.2%	46.3%	53.4%	48.5%	49.8%

Table 3.5 – 16/17 year old Homeless Acceptances in Northampton 2003-2008

Source: Northampton Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

3.7 MANAGING THE NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE

Since the 2001 Census Survey, the population of people over the age of 65 has increased by 11.4% in Northampton. Looking ahead to the future, this trend is likely to increase with people living longer as standards of living improve. Key issues for this strategy will be how we plan for an ageing population in terms of new provision, but also how we manage the existing housing stock with the policy tools available to the Council. Below are some of the areas where the Council currently provides a service,

through existing schemes, and where we plan to provide new provision in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council.

3.7.1 Sheltered Housing

The Council's Sheltered Housing service is a key asset in the delivery of services to older people. It is the provision of choice for many older people, and also often provides a cornerstone of local community based living for many, as they grow older.

However, to ensure that the Council's strategic responsibilities are met regarding the ageing population will require the development of a clear and robust strategy, not only as a provider, but also as a partner and commissioner with the voluntary and private sectors to ensure that life chances are enhanced and older people are able to play socially and economically active roles in society.

A review of sheltered housing is due to be completed by the end of 2010.

Chapter 3 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable people

3.7.2 Extra Care

The population of people aged 65 and over in Northampton in 2025 is projected to be 44,900. This equates to 26.7% of the total projected population figures. One of the aims of Northamptonshire County Council as part of their Supporting People role is to reduce the level of residential care facilities that are of poor quality, and replace them with extra care facilities. Northampton Borough Council is currently working very closely with the County Council on the re-provision of residential care units, and the new provision of extra care schemes. As part of this work the County Council have identified the following numbers of extra care dwellings that are required in Northampton over the period 2008-2025 in *table 3.6*.

Total Projected Units required	Owner Occupied	Social Rented	Shared Ownership	Social Rented
1,069	81.94%	18.06%	876	193

Table 3.6 – Number of Extra Care units required in Northampton 2008-2025

Source: Northamptonshire County Council

The table opposite highlights that the Council will have to provide almost 63 dwellings per year for extra care purposes, and that this needs to be split down to 52 shared ownership units and 11 social rented units.

3.7.3 Telecare

The Council's Call Care service currently provides an emergency alarm service to over 3,000 people in the Borough, most of them older and vulnerable, but a significant - and growing – amount of younger disabled people. In addition to this the council services an additional 8,000 people throughout the wider County of Northamptonshire and this gives it a clear opportunity to promote the choices that assistive technology can offer in allowing older people to remain in their own homes for longer and maintain their independence. Developing a large-scale emergency response service will ensure that this valuable service reaches a far greater number of older vulnerable people.

The Call Care service has already played a key role in delivering the Telecare agenda throughout the County of Northamptonshire and is also looking to work with the health service in piloting Telehealth.

Chapter 3 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable people

3.8 MANAGING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

The forecasting of the number of housing units required for people with mental health needs is based on prevalence figures plus local demands and information reflected in existing policies.

Prevalence is defined as the expected number of people with a general population that can be expected to have a particular condition. Mental Health needs are a strategic priority for Supporting People in Northamptonshire, and the figures in table 3.6 below are for the West Northamptonshire Area, which includes Northampton.

Year	Level of Need	West Northants Area
2010	High Support	25
	Low Support/General Needs	15
	Total	40
2015	High Support	48
	Low Support/General Needs	88
	Total	136
2020	High Support	69
	Low Support/General Needs	161
	Total	230

Table 3.7 – Mental Health Provision in West Northants 2010-2020

Source: Northampton County Council

The main need in West Northamptonshire is in Northampton, and therefore there will be more emphasis on the Borough to help deliver the identified need in *table 3.7*.

3.9 MANAGING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Northamptonshire County Council have forecasted the number of housing units required for people experiencing learning difficulties by using prevalence figures and local information in policies and strategies. When establishing the number of housing units required the County Council have considered people across a range of learning disabilities and based on research, have assumed that 12.5% of the prevalence figures for learning disability will be in need of housing at any one time.

There is a long-term commitment to reduce the reliance on residential care and replace this with a supported living model of care and accommodation. In addition, providing choice is also important, and using self-directed support to do this, will enable individuals to have a choice of whom, when and how services are provided.

Chapter 3 – Managing the needs of Vulnerable people

Table 3.8 below illustrates the level of need for West Northamptonshire over the next 10 years. The majority of this need will fall in Northampton and therefore more emphasis will be placed on the Borough Council to assist in the delivery of these housing numbers required.

Year	Level of Need	West Northants Area
2010	High Support	119
	Low Support/General Needs	232
	Total	351
2015	High Support	254
	Low Support/General Needs	418
	Total	672
2020	High Support	370
	Low Support/General Needs	624
	Total	994

Table 3.8 – Learning Disability provision in West Northants 2010-2020

Source: Northamptonshire County Council

3.10 MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ensuring households have the choice of staying within their own home is extremely important. Over the last 2 years, Northampton Borough Council have completed 600 Disabled Facilities Grants, and in 2009/10 spent 100% of the £2.5m budget.

The budget for 2010/11 is £2.5m and demand is still high with an increase of over 50%, the private sector housing team have dealt with 365 new Disabled Facilities Grant enquiries since 1st December 2009.

In addition to the Disabled Facilities Grants, we have also spent £1.1m on Council aids and adaptations, with a further £1m for the 2010/11 budget.

As part of the lettings process, we are attempting to match vacant dwellings that have already had some adaptations completed, with a suitable household off the Housing Register. This way we aim to minimise the amount of additional work that requires carrying out but also maximising the small amounts of DFG and aids and adaptation funding we have.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

Summary of Chapter 4

After discussing in the previous chapter the main issues within the Northampton Housing Market, this chapter looks to identify and discuss the actions required to meet the needs identified within Chapter 2 & 3. It will look at what actions need delivering under each of the four main priorities of this Housing Strategy, which are:

- Manage supply and growth for the future of Northampton;
- Create resilient and cohesive communities;
- Deliver well-designed, high quality homes, neighbourhoods and services; and
- Improve customer access, opportunity and choice

4.1 THE CONTEXT

Northampton Borough Council acknowledge the fact that we are part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands wider growth agenda, and that we will have to consider the impacts of the increased number of dwellings referred to in the East Midlands Regional Plan.

It is equally important that we effectively manage and invest in the maintenance of the existing housing in Northampton, both public and private housing.

The objectives within each of the Housing Strategy priorities have been determined through a mixed approach. Consultation with public and private sector stakeholders has taken place, which can be seen in detail in *Appendix 4, p100*. We have also used self-assessment Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) to analyse the gaps in our services and what we need to do to improve. Previous actions from the 2006-2011 Housing Strategy Action Plan will also be brought forward, where they are still to be completed. See *Appendix 2 for more detail*.

Within the action plan in *Appendix 1*, there will be more objectives described to achieve each priority. However the purpose of this chapter is to highlight the main key objectives that will need to be delivered over the next 5 years to demonstrate a transformational change for housing in Northampton.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

4.2 Spatial Priorities

For the period of this Housing Strategy 2010-2015, there are three main priority areas for Housing. *Map 4.2* below highlights these areas.

4.2.1 Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) Area

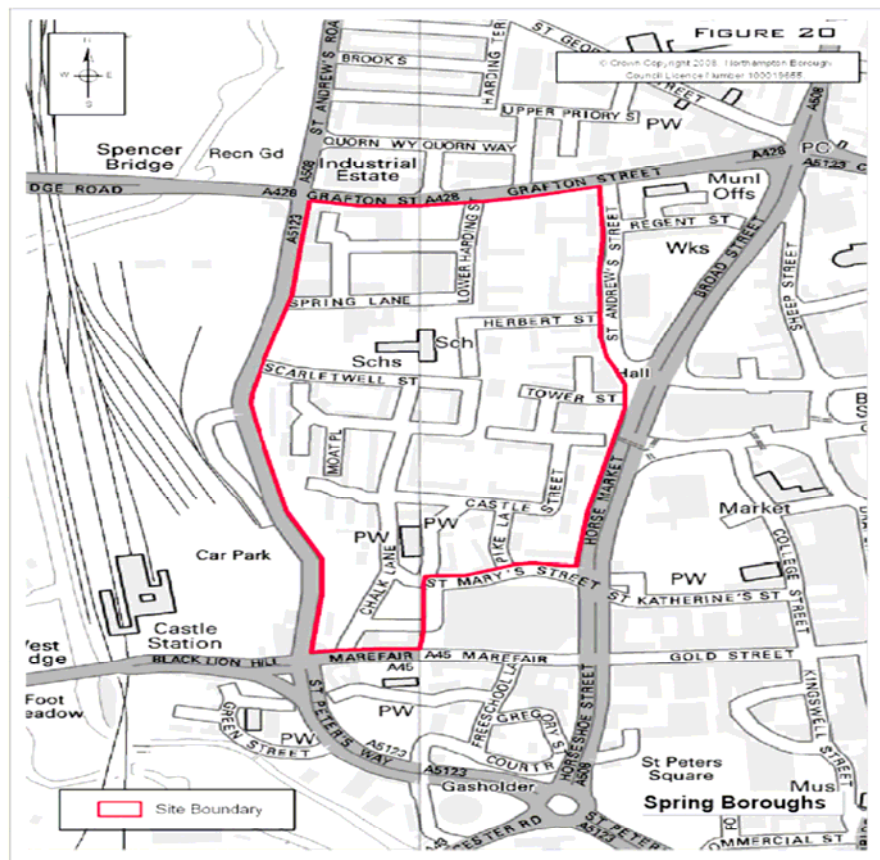
Area 1 identified on *Map 4.2, p63* illustrates the Central Area Action Plan area. Within this area, the Council own 83% of dwellings in the Spring Boroughs Estate, which is the largest existing concentration of housing in the CAAP area. The dwellings mainly comprise of high to medium rise flats, which were built when the Victorian terraces were subject to clearance in the 1950's.

The estate falls within one of the top 5% most deprived Super Output Areas (SOA) in the Country. See *Map 2.4*. In addition to the deprivation issues experienced by this estate, a significant proportion of the Council owned stock will fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

As part of the Central Area Action Plan it will be important that the Council work with the residents and businesses within this area to work up a number of options for the future regeneration of the estate.

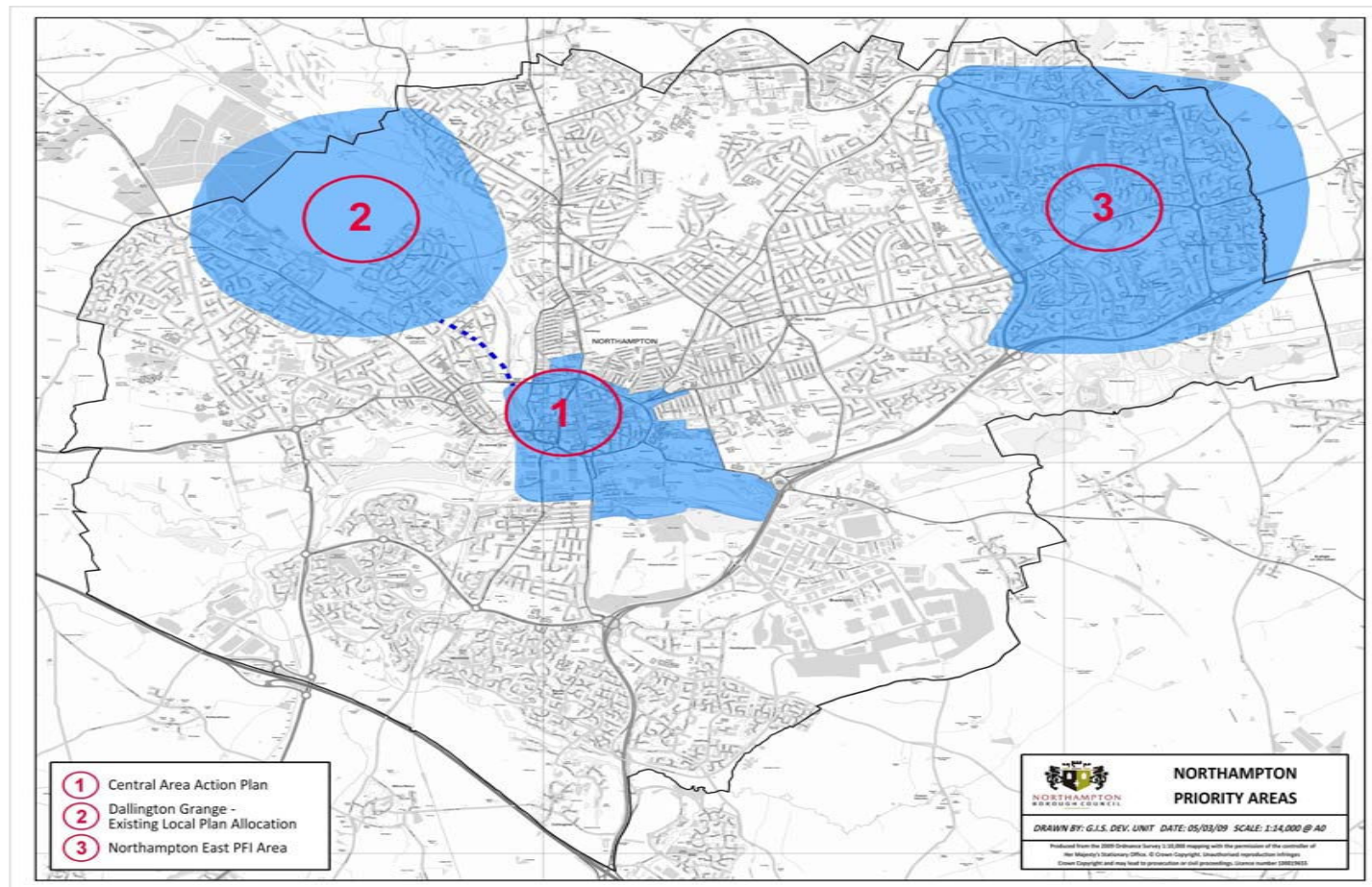
Therefore one of the key actions for this Housing Strategy will be to engage with the residents and businesses of the Spring Boroughs Estate to develop a series of options that can be considered for the future investment and regeneration of the area.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities



Map 4.1 – Spring Boroughs Estate Boundary
Source: Central Area Action Plan

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities



Map 4.2 – Northampton Housing Priority Areas
Source: Northampton Borough Council

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

4.2.2 Northampton East (PFI Area)

In July 2009, Northampton Borough Council was successful in reaching the next stage of the bidding process for Round 6 PFI Credits. The offer from the HCA was for £100m PFI credits. Our initial Expression of Interest was for £208m. The offer of £100m was on the terms that the Eastfield Estate is part of the PFI scheme along with other options that will total, but not exceed the £100m PFI credits.

Consultation with the residents of the Bellinge, Blackthorn and Thorplands estates was carried out and the Council made a decision to regenerate Thorplands. The Outline Business Case is due to be submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency by July 2010.

It is envisaged that the PFI scheme in Northampton East will consist of a mixture of Refurbishment work, demolition of existing homes and new build affordable homes built in their replacement.

4.2.3 Dallington Grange Area

Identified as *Area 2 on Map 4.2*, Dallington Grange is an existing identified site in the Local Plan for growth. The proposed development offers an excellent opportunity for the creation of a new sustainable urban extension to the town. In order to create this sustainable community the integration and effective delivery of affordable housing appropriate to the town is essential. The site has outline planning permission, and as part of this the Council has requested that 35% of the total dwellings are affordable, to be provided in partnership with an RSL.

It will be important that Dallington Grange is not developed in isolation from the surrounding community in Kings Heath. The Council own 886 dwellings on the Kings Heath Estate, and any planned new development will have to consider the possible regeneration and investment needs of this Estate.

A priority for this Housing Strategy will be to consider what options there are available for the Kings Heath area.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

4.3 PRIORITY 1 - MANAGE SUPPLY AND GROWTH FOR THE FUTURE OF NORTHAMPTON

4.3.1 What are the issues?

The main issues under this priority are clearly linked with affordable housing and growth of Northampton. Over the next 10-15 years Northampton is going to increase its dwelling numbers considerably, and we will need to focus and prioritise our efforts to enable this to happen.

In order to facilitate the expansion of Northampton, various Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE) within the Northampton Implementation Area (NIA) will need to be developed on. *Table 4.1* highlights the number of dwellings to be developed in each SUE area, and *Map 4.3* illustrates where the SUE growth areas are located.

Northampton will need to work closely with Daventry, South Northamptonshire local authorities and the JPU to enable the growth of Northampton.

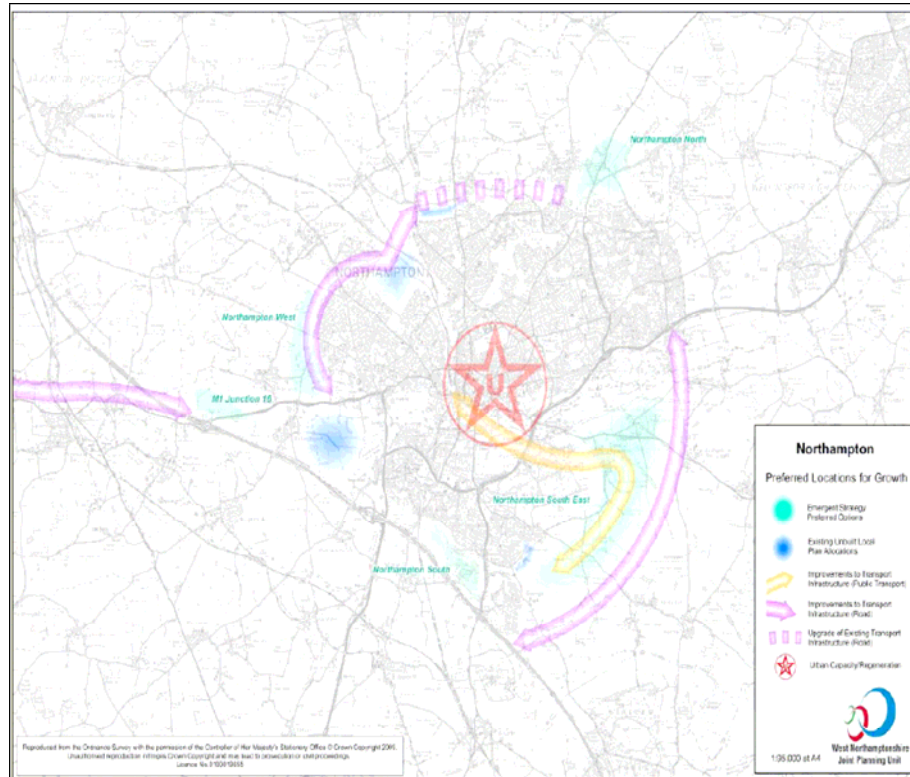
Growth Location Options	Housing Delivery to 2026	Housing Delivery beyond 2026	Total Housing Capacity
Northampton North	5,400	263	5,663
Northampton South East	6,250	11,750	18,000
Northampton West	5,400	1,460	6,860
Northampton South	2,200	0	2,200

Table 4.1 – Numbers of dwellings to be delivered in the NIA Sustainable Urban Extensions

Source: West Northants Emergent Joint Core Strategy

Despite lower house prices within the last 12 months, the prospects of less government funding in future years, and the level of affordable housing we will need to deliver, is going to require new methods of thinking about how we deliver this. The local authority cannot do this on their own, but with our RSL partners and the strategic use of our own land and the SUE's, we can ensure that affordable housing will continue to be delivered over the next 5 years.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities



Map 4.3 – Northampton Implementation Area Growth Locations
Source: West Northants Emergent Joint Core Strategy

4.3.2 What are the key objectives?

Mechanisms for Improving Supply

Funding for affordable housing in the next 5 years will be reduced, and it is vital that the Council makes best use of its assets and land holdings to ensure affordable housing is maximised. As part of our commitment to the affordable housing agenda we will be developing 8 affordable homes as part of the LA New Build initiative in partnership with the HCA, and we have also been conducting a Strategic Business Review in partnership with corporate asset management colleagues to look at some of the land we have and carry out option appraisal work to establish the best options.

We have also started preparing for the new Comprehensive Spending Review April 2011, by reviewing our RSL Partnership arrangements and developing a new RSL framework process that includes both managements standards and development opportunities, to maximise the numbers of affordable homes in Northampton.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

In conjunction with the Strategic Business Review work, we will also be continuing to review our garage sites and carrying out options appraisal work on the poorest of sites to see if there is potential for re-investment for parking or potential for residential development.

Supply of Family Homes

Identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and a recommended action, it has to be a priority to increase the larger sized family accommodation through the planning system, but also to manage the existing stock and target under occupancy. This will both help to meet household's needs on the Housing Register who are in need for larger family sized accommodation, but also will help with those tenants currently living in overcrowded accommodation.

Currently out of the 3200 3 bed properties that the Council has in its own stock, a proportion¹¹ are occupied by single people. In December 2009, the Council launched its Under – Occupation Scheme to try and release some of the larger stock and move people who are over crowded into the larger homes.

This would also free up some of the more suitable one and two bedroom accommodation from the overcrowded households and help meet the needs of households on the Housing Register. Since December 2009, we have completed the move of 17 households.

Dallington Grange and Major Sites

Mentioned earlier in this chapter, Dallington Grange is a large existing Sustainable Urban Extension site within Northampton, of which the Council owns a large section of the site. It is important that this asset is used effectively to maximise the delivery of affordable housing, and is therefore a priority objective within this Housing Strategy. As part of the 5 year land supply discussed in *Chapter 2*, there will be large sites coming forward, of which Ransom Road is one of them. On schemes of this size, we will be working closely with West Northamptonshire Development Corporation to ensure the maximum 35% affordable housing is delivered where proven viable.

¹¹ Data from Housing Solutions Team, April 2010

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

Key Objectives to achieve Priority 1

Term	Objective	By When
Short Term	Work Closely with RSL partners to consider new delivery options for increasing affordable housing numbers	Sep 2010
	Develop Robinson House scheme for a 'Design & Finance' competition	Dec 2010
Medium Term	Support and bring forward Dallington Grange as a Growth Area	Mar 2012
	Deliver the local authority New Build scheme	Mar 2011
Long Term	Work in partnership with Daventry, South Northamptonshire LA's, the JPU and WNDC to deliver the Sustainable Urban Extensions	Mar 2015

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

4.4 PRIORITY 2 – CREATE RESILIENT AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES

4.4.1 What are the issues?

Over the next 5 years, the following actions are considered to be the biggest key objectives to delivering better services and providing vast improvement for the vulnerable households we have to help.

4.4.2 What are the key objectives?

Places of Change Scheme

The Council have secured £1.42m of Communities and Local Government (CLG) funding and Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding to deliver a homelessness scheme in partnership with Midland Heart Housing Association. The Scheme is utilising the existing site of Maple Buildings and will provide 48 units of accommodation consisting of emergency

accommodation, general needs and multiple needs accommodation. The total scheme costs are £5,972,814. Details of the scheme costs are on *p79, table 5.1*

The facility will also have support agencies based in the building so that a full range of options can be provided to ensure that homeless people accessing the service are equipped with the necessary skills to sustain their own tenancy.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

Sheltered Housing Review

The Council own a significant amount of sheltered housing accommodation, some of which is hard to let. As part of reviewing the service we provide to older people, we will be looking at the best use of this type of accommodation to see whether it is fit for purpose and provides a good quality living environment for our residents that live in these schemes. This will feed into the partnership working with County Council and their programme for the closure of some Residential Care Homes.

Single Person Accommodation Review

The Council are currently looking at six medium rise blocks of accommodation that have been and are still used for single persons. These blocks will be reviewed to consider what potential they have in their current use, and whether they could provide alternative uses in the future. One of these blocks being considered is Robinson House, which is completely empty now. It has been agreed to run a Design and Finance competition for this block, and learn from the process to see if a similar exercise could be used for the remaining 5 blocks.

Homelessness Prevention

Despite the excellent work by our Housing Solutions Team to continue to increase homeless preventions, the lower supply of affordable housing, coupled with the economic climate and people losing their jobs and potentially their homes, will provide an increased pressure on this area of our work.

As mentioned throughout this strategy, we continue to provide increased numbers of the rent bond scheme, with 355 completed in 2009/10. We have also started to do some excellent joined up working with Adult Services in the County Council, to locate several members of their team in the Housing Solutions team, to tackle the needs of young 16 and 17 year olds who are faced with homelessness. This will be a priority to improve and expand upon. We also want to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and achieve this by working more closely with private landlords to increase the supply of accommodation through this sector.

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Responding to an ageing Population

The population is ageing and this is bringing new and significant challenges for public services. By 2030 around 13 million people in this country will be over the age of 65 and almost 2.5 million over 80. In Northampton this will mean that there will be nearly over 50,000 people over 65 and more than 15,000 over 80 representing approximately 20% of our total population and growing.

Unless resources are diverted towards prevention, the burden on health and social care may well be unsustainable.

Key objectives of this Housing Strategy will be to develop an Independent Living Strategy that explains in detail what the Council plans to do to prepare for the increasing age of our population, and also for the Council to start discussing funding options with the NHS and the County Council to begin the prevention agenda and prevent the costly admissions that the NHS are sometimes faced with as a result of poor housing conditions.

Key Objectives to achieve Priority 2

Term	Objective	By When
Short Term	Complete review of Sheltered Housing	Sep 2010
Medium Term	Develop an Independent Living Strategy	Jun 2011
	Complete review of Single Persons Accommodation	Dec 2012
	Deliver the Places of Change scheme on time	Sep 2011
	Work with the NHS and County Council to provide a funding package to tackle Energy Efficiency and prevent admissions	Sep 2011
Long Term	Aid the WNJPU in the identification of sites for Gypsy and Travellers needs identified in the GTAA 2008	Mar 2011

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

4.5 PRIORITY 3 – DELIVER WELL DESIGNED, HIGH QUALITY HOMES, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND SERVICES

4.5.1 What are the issues?

Despite Northampton being in a growth area, a major aspect of this Strategy will be the investment and maintenance of existing homes, both council owned and in the private sector, along with the regeneration of some of our estates that have poor stock.

4.5.2 What are the key objectives?

Achieving the Decent Homes Standard

Northampton Borough Council is in the process of improving their homes and starting to bring properties up to the Decent Homes Standard. As identified in Section 1.2.6, p16, the council have estimated that there is an investment shortfall of £72m to improve all the housing stock up to the Decent Homes Standard. Phase 1 of the DHS programme started in 2009 with the Kingsthorpe and Kingsley Estates. For further information please refer to the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010-2015.

Spring Boroughs Regeneration (CAAP Area)

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Spring Boroughs is the largest housing estate in the Central Area Action Plan boundary, with a high concentration of social rented stock (over 83%). The Estate acts as a barrier to the town centre from the train station, and as part of the CAAP, it will be important to explore various options with residents as part of a master planning exercise to see how we can create a natural linkage from the train station to the town centre, but also regenerate Spring Boroughs and provide a more balanced housing market.

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Northampton East PFI Programme

Northampton East covers almost a third of the Council's housing stock. The delivery of the PFI scheme for this area will have a significant impact on the way to achieving the Decent Homes Standard overall, but more importantly in regenerating this area of Northampton and creating sustainable communities.

The regeneration of Northampton East is likely to consist of refurbishment work, demolition of stock in poor condition and replacement new build dwellings for the Eastfield and Thorplands estates. The overall impact for the area will be to have a slightly reduced number of total dwellings.

Despite the estates of Blackthorn and Bellinge not being included in the PFI Scheme, it will be important to have a longer term strategy for Northampton East, that explains what will be done for these two estates, as well as Eastfield and Thorplands. A key objective will therefore be to develop the Northampton East Regeneration Strategy.

The purpose of this strategy will be to set the overall framework for the regeneration of Northampton

East in order to create safe, inclusive sustainable communities, (economically, environmentally and socially). The strategy will set high-level principles for the regeneration of Northampton East from which more detailed Area Action Plans and supplementary planning documents can be developed.

Options Appraisal

In Chapter 1 the reform of the HRA financing system was explained. In terms of what this means for Northampton, we will have to wait to see if the HRA system is changed, and therefore local authorities are given the opportunity to buy out of the HRA. This will have an impact on future Stock Options, and also will need considering whether it is affordable to the Council. A key objective will be to develop a paper for members once a decision is made by the Government.

Property Design

An important part of achieving this priority will be to ensure design standards are high, especially in our social rented accommodation. Where possible we will be building to Code for Sustainable Homes level 4,

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

and we will ensure that Life Time Homes standards are considered, along with effective engagement with the police crime prevention officers as part of the designing out crime approach to new developments.

Private Rented Sector

In Chapter 2, table 2.2 illustrated that Northampton has approximately 6,812 private rented homes, which represents 7.6% of the total housing stock. The current economic climate means that for most households, social rented accommodation is not an option, and therefore the most affordable option is to move into the private rented sector. As part of our approach to creating mixed and sustainable communities, Northampton Borough Council want to encapsulate the work we do by developing a private sector housing strategy. This strategy will cover issues around Empty Homes, standards within the private sector and initiatives we are working on to improve the condition of the stock and to improve the standards of management through the accredited landlord scheme.

We are already providing 1 out of every 2 lets on CBL as private rented, and therefore need to make sure it is a tenure of choice. Our Rent Bond scheme also

continues to grow with 355 bonds completed in 2009/10 compared to 162 in 2008/09.

Energy Efficiency

Energy Efficiency is high up on the Governments agenda, and the development of the Warmer Homes, Greener Homes strategy confirms this. Northampton Borough Council are already working in partnership with the County Council as part their Carbon Reduction Programme Board meetings to bring down the Council's carbon emissions corporately. With a member of the Housing Directorate senior management team on this board, we now want to drive up energy efficiency on the Housing Agenda also. A key objective for achieving this will be to develop an Affordable Warmth Strategy, which covers initiatives to retrofit the Council's own stock, but also initiatives in the private sector such as the Countywide Climate friendly communities scheme.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

Key Objectives to achieve Priority 3

Term	Objective	By When
Short Term	Develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy	Feb 2011
	Develop Northampton East Regeneration Strategy	Oct 2010
Medium Term	Develop a Masterplan for regeneration of Spring Boroughs as part of the CAAP	Mar 2011
	Develop an Affordable Warmth Strategy	Mar 2011
	Develop detailed report on Stock Options following National decision on HRA Finance Reform	Jun 2011
Long Term	Commence Delivery of Northampton East PFI Programme	Apr 2013
	Achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2013/14	Mar 2014

4.6 PRIORITY 4 – IMPROVE CUSTOMER ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND CHOICE

4.6.1 What are the issues?

The Housing Directorate in Northampton Borough Council is experiencing significant change. We value all our stakeholders, tenants/residents views and we want to improve on how we effectively engage and share information to provide people with more

opportunity and choice. As part of our Key Lines of Enquiry approach, we have identified that there are a number of gaps in the services we deliver and provide our customers.

4.6.2 What are the key objectives?

Providing more choice and opportunity

In an economic climate where affordable housing is scarce resource, and the Housing Register is ever increasing, Northampton Borough Council have identified that better partnership working with other local authorities and especially making best use of the private rented sector, will help provide choice to those households who can not access the property ladder but also are not placed in a higher Band within the CBL System. A key objective we want to see expanded upon is the current approach to Sub-regional working that we have with Daventry, South Northants and Wellingborough local authorities.

As part of the Sub-regional CBL Scheme between Daventry and Northampton, we have managed to extend the approach to letting private rented properties through CBL to South Northants and

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

Wellingborough local authorities. This approach is the first Sub-regional scheme in the Country that offers customers opportunities to move into the private rented sector in a multitude of local authority areas through one lettings scheme.

In the private sector, it is equally important that households have the ability to repair their own home. We are therefore going to investigate the options implementing an equity loan scheme

Improving Customer access

Throughout the consultation process of the Housing Strategy we have engaged with residents, stakeholders and internal colleagues. The following are a list of issues that will need to be addressed in improving customer access and giving partners more information:

- Engage more effectively with estate agents;
- Improve access to Housing Solutions services;
- Expand choice based lettings to incorporate Daventry;
- Develop an annual housing event to update partners and residents on housing activities; and

- Provide additional information on how to access Low Cost Home Ownership properties, especially in the BME Communities as identified through the BME Housing Needs Survey report

Partnership Working

As part of the consultation process, several partners have suggested that partnership working could improve, and look to engage more effectively with groups such as the Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) and the Police to vulnerable households in our communities feel safer by providing crime prevention advice and fire safety advice.

Chapter 4 – How we will achieve our priorities

We also need to be able to have a better co-ordinated approach to delivering joined up housing initiatives as part of the wider Housing Strategy and Local Strategic Partnership relationship. A key objective therefore will be to review the existing Housing groups we have and assess whether a more strategic group could be formed.

Key Objectives to achieving Priority 4

Term	Objective	By When
Short Term	Investigate use and implementation of an Equity Loan Scheme	Jul 2011
	Expand Choice Based Lettings Scheme to include Daventry	Jul 2010
Medium Term	Develop Annual Housing Event to update partners and residents on housing activities	Apr 2011
	Review existing Housing groups as part of strategic partnership approach	Sep 2011
Longer Term	Monitor and success of Sub-regional private rented letting scheme and look to expand	Dec 2012

Chapter 5 – Resourcing the Housing Strategy

Summary of Chapter 5

This section indicates the resources available to Northampton Borough Council to be able to achieve its priorities and objectives identified in the action plan. The resources are projected up to 2013/14 for internal resources. This reflects a 3 year budget process. For the remaining two years of the strategy, this information will be added to update the strategy when the budget process has been set.

5.1 CAPITAL RESOURCES

In 2010-2011 the HRA Capital Programme has a total of £17,110,000 and the General Fund a total of £5,041,000. The Borough Council will be embarking on some big schemes during 2010, and the funding associated with these schemes is highlighted in table 5.1. Details of how the council will be investing in the maintenance of its own housing stock can be seen in more detail in the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010 – 2015.

Scheme	Total Costs	NBC Funding	HCA/CLG Funding	Other
Northampton East PFI	£105,640,000 [^]	£5,640,000	£100,000,000 [#]	-
Woodside Way (Council New Build)	£1,183,993	£600,080	£451,913	£132,000
Places of Change (Homelessness Scheme)*	£5,972,814	-	£2,950,000**	£3,022,814+

Table 5.1 – Capital Programme Schemes in Northampton 2010

[^] Total PFI budget to be confirmed once Outline Business Case approved in October 2010

[#] Net present Value Figure

* This also includes the transfer of land to Midland Heart at nominal value, with a land value of £440,000

** This consists of £1.42m CLG funding, which NBC are administering and £1.53m HCA funding, which Midland Heart are administering

+ This is funding supported by Midland Heart, who are project and budget managing the total scheme budget. £149,971 of this figure is Section 106 funding provided by NBC.

Chapter 6 – Monitoring and Review

6.1 MONITORING

6.1.1 It is proposed to monitor the delivery of the Housing Strategy every 6 months. The responsibility of monitoring the progress of the action plan will be the Housing Strategy team, who will report the action plan updates to the Housing Strategy Steering Panel (HSSP). The HSSP meet every 3 months, but the Housing Strategy Action Plan will be discussed at every other meeting.

6.1.2 Following approval from the HSSP, the 6 monthly action plan updates will be available to download on the Council's website.

look to update the strategy for the next 5 years towards the end of 2014/beginning of 2015.

6.2 REVIEW

6.2.1 This Housing Strategy will be reviewed annually and will feed into the Housing Departmental Management Team (DMT) meetings and the Portfolio Holder for Housing meetings. Annual reviews will take place every year in June, which coincides with the date of adoption of this Strategy.

6.2.2 The table below highlights the process for reviewing and updating the Housing Strategy over the first 12-month period. This process will be repeated until we

Monitoring Process	By When
Housing Strategy Action Plan 1 st 6 month Review	December 2010
HSSP Approval	January 2011
Published on Website	February 2011
Housing Strategy Action Plan 2 nd 6 month Review	June 2011
HSSP Approval	July 2011
Published on Website	August 2011

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Housing Strategy Action Plan 2010-2015

This section is closely linked with Chapter 4 of the Housing Strategy '*How we will achieve our priorities*'. It shows where each objective has come from, and clearly lists who will monitor the actions and who the lead person will be in taking the actions forward. Actions highlighted in light blue are those that are high strategic priorities, and also help deliver the corporate priorities and objectives of the Council.

Housing Strategy Priority 1 – Manage supply and growth for the future of Northampton

No.	Objective	Source	Milestones & Actions	Monitoring & Progress			Resource Implications	Lead Person
				Start	Finish	Monitored by		
1.1	Deliver the local authority new build scheme	NEW	1. Start on Site 2. Complete Schemes	Nov 2009 Mar 2010	Mar 2010 Mar 2011	Housing Strategy & Estate Renewal Teams	HCA £451,913 NBC £600,080 S106 £132,000	Housing Strategy Manager
1.2	Work closely with RSL partners to consider new delivery options for increasing affordable housing numbers	HSAP 2006-2011 (2.3)	Develop an RSL Procurement Framework	Jan 2010	Sep 2010	Housing Strategy Steering Panel	Existing Staffing Resources	Housing Strategy Manager
1.3	Provide Council owned land or assets to support new affordable housing development	HSAP 2006-2011 (1.1)	1. Complete Garage review 2. Develop Terrier of HRA owned land for development potential	Nov 2009 Mar 2010	Sep 2010 Mar 2011	Housing Strategy Team Estate Renewal Team	Existing staffing resources Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager Housing Strategy Manager
1.4	Investigate ways to bring empty properties in the private sector back into use to meet affordable housing needs	HSAP 2006-2011 (1.10)	Investigate use of EDMO's and other methods	Apr 2010	Apr 2011	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
1.5	Update Housing Needs Information	12-week consultation period	1. Revise evidence base with Census 2011 data	Aug 2012	Aug 2013	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
1.6	Develop a Section 106 Policy for off-site commuted Sums	HSAP 2006-2011 (1.17)	Develop off-site commuted sums policy	Jan 2010	Sep 2010	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager

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Housing Strategy Priority 1 – Manage supply and growth for the future of Northampton

No.	Objective	Source	Milestones & Actions	Monitoring & Progress			Resource Implications	Lead Person
				Start	Finish	Monitored by		
1.7	Support and bring forward Dallington Grange as a growth area	NEW	Agree affordable housing provision	Mar 2011	Mar 2012	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
1.8	Work with our RSL Partners to ensure that Recycled Capital Grant is used within Northampton	HSAP 2006-2011 (1.18), HSIP 7.4	Develop an agreement to be used with RSL partners	Mar 2010	Mar 2011	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
1.9	Develop Robinson House scheme for a 'Design & Finance' competition	NEW	1. Appoint Partner organisation through procurement 2. Develop Robinson House for 100% Affordable Housing	July 2010	Dec 2010	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
				Apr 2011	Mar 2012	Housing Strategy Team	External resources	Housing Strategy Manager
1.10	Work in partnership with Daventry, South Northamptonshire LA's, the JPU and WNDC to deliver the Sustainable Urban Extensions	NEW	Agree Affordable Housing Provision and Nominations with both local authorities	Mar 2012	Mar 2015	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
1.11	Continue to support the development of Brownfield sites	HSAP 2006-2011 (2.9)/Eastfield NM Workshop	Maximise the use of Brownfield Land opportunities where appropriate	Mar 2010	Mar 2015	Development Control Team	Existing staffing resources	Development Control Manager
1.12	Work in partnership with University to establish student accommodation need	Visioning Days/ RSL Workshop	Engage with the University and establish level of need	Mar 2010	Mar 2012	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
1.13	Work in partnership with all accredited landlords and lettings agencies to increase the supply of private rented accommodation as an affordable alternative.	Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013	Increase the number of dwellings let through CBL to private rented accommodation each year	Apr 2010	Mar 2015	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
1.14	Expand Under Occupation Scheme to RSL partners	NEW	Ensure all RSL Partners signed up to scheme	Sep 2010	Apr 2011	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager

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Housing Strategy Priority 2 – Create resilient and Cohesive Communities

No.	Objective	Source	Milestones & Actions	Monitoring & Progress			Resource Implications	Lead Person
				Start	Finish	Monitored by		
2.1	Develop a BME Housing Strategy Update	HSIP 6.13	1. Commission BME Housing Needs Survey 2. Develop a Strategy for Consultation	Nov 2009	Apr 2010	Housing Strategy Team	£31,000 S106 funds	Housing Strategy Manager
				Apr 2010	July 2010	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
2.2	Review policy on lettings to Ex-Offenders and how this relates to CBL	CASPAR NR Workshop	Review lettings policy and report findings	Mar 2010	Mar 2011	Housing Solutions Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
2.3	Deliver Places of Change Scheme on time	NEW	1. Deliver hand over of the site to Midland Heart	Nov 2009	Mar 2010	Housing Strategy Team	CLG £1.42m, £149,971 S106 funding	Housing Strategy Manager
			2. Complete scheme	Mar 2010	Sep 2011	Housing Strategy Team		Housing Strategy Manager
2.4	Work in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council to address the ageing population	Eastfield NM Workshop	1. Provide 63 extra care affordable dwellings per year (52 S/O and 11 SR)	Mar 2010	Mar 2015	Housing Strategy Team	NAHP Funding/RSL Partners	Housing Strategy Manager
			2. Work with NHS and NCC on funding packages to tackle Energy Efficiency and prevent admissions	Sep 2010	Sep 2011	Housing Strategy Manager	NHS/NCC	Housing Strategy Manager
2.5	Complete review of Sheltered Housing	NEW/ CASPAR NR Workshop	Complete report and review	Jan 2010	Sep 2010	Head of Strategic Housing	Existing staffing resources	Head of Strategic Housing
2.6	Improve prevention of youth homelessness by working in partnership with NCC	Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013	Reduce the number of 16/17 year olds presenting as homeless each year	Apr 2010	Mar 2015	Housing Solutions Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
2.7	Complete Review of Single Persons Accommodation	NEW	Complete review and report with recommendations	Mar 2012	Dec 2012	Head of Housing Needs	Existing staffing resources	Head of Housing Needs
2.8	Continue to reduce the number of homeless households in Temporary Accommodation	Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013	Reduce TA use year on year	Mar 2010	Mar 2015	Housing Solutions Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager

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Housing Strategy Priority 2 – Create resilient and Cohesive Communities

No.	Objective	Source	Milestones & Actions	Monitoring & Progress			Resource Implications	Lead Person
				Start	Finish	Monitored by		
2.9	Aid the WNJPU in the identification of sites for Gypsy and Travellers needs identified in the GTAA 2008	NEW	1. Establish Steering Group 2. Identify potential sites and consult	Jun 2010	Sep 2010	Housing Strategy Team	Existing Staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
				Oct 2010	Mar 2011	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
2.10	Develop an Independent Living Strategy	NEW	Develop strategy for consultation	Sep 2010	Jun 2011	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Team Leader

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Housing Strategy Priority 3 - Deliver well designed, high quality homes, neighbourhoods and services

No.	Objective	Source	Milestones & Actions	Monitoring & Progress			Resource Implications	Lead Person
				Start	Finish	Monitored by		
3.1	Develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy	KLOE, PSL workshop	Develop Strategy for consultation	Jan 2010	Feb 2011	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
3.2	Formulate a framework to allow private landlords to apply for grants	KLOE	Investigate and produce report on use of grants for Private Landlords	Apr 2010	Mar 2012	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
3.3	Develop a Masterplan for regeneration of Spring Boroughs as part of CAAP	NEW	Develop Masterplan of Options in partnership with the Community & Stakeholders	Jan 2010	Mar 2011	Estate Renewal Team	Existing staffing resources/ £180k revenue costs	Housing Asset Manager/Housing Strategy Manager
3.4	Consider selective licensing scheme of HMO's in Northampton	KLOE/CASPAR NR Workshop	Develop report on potential to adopt selective licensing	Apr 2010	Mar 2011	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
3.5	Commence delivery of Northampton East PFI scheme	NEW	1. Submit OBC to HCA 2. Commence Delivery	Nov 2009 Apr 2013	Jul 2010 Mar 2015	Estate Renewal/Major Works Teams	PFI Credits £100m NBC £5.64m	Housing Asset Manager
3.6	Conduct Overcrowding assessment to impact on housing register	KLOE	Conduct assessment and report findings	Mar 2010	Mar 2011	Housing Solutions Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
3.7	Continue to improve our Council homes	HSAP 2006-2011 (5.1)	Prioritise investment for Decent Homes	Nov 2009	Mar 2014	Major Works Team	5 year Capital Programme	Housing Asset Manager
3.8	Conduct Private Sector Stock Condition Survey Update	KLOE	Commission survey to update knowledge on private sector stock condition	Nov 2009	Oct 2010	Private Sector Housing Team	GF Revenue	Housing Solutions Manager
3.9	Increase membership of Private Landlords on accreditation scheme and link with NALS	PSL Workshop	Increase number of landlords accredited	Jan 2010	Mar 2012	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
3.10	Develop detailed report on stock options following National decision on HRA Finance Reform	NEW	1. Review Implications of Governments proposals	Nov 2009	Jul 2010	Housing Director	Existing staffing resources	Housing Director
			2. Revise Stock Options process	Jul 2010	Mar 2011	Major Works Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Asset Manager
3.11	Consider use of EDMO's in tackling Empty Homes	RSL Workshop/KLOE	Develop report with recommendations	Mar 2010	Mar 2011	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Mgr

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Housing Strategy Priority 3 - Deliver well designed, high quality homes, neighbourhoods and services

No.	Objective	Source	Milestones & Actions	Monitoring & Progress			Resource Implications	Lead Person
				Start	Finish	Monitored by		
3.12	Develop an Affordable Warmth Strategy	Housing Strategy Launch Event	Develop a Strategy for consultation	Sep 2010	Mar 2011	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
3.13	Ensure Design Briefs are sensitive to the needs of the BME Community	Housing Strategy EIA	Consult with BME Communities on a Design DPD	Mar 2011	Mar 2012	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing Resources	Housing Strategy Manager
3.14	Develop a Northampton East Regeneration Strategy	12-week consultation period	Develop Strategy for approval	May 2010	Oct 2010	Regeneration Team	Existing staffing Resources	Regeneration Team Leader

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Housing Strategy Priority 4 – Improve customer access, opportunity and choice

No.	Objective	Source	Milestones & Actions	Monitoring & Progress			Resource Implications	Lead Person
				Start	Finish	Monitored by		
4.1	Engage more effectively with estate agents	Developer & Estate Agent Workshop	1. Develop Questionnaire to understand needs of Private Landlords and agents	Jul 2010	Mar 2011	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Mgr
			2. Consider the use of a forum	Apr 2010	Dec 2010	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Mgr
4.2	Investigate use and implementation of an equity loan scheme	KLOE/HSAP 2006-2011 (5.6)	Investigate use of scheme and develop report outlining recommendations	Jun 2010	Jul 2011	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
4.3	Consider Direct Payments to landlords/agents of Housing Benefit for most Vulnerable Households	Developer & Estate Agent Workshop	Review process of allocating the new Housing Allowance to vulnerable households	Apr 2010	Mar 2011	Housing Benefit/Housing Solutions Teams	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Mgr
4.4	Expand Choice Based Lettings scheme to include Daventry	NEW	Finalise arrangements for having a sub-regional CBL Scheme	Nov 2009	Jul 2010	Housing Solutions Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Mgr
4.5	Develop annual housing event to update partners and residents on housing activities	PSL Workshop	Develop a partner list and arrange first annual event	Apr 2010	Apr 2011	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
4.6	Look at adopting Lifetime homes standard into the affordable housing developments in Northampton	RSL Workshop	Develop Lifetime Homes Standard as part of new Framework approach with RSL partners	Jan 2010	Jul 2010	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
4.7	Improve access to Housing Solutions services	Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013	Revise opening times and consider evening and weekend surgeries	Apr 2010	Mar 2011	Housing Solutions Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
4.8	Continue to provide excellent homelessness prevention services	Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013	Review Housing Advice services and consider one service	Apr 2010	Mar 2011	Housing Solutions Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager

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Housing Strategy Priority 4 – Improve customer access, opportunity and choice

No.	Objective	Source	Milestones & Actions	Monitoring & Progress			Resource Implications	Lead Person
				Start	Finish	Monitored by		
4.9	Review existing Housing groups as part of strategic partnership approach	KLOE	Produce a report on the review with recommendations	Oct 2010	Sep 2011	Housing Strategy Steering Panel	Existing Staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
4.10	Monitor the success of Sub-regional private rented letting scheme and look to expand	NEW	Look to expand scheme to other local authorities	Oct 2010	Dec 2012	Housing Strategy Steering Panel	CLG Funding and existing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
4.11	Assess potential to set up a community development trust to maximise community engagement and funding opportunities in the delivery of regeneration activities	12 week consultation period	Conduct a review and report on the merits of adopting such an approach	Sep 2011	Dec 2012	Housing Strategy Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
4.12	Promote Low Cost Home Ownership schemes to BME households via targeted publicity campaigns and the production of BME specific literature	Housing Strategy EIA	Produce LCHO literature in relevant languages and promote the option more amongst BME Groups	Oct 2010	Dec 2011	Housing Equality Champions Group	Existing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
4.13	Develop specialist housing advice services to support BME Households in the private rented sector and provide guidance to landlords	Housing Strategy EIA	Provide BME households with better advice around standards and their rights	Jan 2011	Dec 2011	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Solutions Manager
4.14	Develop a Customer Engagement Strategy	HSAP 2006-2011 (2.7)	Produce a customer engagement strategy	Oct 2010	June 2011	Performance Management Team	Existing staffing resources	Housing Strategy Manager
4.15	Upgrade IT Systems to provide more improved services to customers	HSAP 2006-2011 (3.7)	Fully implement all modules of the IBS System	Jan 2010	Oct 2010	Rent Income Team	£180K HRA	Housing Strategy Manager

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Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Action Plan 2006-2011 Update

This section highlights what has been achieved from the previous Housing Strategy Action Plan, what has been taken off and what actions are still outstanding, and will need to be carried forward into this Housing Strategy to be delivered. Target Status colours are Green for completed, Amber is to transfer to the 2010-2015 Action Plan as part of an on-going action and Red is an action that is no longer applicable or failed to complete

Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Increase the supply of affordable housing	1.1	Provide Council owned land or assets to support new affordable housing development	Number of affordable schemes enabled through land provision	March 2008	Land provided for Woodside Way and Places of Change	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015
	1.2	Ensure 35% requirement of affordable homes on new developments	Review Section 106 policy & numbers achieved	March 2007	S106 agreed and achieved 35% on sites	Completed
	1.3	Support the completion of 1450 new homes annually 2006-2011	Number of annual completions	Annual	Numbers not achieved due to economic climate	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015
	1.5	Widen opportunities to home ownership	Investigate ways to improve access	August 2007	Report on LCHO initiatives produced May 09	Completed
	1.6	Ensure supply of affordable housing addresses need for right mix of size & type	Implement 70% rented and 30% shared ownership	March 2008	70/30 split on developments over 15 units achieved	Completed
	1.7	Maximise inward investment to develop affordable housing across all tenures	Carry out research into range of grant availability	June 2007	Grant achieved on RSL sites and LA Newbuild scheme	Completed
	1.8	Make best use of resources by taking action to reduce under-occupation	Increase number of under-occupied properties available for re-letting	March 2008	Under-Occupation scheme launched on 1 st Dec 2009	Completed
	1.9	Work with housing services to reduce length of time properties are void	Reduction in time taken to re-let a Council property	March 2007	Target in 2009/10 was 24 days, achieved 23.99	Completed

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Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Increase the supply of affordable housing	1.10	Investigate ways to bring empty properties back into use	Investigate use of CPO and then transfer to RSL	September 2007	Not achieved. To be part of new PSH Strategy	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015
	1.11	Develop and implement a Housing Asset Management Strategy	Complete HAMS	Ongoing	HAMS 2010-2015 going to Cabinet in June 2010	Completed
	1.12	Develop targets for energy efficiency in new affordable homes	All new homes to be CSH level 3	Ongoing	All affordable homes after April 2008 are built to CSH 3	Completed
	1.13	Set appropriate design guidance for the development of new affordable homes	Work towards HC SDS standards	Ongoing	HCA design & Quality standards now used on all new homes	Completed
	1.14	Support the development of environmentally friendly and sustainable homes on new developments	All properties to achieve CSH Level 3	Ongoing	Upton achieved 6 dwellings at CSH Level 6. First in Country	Completed
	1.15	Influence early infrastructure contributions by working with WNDC	Involvement in the WNDC Growth Delivery Plan	Ongoing	Contributed to WNDC Consultation in June 2008	Completed
	1.16	Examine the flexibility of affordable housing on larger sites	Review guidance and Policies	December 2007	Conducted a viability assessment as part of SHMA 2009 report	Completed
	1.17	Agree new Section 106 in partnership with WNDC	Develop new policy	April 2008	Not achieved. Carried forward to new strategy	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015
	1.18	Work with our RSL partners to ensure that RCGF is used within Northampton	Develop Agreement with RSL Partners	December 2008	Not achieved. Carried forward to new Strategy	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015

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Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Create Sustainable Communities	2.1	Plan for the renaissance of the town centre	Agreement of Central Area Action Plan	December 2009	Draft CAAP developed for consultation	Completed
	2.2	Contribute to regeneration initiatives that will revive deprived neighbourhoods	Neighbourhood Mgt and CASPAR Initiatives	March 2008	Transferred to Thomas Hall's department	No longer main responsibility of Housing
	2.3	Maximise role of RSLs in developing communities	Produce Action Plan for RSL Management Group	March 2008	Now to be part of new RSL Framework approach	To be carried forward HSAP 2010-2015
	2.4	Support crime and anti-social behaviour reduction	Improve partnership working	March 2008	New ASB Module on IBS, and Officers now attend all resident group meetings	Completed
	2.5	Secure investment in community infrastructure to support integration of new people and communities into our town	Secure Agreement for Neighbourhood Management Structures	March 2007	New Neighbourhood Management Areas established by Julie Seddon	Completed
	2.6	Confirm strong emphasis of neighbourhood management on our estates	Consider role of housing landlord services in Neighbourhood Management	March 2008	Introduced Neighbourhood Walkabouts and officers attend all residents meetings	Completed
	2.7	Develop Tenant Participation Strategy	Develop a Tenant Participation Strategy	December 2007	Not Achieved. New Customer Engagement Strategy to be developed	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015
	2.8	Support the development of mixed tenure and mixed income communities	Implement 70% rent and 30% shared ownership on schemes	March 2008	70% rent and 30% implemented on schemes	Completed
	2.9	Support the development of brownfield sites	Measure percentage of Brownfield Sites used	Ongoing	To be carried forward to new Strategy	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015

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Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Improve the Housing Service	3.1	Work to prevent homelessness by providing excellent advice services and assistance	Reduction in number of homeless cases made and accepted and development of strategy	December 2007	Over 1000 homeless preventions taking place during 2009 and Homelessness Strategy developed	Completed
	3.2	Ensure vulnerable groups have access to services to provide access to suitable accommodation and housing related support	Identification of priority groups in order to target resources	April 2007	Launched Gateway Services which assess all vulnerable groups	Completed
	3.3	Work to reduce the amount of time properties are void to maximise use of available resources	Reduction in the amount of time taken to re-let empty Council properties	Annual	2009/10 target was 24 days, outturn was 23.99 days	Completed
	3.4	Work to improve the revenues and benefits performance, e.g. by reviewing staffing structures, policies and procedures and working practices	An improved customer service in Housing Benefit Claims	November 2006	Review complete and service is now performing at a high level	Completed
	3.5	Implement and monitor the Housing Services Improvement Plan which sets the priorities for improving the housing service	To produce a revised HSIP following Audit Commission light touch	November 2006	Implemented the 2008-2010 Housing Service Improvement Plan	Completed
	3.6	Use choice-based lettings to increase accessibility	To implement choice based lettings	May 2008	CBL launched with over 1,000 properties let	Completed
	3.7	Upgrade IT Systems to provide more improved services to customers	Introduction of integrated Housing IT system (IBS)	March 2008	Not all modules completed. New project plan to be developed following recommendations from an independent review	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015

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Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Improve the Housing Service	3.8	Undertake tenant satisfaction survey to ascertain our customer needs, and to ensure that customer feedback is recorded, reported and used to inform service delivery	To complete a STATUS tenant satisfaction survey and improved BVPI 74 & 75 scores	March 2008	Survey completed. Areas of concerns identified will feed into the Directorate Service Plan	Completed
	3.9	Communicate more effectively with customers	Target for answering calls through new Automatic Call Distribution service 96%, review access to services. 90% customers wait less than 20 minutes	March 2007	Completed review of services and all targets achieved	Completed
	3.10	Improve telephone contact for housing services	Implementation of phase 3 of contact centre	September 2007	Phase 3 now completed	Completed
	3.11	Improve telephone contact for Housing Benefits service	Ensure waiting times hit interim targets – 50% of calls to be answered within 15 seconds and 85% calls answered overall	March 2007	All Targets achieved	Completed
	3.12	Ensure mutual exchange information is accessible to customers	Ensure mutual exchange information is available on the Northampton Council website	April 2007	Mutual Exchange information now available on website	Completed

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Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Provide support to vulnerable people	4.1	Ensure vulnerable groups have access to suitable accommodation and housing related support, by working in partnership with providers and alongside the Supporting People Strategy to develop positive outcomes	Set up supported housing group in order to identify priority groups and their different needs	March 2007	Supported Housing group set up in August 2007. This will also be carried forward in the Independent Living Strategy	Completed
	4.2	Create a sustainable environment where the rights and responsibilities of both Gypsies and Travellers and the settled community are respected, by developing authorised sites for travellers	Develop county wide Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment and produce a strategy	December 2007	GTAA completed in 2008, however strategy not produced as will be contained in the Housing Strategy 2010-2015	Completed
	4.3	Work in partnership to prevent homelessness, for example by working with private sector landlords to enable homeless households to access private rented accommodation	Number of additional units provided	March 2008	Over 100 landlords are accredited now, and 1 in 2 lets through CBL are from private rented sector	Complete
	4.4	Reduce reliance on temporary accommodation by supporting the provision of more secure accommodation by 2008	Number of people using Temporary Accommodation	Quarterly Monitoring	Use of temporary accommodation has been reduced	Completed
	4.5	Action to enable vulnerable home owners to remain in their own homes, e.g. by providing maintenance grants or disabled adaptations, or by the provision of appropriate advice	Development of Equity Release Scheme	March 2008	Despite no Equity release scheme yet, this is continuing to be reviewed and will be looked at in the new Strategy	To be carried forward to HSAP 2010-2015
	4.7	Develop more and improved supported accommodation e.g. for adults with learning disabilities and/or teenage parents	Priority groups and their needs identified	December 2007	Clients with Mental Health difficulties identified as priority by Supporting People and two schemes progressed. Places of Change also identified as a priority and scheme progressing	Completed

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Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Provide Support to Vulnerable people	4.8	Strengthen protocols for provision of support to vulnerable groups	Completion of process Mapping Exercise	January 2008	Gateway Services now launched on 1 st April 2009	Completed
	4.9	Dealing effectively with racial harassment	BVPI 164 – Equal access to social housing and BVPI 175 – Racial incidents resulting in further action	March 2008	The Government have now deleted BVPI 164 as a Performance Indicator and therefore no longer used	No longer monitored
	4.10	Production of a BME Housing Strategy	Completion of Strategy	July 2007	This has been carried forward to new strategy and a Draft is completed for consultation	Completed

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Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Meet the Decent Homes Standard	5.1	Achieve Decent Homes Standard in the Council stock by 2010	Achieve full spend of the annual capital programme for life of this strategy. Total council homes meeting the decent homes standard (Currently 67% achieved)	Achieve by 2010	The Council commenced phase 1 of the Decent Homes Standard. Full compliance is scheduled for 2014 subject to financial circumstances and changes	To be carried forward to the HSAP 2010-2015
	5.2	Develop and implement asset management strategy, and decent homes standard implementation plan	Production of an Asset Management Strategy for the Council's housing stock	Ongoing	Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010-2015 developed and going to cabinet in June 2010	Completed
	5.3	Support achievement of Decent Homes Standard in the private sector by 2010 e.g. by reviewing eligibility criteria for grants	Achieve full spend of available capital programme annually for the life of this strategy	Ongoing	Decent Homes Targets are no longer monitored by Government and this will be taken forward in Private Sector Housing Strategy	No longer a Government PI
	5.4	Secure improvement to homes in the private sector which are unfit or in poor repair	Implementation of private sector renewal strategy	May 2008	100% of improvement grants programme committed during 2008/09 and current financial year. Strategy to be developed as part of new Housing Strategy	Completed
	5.5	Review renewal and regeneration strategies in the light of stock condition information	Consideration by knowledge and information management group	March 2008	Stock condition survey to be completed December 2009	Completed

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Priority	Objectives		Measure/Action	Completion Date	Outcome/Progress	Target Status
	No.	Description				
Meet the Decent Homes Standard	5.6	Enable vulnerable home owners to remain in their homes e.g. by investing loans and equity schemes to enable vulnerable home owners to access funds to repair and renovate their homes	Consideration by knowledge and information management group	June 2007	Mortgage rescue scheme launched and homeless prevention toolbox has resulted in over 1,000 customers being prevented from becoming homeless in 2009	Completed
	5.7	Improve energy efficiency across all tenures, e.g. by promoting grants and initiatives for owner-occupiers to improve the energy efficiency of their homes	Measure – BVPI 63 – Energy Efficiency SAP Rating – Current performance 67. Two new team leaders to be recruited for gas and electrical services, who will produce strategy for energy efficiency in public sector following report by Savills and NBA consultants	March 2007	Exceeded Government targets for this area a year earlier than timeframe allowed for. Private Sector House condition survey to report in 2010 on updated SAP rating	Completed

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Appendix 3 – Glossary of Terms

Term Used	What it means
BME	Black Minority Ethnic – category used to describe any ethnicity other than White British
CAAP	Central Area Action Plan – Development plan document that is part of the Joint Core Strategy, and illustrates the options to regenerate the town centre of Northampton.
DPD	Development Plan Document – These are documents that support the Joint Core Strategy and offer more detailed information.
DHS	Decent Homes Standard – This is a National standard implemented by the Government in 2000, to bring all social rented homes up to a certain decency level.
DMT	Directorate Management Team
GOEM	Government Office East Midlands
GTAA	Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment – This was conducted County wide and a report was produced in 2008
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency – Formed by the amalgamation of English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation, and provided with statutory powers as part of the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008
HAMS	Housing Asset Management Strategy
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
HQN	Housing Quality Network – This is an organisation that works with Local Authorities and other Housing organisations to promote Best Practice and provide guidance on Government Policy
HSSP	Housing Strategy Steering Panel – Group of Northampton Borough Council Officers and Elected Members to monitor the delivery of the Housing Strategy
KLOE	Key Line of Enquiry – Toolkit provided by the Audit Commission for Local Authorities to assess how their services are performing against criteria of a good and excellent organisation
LIP	Local Investment Plan – Plan of actions that is agreed by the Homes and Communities Agency and the Housing Market Area they are working with as part of the Single Conversation to identify what the strategic priorities are for the area. For Northampton this means West Northamptonshire level.
LIA	Local Investment Agreement – Agreement that states what funding the Homes and Communities Agency will provide the Housing Market Area, and detail what each partner within the Housing Market Area will also bring to the table to ensure the delivery of the Local Investment Plan. For Northampton this means West Northamptonshire level.

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Appendix 3 – Glossary of Terms

Term Used	What it means
LAA	Local Area Agreement – This is an agreement between a local authority (Unitary) or County Council (two tier authorities) and Central Government based on 35 National Performance Indicators out of the National suite of indicators. Depending on performance additional funding can be provided for stretch targets being achieved
LDF	Local Development Framework – This replaced the old planning policy system, and provides a new system for developing planning documents. The main document in the LDF is a Core Strategy, and then underneath this is the Development Plan Documents.
MAA	Multi Area Agreement – This is similar to a Local Area Agreement, but is related to a number of local authorities agreeing targets and working on a sub-regional or City Regional level.
NIA	Northampton Implementation Area – This is an area referred to in the East Midlands Regional Plan and the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. The boundary can be defined as Northampton Borough Council, with the inclusion of the Sustainable Urban Extensions in Daventry and South Northamptonshire.
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
RSL	Registered Social Landlord – Also referred to as Housing Associations
RTB	Right to Buy – Allows Local Authority tenants the right to buy their own home, providing certain criteria has been met. The alternative for RSL tenants is the 'Right to Acquire (RTA)
Single Conversation	This is the new process in which the Homes and Communities Agency want to work with Local Authorities and their partners in agreed Housing Market Areas. This consists of agreeing a Local Investment Plan (LIP) and a Local Investment Agreement (LIA)
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SOA	Super Output Area
SUE	Sustainable Urban Extension – typically large Greenfield land, which is capable of providing space for thousands of extra homes to be built as part of the identified need in the East Midlands Regional Plan
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment – Provides the evidence base for the Core Strategy, within a Local Development Framework
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment – Provides information on how much land is available for housing development over a 5 year period, and then 10 and 15 year period

Appendices

Appendix 4 – Consultation Process

The consultation process consisted of many processes to get to the stage of final approval of the Housing Strategy, and these are explained below.

Visioning Days

These sessions were held with managers within the Council to ascertain whether the vision and priorities were right for the Housing Strategy. The diagram in Figure 1.4 in Chapter 1, is the diagram that was used to engage with internal colleagues. Following on from these sessions, the four priorities of the Housing Strategy were agreed and then objectives were suggested under each priority area. This document was then considered amongst a wider group of stakeholders as part of the next process.

Workshop Sessions

The workshop sessions included consultation with partners, but also going out into the community and speaking with residents groups. The following groups were held and these groups were asked to further comment on the priorities diagram and objectives that had been developed as part of the visioning days process:

- Private Sector Landlord workshop;
- Spencer Neighbourhood Management Board;
- RSL Partners workshop;
- Eastfield and Headlands Neighbourhood Management Board;
- East Area workshop;
- Developer and Estate Agents workshop; and
- CASPAR Neighbourhood Renewal meeting

Housing Strategy Launch Event

On the 16th December a launch event was held in the Great Hall, Guildhall which over 40 partners and residents attended. This Event presented information on the Housing Strategy and Housing Asset Management Strategy and held workshops for delegates to make comments on the four priorities of the emerging Housing Strategy and what the key objectives should be. The launch event was also the start for the 12-week consultation process, which was advertised in public buildings and also on the JC Decaux Bus Shelters for 2 weeks in February 2010. The comments in the table below are from the 12-week consultation period and the workshop sessions.

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Appendix 4

No.	Consultation Comment	Stage of Consultation	What we will do
1	'I never read about elderly and infirm in Council residential homes across Northampton. I felt they need to be incorporated, especially now we have a programme on closures of residential homes across the Borough'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	Included a more detailed response in Chapter 4 on what the issues are and what the key objectives will be for tackling the ageing population
2	'I was disappointed to see that while the PFI project obviously gets high priority, there is no mention of the rest of Northampton East, and specifically no mention of the other two PFI candidate estates, Bellinge and Blackthorn. Residents were told that plan B would be developed through the Housing Strategy'.	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	Provided more detail in Chapter 4, under priority 3 on the PFI priority objective and included development of Northampton East Regeneration Strategy as a key objective which will include Bellinge & Blackthorn Estates.
3	'Delivering the local authority new build schemes, should be a key objective under priority 1'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	The delivery of the Woodside Way scheme has now been made a key objective in Chapter 4
4	'Consider retrofitting to enhance environmental issues'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	We have added a new section in Chapter 4, under priority 3, which is to develop an affordable warmth strategy and improve energy efficiency of all the stock
5	'Review the Governments proposal on Council Housing Finance and consider impact on stock options work, should be a priority'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	We have added a new section in Chapter 4, under priority 3, to provide more detail on stock options and make a review a key objective
6	'Consider use of EDMO's in tackling Empty Homes and develop an Empty Homes Strategy'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	As part of chapter 4, a key objective will be to develop a 'private sector housing strategy', which includes a detailed section on Empty Homes
7	'Work in partnership with NCC to address ageing population should be a priority'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	In chapter 4, we have included a key objective under priority 2 to work in partnership with NCC to address an ageing population
8	'Improve prevention of youth homelessness by working in partnership with NCC should be a priority'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	In Chapter 4, under priority 2 we have included a section on Homelessness Prevention and a key objective will be to work in partnership with Adult services to provide a joined up approach

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Appendix 4

No.	Consultation Comment	Stage of Consultation	What we will do
9	'Mortgage rescue scheme should be expanded and be a priority'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	In Chapter 4, under priority 2 we have included a section on homelessness prevention and mortgage rescue will be a priority to deliver this
10	'Develop a strategy for under occupation'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	In Chapter 4 under priority 1, we have included a section on overcrowding and under occupation and explained our under occupation scheme in more detail and made it a priority
11	'Look at adopting Life Time Homes Standard as part of Affordable Housing programme, should be a priority'	Housing Strategy Launch Event	As part of Chapter 4, under priority 3, we have included a section on Property Design and in the action plan is an action to increase the Life Time Homes standard in the development of all affordable housing
12	'Consider direct payments to landlords/agents of Housing Benefit for most Vulnerable Households'	Developer & Estate Agent Workshop	We have now included this as an action, within the Action Plan
13	'Work in partnership with the NHS and County Council to put funding packages in place to tackle ageing population and energy efficiency measures'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have included a section in Chapter 4, under priority 2 that tackles the response to an ageing population and will be an action in the action plan
14	'It is important that the potential to work with the force and NFRS is recognised when working with vulnerable people'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have included a section within Chapter 4 under priority 4 that addresses partnership working and to improve working relationships with the police and NFRS
15	'Ensure the police crime prevention officers or crime prevention design advisors are involved with the design of new housing schemes'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have included in Chapter 4, under priority 3 a section on property design and an action for crime prevention officers to be involved in the design stage of all affordable housing schemes
16	'All homes (new-build) to have secured by design principles, within the new Code for Sustainable Homes standards'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have included this as an action within the action plan.
17	'Encourage the use of strengthened partnership arrangements to ensure that partners can be updated on housing activities more frequently than on an annual basis'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have included an action to revise our housing partnership newsletter to ensure all partners receive this.

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Appendix 4

No.	Consultation Comment	Stage of Consultation	What we will do
18	A specific strategy that addresses the need to support older people within the community is essential'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have included an action to develop an Independent Living Strategy and there is also a new section in Chapter 4, under priority 2, which explains what we are doing in response to an ageing population
19	'There is no reference to Northampton Economic Regeneration Strategy 2008'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have included the Northampton Economic Regeneration Strategy 2008 in Chapter 1 under local context
20	'There is no mention of how the strategy plans to assist residents with physical disabilities, despite this being identified as the second highest need category in the most recent housing needs survey'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have now included a section on meeting the needs of people with disabilities in Chapter 3 of the Strategy
21	'Priority one does not mention how future supply can/will tackle the overcrowding problem in northampton'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have now included a section in Chapter 4, priority 1 of how we are tackling the overcrowding problem in Northampton
22	'Assess the need for student accommodation'	Visioning Day Events/RSL Workshop	We will include an action in the action plan to look at working with the university to establish additional need requirements.
23	'Continue to support the development of Brownfield Sites'	Eastfield Neighbourhood Management Workshop	We have included an action in the action plan to address this
24	'Review policy on lettings to ex-offenders and how this relates to CBL'	CASPAR Neighbourhood Renewal Meeting	We have included an action in the action plan to address this
25	'Complete review of sheltered housing'	CASPAR Neighbourhood Renewal Meeting	We have included a section in chapter 4, under priority 3 which is the sheltered housing review and it is an action to deliver in the action plan
26	'Increase membership of private landlords on accreditation scheme and link with NALS'	Private Sector Landlord Workshop	We have included an action within the action plan to deliver this
27	'Develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy'	Private Sector Landlord Workshop	We have made this a priority objective in the Strategy in Chapter 4 under priority 3.

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Appendix 4

No.	Consultation Comment	Stage of Consultation	What we will do
28	'Consider selective licensing scheme of HMO's in Northampton	CASPAR Neighbourhood Renewal Meeting	We have included this as an action within the action plan
29	'Consider use of EDMO's in tackling Empty Homes	RSL Workshop	We have included this as an action in the Action Plan, and also covered in development of a private sector housing strategy
30	'Engage more effectively with estate agents'	Developer & Estate Agent Workshop	We have included this as an action within the Action Plan
31	'Develop annual housing event to update partners and residents on housing activities'	Private Sector Landlord Workshop	We have developed an action with the Action Plan to address this
32	'Consider updating the Housing Needs Data'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We will consider this within the action plan
33	'Reference should be made to planning policy statement 3'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have now included a section on Planning Policy Statement 3 under Chapter 1, within the National Context section.
34	'No reference to the Regional Economic Strategy'	Housing Strategy 12-week consultation period	We have now included this strategy in Chapter 1, under Regional Context.

Appendices

Appendix 5 – Contact details for Northampton Borough Council Staff

The Council appreciate that staff details can change over a period of time. Therefore during this 5 year strategy period, this appendix will be updated on a regular basis when changes in personnel occur, and this will be reflected in the electronic document on the website.

Officer Name	Job Title	Service Area	Responsible For	Contact Details	
				Telephone Number	E-mail
Gary Parsons	Housing Strategy Manager	Housing Strategy & Policy Development	Housing Strategy, RSL Partners, Affordable Housing Delivery, External funding bids	01604 837970	gparsons@northampton.gov.uk
Yvonne Markie	Housing Strategy Team Leader	Housing Strategy	Housing Strategy, RSL Partners, Affordable Housing Delivery, External funding bids	01604 838802	ymarkie@northampton.gov.uk
Gary Owens	Housing Strategy Officer	Housing Strategy	Housing Strategy, RSL Partners, Affordable Housing Delivery, External funding bids	01604 837146	gowens@northampton.gov.uk
Lauren Humber	Housing Strategy Officer	Housing Strategy	Housing Strategy, RSL Partners, Affordable Housing Delivery, External funding bids	01604 838773	lhumber@northampton.gov.uk
Andrew Treweek	Housing Asset Strategy Manager	Housing Asset Management	Devise Capital programmes to procure, manage and deliver works into peoples homes in line with the Council's Housing Asset Strategy	01604 838820	atreweek@northampton.gov.uk
Cath Maddison	Major Works Team Leader	Planned and Major Works	Delivery of council housing capital programme, including decent homes.	01604 838316	cmaddison@northampton.gov.uk

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Officer Name	Job Title	Service Area	Responsible For	Contact Details	
				Telephone Number	E-mail
Lesley Dalby	Estates Renewal Team Leader	Estates Renewal	Develop and oversee the Council's Asset Management Strategy including the Council's strategy for delivering the Decent Homes programme	01604 838101	ldalby@northampton.gov.uk
Rachael Hawthorne	Estates Renewal Project Officer	Estates Renewal	Develop and oversee the Council's Asset Management Strategy including the Council's strategy for delivering the Decent Homes programme	01604 838594	rhawthorne@northampton.gov.uk
Alice Arden-Barnett	Estates Renewal Project Officer	Estates Renewal	Responsible for the development and delivery of Northampton's PFI project	01604 838633	aarden@northampton.gov.uk
Tim Ansell	Housing Services Manager	Tenancy Management	The management of housing officers, rent income and general housing management of council housing.	01604 838756	tansell@northampton.gov.uk
Darren Berrick	Housing Services Team Leader	Housing Services	Team leader of housing officers which operate in the Northampton East area	01604 838106	dberrick@northampton.gov.uk
Peter Haytack	Housing Services Team Leader	Housing Landlord Services	Team Leader of housing officers which operate in West Northampton		
Paul Allen	Voids Manager	Property Maintenance	In charge of voids and state of property upon re-let	01604 838875	pallen@northampton.gov.uk
Geoff Seddon	Interim Property Manager	Housing Landlord Services		01604 838886	gseddon@northampton.gov.uk
Ian Swift	Housing Solutions Manager	Housing Needs and Support	Management of the Housing Options, Home Choice, Private Sector Housing, Homeless Teams	01604 838603	iswift@northampton.gov.uk

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Officer Name	Job Title	Service Area	Responsible For	Contact Details	
				Telephone Number	E-mail
Nicky McKenzie	Home Choice and Resettlement Team Leader	Housing Needs and Support	Team leader of administrating the CBL and allocations personnel and systems.	01604 837419	nmckenzie@northampton.gov.uk
Liz Adamson	Private Sector Housing Team Leader	Private Sector Housing Support Service	Provides a range of support and advice services to tenant and landlords in the Private rented sector.	01604 837225	ladamson@northampton.gov.uk
(Recruiting)	Housing Options Team Leader	Housing Needs and Support	Oversees the housing options team which gives advice to customers on their housing options		
Shani Elms	Independent Living Team Leader	Call Care	Administers the call care system and personnel for vulnerable households to access	01604 838248	selms@northampton.gov.uk
Sarah Farrow	Performance Improvement Team Leader	Performance Improvement	Delivering policy and housing improvement agenda.	01604 837270	sfarrow@northampton.gov.uk
Paul Lewin	Planning Policy and Conservation Manager	Planning Policy Support Services	Responsible for the Local Development Framework (the successor to the Local Plan). Provides supplementary planning guidance for Development Control officers and planning professionals. Also monitors housing, commercial and industrial land, providing statistics to national Government.	01604 838734	plewin@northampton.gov.uk
Peter Wright	PFI Project Manager	Estates Renewal	Develop and deliver the Council's PFI programme in Northampton East	01604 838639	pwright@northampton.gov.uk

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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	The West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Council's Approach to Affordable Housing Provision in Northampton
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AGENDA STATUS: Public

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 th June 2010
Key Decision:	Yes
Listed on Forward Plan:	Yes
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	Yes
Directorate:	Planning and Regeneration, Housing
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Richard Church & Councillor Sally Beardsworth
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To report on the significant findings of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- 1.2 To outline the affordable housing policy implications this has for Northampton
- 1.3 To confirm the Council's approach to affordable housing requirements in terms of percentage of affordable dwellings sought in new development, their tenure and size mix; and to adopt this approach for the purposes of development control.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the outputs of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment May 2010 mentioned in this report
- 2.2 Agree that the West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment May 2010 is a robust piece of evidence that the Council should use to inform its decision making with regards to affordable housing planning policies and the Housing Strategy
- 2.3 Agree an affordable housing target of 35% in the Borough to be provided in new developments, subject to viability considerations, for developments of 15 dwellings or ½ hectare in association with Northampton Local Plan policy H32, in advance of a new policy being adopted within the revised West Northamptonshire Local Development Framework.
- 2.4 Agree an affordable housing tenure mix that is based on a target of 70% social rent and 30% intermediate housing types (e.g. new build home buy, below market rent, fixed equity, or other below market housing price products that may become available) within Northampton Borough.
- 2.5 Agree the approach of seeking a target of no more than 15% of affordable dwellings as 1 bed homes, with the Council placing more emphasis on the provision of 2 bed, 3 bed and 4 bed houses as part of any affordable housing negotiated.
- 2.6 Agree that these targets be adopted for the purposes of development control.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 In June 2009 consultants Opinion Research Services (ORS) and Three Dragons were commissioned by the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Officers from both the Planning and Regeneration and Housing Directorates together with officers from Daventry and South Northamptonshire Districts were closely involved with the Joint Planning Unit in commissioning and overseeing the work of the consultants. The Assessment was published by the Joint Planning Unit in May 2010. The Assessment relates to the West Northamptonshire housing market area; it covers Northampton Borough and Daventry and South Northamptonshire Districts. The Assessment has been completed in accordance with national best practice guidelines.
- 3.1.2 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment seeks to identify the amount and type of housing required to meet market and affordable housing needs. This work informs both planning policy and housing strategy for the area. For planning purposes, it will help set an overall affordable housing target and

approach to affordable housing within the Local Development Framework replacing the Structure Plan and Local Plan.

- 3.1.3 Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) (PPS3) states that affordable housing targets should be set within an approved Local Development Framework, which would have been subject to examination for the test of soundness by the Planning Inspectorate. It also is clear about the need for affordable housing targets to be realistic and take into account financial viability. Three Dragons have completed the viability assessment work. This has fed into the affordable housing targets that ORS have recommended and influenced the targets and approach being recommended.
- 3.1.4 Northampton Borough Council has a 'saved' affordable housing policy H32 within the Northampton Local Plan 1997. This does not set a target for the proportion of affordable housing that will be negotiated as part of proposed housing developments. The current applicable target and threshold at which the target would be applied was set in 'Affordable Housing – Council Planning Policy Statement, which the Council adopted in December 2004.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 An Executive Summary of the Assessment as well as the full version of the published report has been made available for viewing in the Members' Room. The key headlines that emerge in relation to affordable housing needs in particular in relation to Northampton and the Northampton Implementation Area are that:
- there is a well evidenced need for a significant number of affordable homes,
 - viability and need considerations give rise to a range of targets across West Northamptonshire and Northampton,
 - there is now a very limited need for intermediate housing (New Build Home Buy/Shared Equity/reduced market rent) affordable housing, particularly in and around Northampton, and
 - although affordable housing need for one-bed room properties is high, the needs of families should be given high priority.

Affordable Housing Targets

- 3.2.2 The Three Dragons work identified that within Northampton and the Northampton Implementation Area (to include the proposed Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) that will be placed adjacent to Northampton Borough) a range of affordable housing percentages as part of new developments will be viable. They believe that a 40% target is achievable in the Southern Fringe and the SUEs. (See Appendix 1 for the classification areas) However, achieving the 35% affordable housing target in the rest of Northampton is more challenging from a viability perspective.
- 3.2.3 Three Dragons propose a 25% affordable housing target for the Suburban Older Urban Areas and Northampton East, recognising that this will be challenging for the latter two areas. They state that any affordable housing provision in the Older Urban Area and Northampton East should be fully supported with grant (either from the local authority itself or from the HCA). A

general recommendation is that individual schemes will need to be negotiated on viability and any change in house prices. The existing 15 dwelling threshold at which affordable housing requirements start is considered to be most appropriate level within Northampton.

- 3.2.4 Three Dragons have subsequently stated that the use of different targets across different parts of a housing market area is becoming more the norm. However, the use of different targets across a town is unusual. As can be seen from Appendix 1 the areas are not necessarily split from each other by for instance large areas of open space, or being separate settlements. For the areas identified there is likely to be much debate about whether the values in this area reflect those that have been identified, or whether another categorisation is more appropriate.
- 3.2.5 In advance of the potential differential targets being more thoroughly tested and possibly adopted within the emerging West Northamptonshire Local Development Framework, for ease of use there is some merit in using a borough wide target. It is proposed that this target is consistent with the 35% sought in 'Affordable Housing – Council Planning Policy Statement adopted in December 2004. Whilst this may mean lower targets than could possibly be achieved within the SUEs, it is considered that there will need to be further work done. This work will identify the extent to which a higher percentage could be sought, given that overall the affordable housing need within the Northampton Implementation Area is 33.7% of all housing to be delivered. From a sustainable communities' perspective the 35% is a good percentage to achieve. As evidenced by the Three Dragons work there does however need to be recognition that on many sites there will need to be a more detailed study of viability.

Affordable Housing Tenures

- 3.2.6 In relation to Northampton, the Assessment has a number of recommendations on the type of tenure appropriate. When considering the potential housing that will be delivered within Northampton over the period 2008-2026, there is a heavy skew towards the need for social rented property. The Assessment identifies that in order to meet affordable needs, 71.9% of the 8,100 homes that will need to be delivered in the Borough until 2026 will need to be affordable. All this affordable housing should all be social rented accommodation. There is no need for intermediate housing.
- 3.2.7 Clearly this is a very high proportion of social rented affordable housing that would be very difficult to fully deliver as an affordable housing target in association with new developments. It also does not take into account the fact that significant amounts of housing related to the needs of Northampton will be provided outside but adjacent to the Borough in the Northampton Implementation Area. Taking this additional development into account, a social rented target of 33.3% is required to meet need, with a very small proportion (0.4%) intermediate. The Council will need to work with Daventry and South Northamptonshire Councils to ensure that there is the ability for nominations from Northampton to be housed within the Sustainable Urban Extensions on Northampton's borders.

3.2.8 ORS suggest however that small increases in house prices could create the need for much more intermediate housing. In reality significant levels of new housing activity are not likely to occur until there has been a reasonable house price rise. Notwithstanding the current overall needs, the provision of intermediate housing particularly within the SUEs would create more sustainable communities. It will not result in a situation of only market and social rented housing being provided in development. It will create more balanced communities by allowing those who might be able to afford to buy a used home, the opportunity of living in SUEs where prices are likely to be higher than the rest of Northampton. On this basis, in order to ensure that in the longer term there is a range of affordable housing provided in new developments, it is proposed that a 70% target for social rent and a 30% target for intermediate housing are sought within negotiations for proportions of affordable housing. This is the mix that has been assumed within the Three Dragons viability work and is considered the most appropriate for the purposes of negotiating with developers. A significant increase in the proportion of social rent will substantially affect viability and because of likely levels of social housing grant required from the Homes and Communities Agency is likely to reduce the amount of affordable housing attained overall.

Affordable house sizes required

- 3.2.9 For Northampton, when looking at affordable housing needs, of the 5,800 social rented homes required, in purely needs terms 39% are 1 bed, 31% are 2 bed, 27% are three bed and 2% are 4 bed. For the NIA these are 37% are 1 bed, 30% are 2 bed, 29% are three bed and 4% are 4 bed.
- 3.2.10 It is recognised that from a pure needs perspective the highest numbers will be generated by single people and couples without children, or with one child. When considered against the Government's definition of need, these groups will only require 1 or 2 bedroom properties. However, there are issues with using this need to literally interpret what should be negotiated as the size of accommodation agreed when providing affordable housing in association with new development.
- 3.2.11 Historically, although the Council has had success in negotiating affordable housing targets, there is still a shortfall against requirements. In particular the needs of larger households are more pressing and cause more pressing social issues than those of single people or couples. In addition there are management issues associated with the provision of a lot of one bedroom dwellings. Housing many people with the same characteristics can create problems. The one bedroom properties have a much higher turnover of occupants than other sizes of dwellings. In addition in times of affordable housing shortage they do not provide the flexibility to meet a range of housing needs that 2 bed properties or larger do. The cost of providing extra bedrooms is small against the capital expenditure associated with a one bed property.
- 3.2.12 There is a strong case against seeking to ensure that due to priority need requirements of larger households to not seek so much 1 bed property as the assessment shows and place more emphasis on 2 bed homes. Evidence of the waiting list information and allocation priorities indicate the need to provide

more houses rather than flats to meet more pressing affordable needs. On this basis it is considered appropriate to seek no more than 15% of one bed affordable homes within new developments.

Timing of the Local Development Framework Adoption Process

- 3.2.13 Work is progressing on the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. A Pre-Submission Draft will be issued for consultation in October. It is likely that the document will set out the amount of affordable housing required in numbers, although it is not yet clear whether it will set a percentage target to be achieved in association with planning obligations, or whether these will be included within the proposed Planning Obligations Development Plan Document, which will also be go to Pre-Submission Stage in October 10. Given that there are planning applications for urban extensions currently awaiting determination there is some merit in the meantime in the Council using the findings of the Assessment to set out its response and applications that are submitted.

3.3 Choices (Options)

Option A

- 3.3.1 Do nothing; do not take into account the results of the SHMA when negotiating affordable housing in association with new developments. This is not considered appropriate. There is a need to recognise that affordable housing requirements have changed with the housing market and that these should be reflected in the amount and type of affordable housing sought. There also needs to be further clarity on the Council's position with regards to tenure split and bedroom size than is set out in the 'Affordable Housing – Council Planning Policy Statement, which the Council adopted in December 2004.

Option B

- 3.3.2 Set the affordable housing target as recommended by Three Dragons, and the tenure mix and property sizes at the levels suggested in ORS in the Assessment. With regards to the lower targets than 35% the housing market has the potential to change very quickly, with prices rising particularly fast. In recent history 35% affordable housing has been achieved on sites within areas identified as marginal within the Three Dragons work. Given the high need for affordable housing within the Borough all potential sources should be identified. The Council can through the viability tool kit provided by Three Dragons take into account circumstances at the time to decide on the extent to which departure from higher affordable housing targets might be appropriate. With regards to the 40% target for SUEs suggested by Three Dragons, in the short term this is not considered appropriate to seek this amount, but that this be further tested as part of the advancement of the West Northamptonshire Local Development Framework.
- 3.3.3 With regards to tenure mix, it is considered that whilst need is overwhelmingly for social rented property, that there is merit, particularly in the Sustainable Urban Extensions in having an element of intermediate housing to ensure more balanced communities and opportunities for those that can afford more than social rent, but not market properties to live.

- 3.3.4 In addition, there is merit in targeting the affordable dwellings more towards priority needs and looking to longer term flexibility and stock management issues than more immediate needs. For this reason it is not considered that such an emphasis should be placed on 1 bed properties (which will invariably be in the form of flats).

Option C

- 3.3.5 Seek an affordable housing target of 35% target across the Borough with the opportunity for the developer to show with tangible evidence that site viability would be adversely affected that the percentage would be able to drop. This is the preferred option in advance of the West Northamptonshire Local Development Framework substantially moving forward. The approach of setting a target that is flexible subject to taking into account viability on a site by site basis has been approved by the planning inspectorate when examining Wakefield Council's planning policies that have been adopted post the downturn in the housing market.
- 3.3.6 To seek an affordable housing tenure mix that is based on 70% social rent and 30% intermediate target within Northampton Borough. This is the preferred option as it will give considerable priority to meeting essential needs, but that there is merit, particularly in the Sustainable Urban Extensions in having an element of intermediate housing to ensure more balanced communities and opportunities for those that can afford more than social rent, but not market properties to live.
- 3.3.7 Seek no more than 15% of affordable dwellings as 1 bed homes, with the Council placing more emphasis on the provision of 2 bed, 3 bed and 4 bed houses as part of any affordable housing negotiated. This is the preferred option it targets the affordable dwellings more towards priority needs and provides longer term flexibility particularly for stock management a higher emphasis on 1 bed dwellings would.

Option D

- 3.3.8 As long as it can be shown to be justified that any changes it might want to make would be sound when considering available evidence, Cabinet may decide to amend the percentage, tenure mix and accommodation size mix to a level that it considers more appropriate.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The affordable housing targets set in 'Affordable Housing – Council Planning Policy Statement, which the Council adopted in December 2004 would be superseded. This will be in advance of the targets being set within forthcoming Development Plan Documents. However, to be exceptionally robust from a planning policy perspective the target and approach will need to be endorsed as 'sound' by a Planning Inspector through being contained within a Development Plan Document.

4.1.2 An approach to negotiating affordable housing, would help to achieve the following priorities of the emerging Housing Strategy 2010-2015:

- Manage supply and growth for the future of Northampton; and
- Deliver well designed, high quality homes, Neighbourhoods and Services

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 Future funding is likely to be limited for affordable housing, and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will be wanting to work with local authorities on the single conversation approach to investment and priorities. Adopting an approach to affordable housing now, would give the HCA a clear statement of what is required in Northampton in terms of funding requirements.

4.2.2 There is a risk that the approach of the Council will be open to challenge, as the targets have not been validated by an Inspector, and found 'sound' as part of the adoption process of Development Plan Document. However, the targets are based on sound evidence, follow good practice and legal precedent and comply with national and regional policy.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment was complemented by a viability assessment of sites across West Northamptonshire. This means that the authorities, including Northampton have complied with National Planning Policy Statement 3, paragraph 29 on viability of schemes, when using affordable housing policies to secure affordable housing. However, as highlighted in Resources and Risk, there are some issues around potential challenge of the Council's approach which have been minimised by the methodology and approach taken.

4.4 Equality

4.4.1 Decisions on affordable housing policy by the very nature of addressing housing those unable to meet their housing needs on the open market has an impact on equalities groups. In undertaking a screening of the EIA the policy approach set out is likely to have a positive impact on ethnic minorities, the young, the old and those with a disability.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 Head of Planning, Director of Planning & Regeneration, Director of Housing
Head of Legal, Director of Finance, Joint Planning Unit.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 Priority 2 – Housing Health and Wellbeing
Priority 4 – Partnerships and Community Engagement

4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 None

5. Background Papers

5.1 Strategic Housing Market Assessment March 2010

5.2 'Affordable Housing – Council Planning Policy Statement, Northampton Borough Council - December 2004

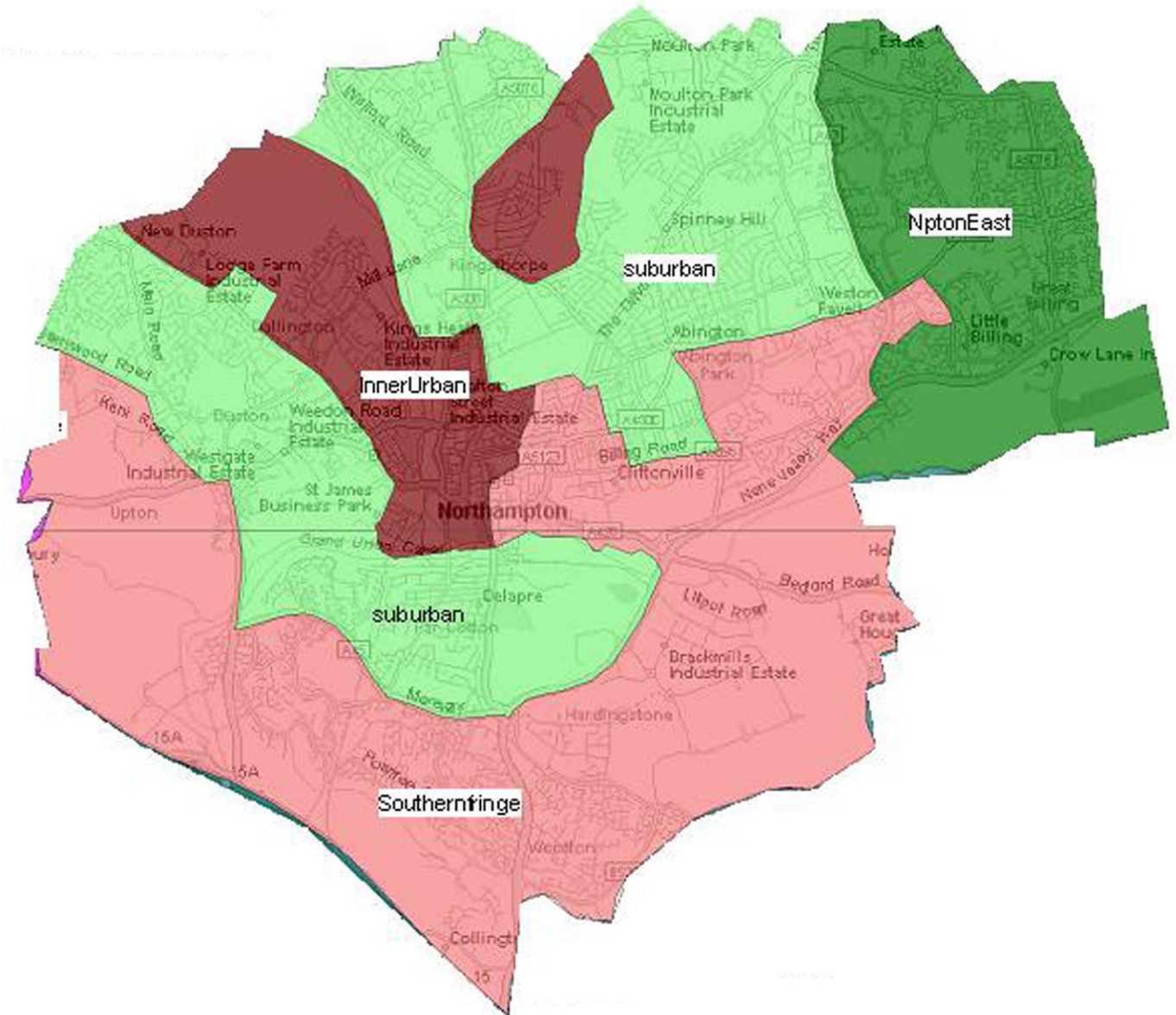
Paul Lewin, Planning Policy & Conservation Manager

X8734

Gary Parsons, Housing Strategy & Policy Development Manager

X7970

Northampton- housing submarkets used for economic viability assessment



Northampton Borough Council Cabinet Report 9th June 2010

Appendices

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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No.

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Choice Based Lettings review and revised allocations policy changes
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AGENDA STATUS: **Public**

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 th June 2010.
Key Decision:	Yes
Listed on Forward Plan:	Yes
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	Yes
Directorate:	Housing Directorate
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Sally Beardsworth
Ward(s)	All Ward Councillors

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To inform members of the outcome of a review of the first two years of the Choice Based Lettings scheme and to propose improvements to the scheme.
- 1.2 To consider the Tenant Services Authority new regulatory framework and how this framework affects the operational activities of the Choice Based Lettings scheme.
- 1.3 To consider the Communities and Local Government new statutory guidance "Fair and Flexible" and how this statutory guidance impacts upon the operational activities of the Choice Based Lettings scheme and the Housing Allocations scheme.
- 1.4 To consider the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Communities and Local Government best practice guidance "Allocations and Local Flexibility" and how this best practice guidance impacts upon the operational activities of the Choice Based Lettings scheme and the Housing Allocations scheme

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet notes the outcome of the review of the Choice Based Lettings scheme

2.2 That Cabinet agrees to the operational changes to the Choice Based Lettings scheme and agrees the changes to the Housing Allocations policy contained in Appendix F.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1. Affordable housing plays an important role in providing accommodation for a wide range of households, including some of the most vulnerable in society. Its contribution to wider public policy concerns such as the creation of socially cohesive communities, educational performance, health improvements and economic opportunities is well accepted nationally and local within Northampton.

3.1.2 Central Government introduced a national target for all Council's in England to introduce a Choice Based Lettings scheme by 2010. Northampton achieved this target and introduced its own Choice Based Lettings scheme on the 31st July 2008. Northampton Borough Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme is a mechanism that gives customers more choice over where they live. In turn this should enable greater commitment to their new home area and build viable and settled communities. This will then reduce homelessness; as customers will stay in their homes longer if they have more choice about the home they live in.

3.1.3 The housing allocation's policy of placing customers in priority Bands from Emergency, Band A, Band B, Band C and Band D allows customers to understand the housing allocation policy and process and replaces the previous complicated and confusing points based lettings approach. The proposed housing allocations scheme is attached to this report as Appendix A for guidance.

3.1.4 Northampton Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee conducted an Appreciative Enquiry during 2009/2010, and the findings of this enquiry provide the framework for this report and the proposed service improvements.

3.1.5 The Housing Solutions service have compared the operational effectiveness of the Choice Based lettings scheme against the recently published Communities and Local Government on the statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England "Fair and Flexible" and the changes to the Housing Allocations scheme and operational effectiveness of the Choice Based lettings fully comply with this statutory guidance. The proposed changes following the introduction of this statutory guidance to the Housing Allocations scheme are contained in Appendix A and are highlighted in bold.

- 3.1.6 The Housing Solutions service has also compared the operational effectiveness of the Choice Based lettings scheme against the recently published Tenant Services Authority new regulatory framework and how this framework affects the operational activities of the Choice Based lettings scheme. Appendix B highlights how the Choice Based Lettings scheme at Northampton Borough Council complies with these regulatory standards.
- 3.1.7 The Housing Solutions service has also compared the proposed new Housing Allocations scheme and the proposed changes to the Choice Based Lettings scheme with the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Communities and Local Government Best Practice guide published in March 2010, (the proposed changes to our current policies and practices are contained below.) Please note Northampton Borough Council has been referred to within this publication as a best practice example in this area of work and can be found on pages 30 and 46.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The system of allocating affordable housing is complex and poorly understood nationally and locally. The demands and pressures locally and nationally for affordable housing continue to grow due to the current economic climate. This sometimes leads to the perception that the housing allocations system is inflexible and unfair and the mistaken view that much housing goes to those who have no legitimate right to it. It is therefore, important that all Councils should challenge these myths and misunderstandings, and provide clear and transparent priorities and opportunities under the scheme.
- 3.2.2 Northampton Borough Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme has to achieve the following requirements:
- Providing support for those in greatest housing need, including people who have experienced homelessness
 - Ensuring allocations policies comply with equality legislation
 - Promoting greater mobility for existing tenants
 - Making better use of the existing stock
 - Supporting people in work or seeking work
 - Delivering policies which are fair and considered to be fair
- 3.2.3 Central Government has over time prescribed which customers should be provided with reasonable preference when allocating affordable housing. These categories are:
- People who are statutorily homeless
 - People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory living conditions
 - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds leading to disability
 - People who need to move to a particular locality in Northampton where failure to meet that need would cause hardship

Challenges

- 3.2.4 The existing challenges facing the Choice Based Lettings scheme are the growing numbers of customers seeking affordable housing due to the economic climate. There are now over 8,200 households on the housing register with 31 new households joining the Choice Based Lettings Housing Register each day. Consequently by the 1st April 2011, there are likely to be over 10,000 households on the Housing Register seeking accommodation from 1,350 affordable housing vacancies each year. It is clear that accessing appropriate affordable housing will be essential to meet increasing demand, maintain the economic stability of the local economy and reduce tensions between and within the communities of Northampton.
- 3.2.5 This will be achieved by producing six monthly newsletters and providing feedback information on who has been housed and the timescale for re-housing in each priority needs bands. This information can also include information whether particular accommodation is likely to be available and how long they are likely to wait for accommodation, by making available general information about how often property of that type/size/location and accessibility and the general estimated waiting times for each property type.

Choice and Options

- 3.2.6 It is clear that much has been achieved since the introduction of the Choice Based Lettings scheme but even greater achievements are required in the next 12 months to increase further customer and stakeholder satisfaction and to keep the Northampton Borough Council Choice Based Lettings scheme ahead of most other schemes nationally through these developments.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

The review of the Choice Based Lettings scheme complies with the published Homelessness Strategy and the Housing Strategy. The potential changes to the Choice Based Lettings scheme and the published Housing Allocations scheme relate to refinements to the scheme rather than fundamental changes and these changes follow the guidance issued by central Government.

4.2 Resources and Risk

None

4.3 Legal

The review of the Choice Based Lettings scheme complies with the 1996 Housing Act, the 2002 Homelessness Act, the 2004 Housing Act, and the 2008 Housing and Regeneration Act, the 2002, 2008 and 2009 Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation.

4.4 Equality

The Choice Based Lettings scheme and the proposed improvements promote the Equalities Act, and takes forward the Equalities Standard work, its also adopts

national best practice principles and examples in the equality and diversity arena. There are areas that require attention in terms of access to the Choice Based Lettings scheme web site for customers whose first language is not English and customers with sight impairment or dyslexia.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

The following Directorates and Divisions within the Council have been consulted:

Director of Finance and Resources

Director of Housing

Head of Legal Services

Human Resources

Customer Services

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

Housing, Health and Wellbeing

4.7 Other Implications

None

5. Background Papers

Appendix A: Northampton Borough Council's Proposed New Housing Allocations scheme

Appendix B: The Tenant Services Authority Regulatory Framework for Housing Allocations

Appendix C: The Communities and Local Government Fair and Flexible statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England Appendix C

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/allocationsstatutoryguidance

Appendix D: The Chartered Institute of Housing and the Communities and Local Government Departments Best Practice Guidance Allocations and Local Flexibility

Appendix E: Statistical Analysis of the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

Appendix F: Service Improvements to the Choice Based Lettings Framework identified through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Appreciative Enquiry

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Northampton Borough Council

Housing Allocations and Choice Based Lettings Scheme

31st May 2010



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Introduction

This is Northampton Borough Council's Choice Based Lettings and Housing Allocation Scheme as required under section 167 of the Housing Act 1996. It meets the requirements, which are set out in Part VI Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) to have a scheme (their "allocation policy") for determining priorities and procedures to be followed in allocating accommodation giving reasonable preference to the following categories of people:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of Housing Act 1996);
- People who are owed a duty by any local authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) (Or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3);
- People occupying in sanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds; including grounds relating to a disability; and
- People who need to move to a particular locality in their district of the authority where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

The scheme may also be framed so as to give additional preference to particular descriptions of people within the subsection (being descriptions of people with urgent housing needs), as in accordance with section 167(2) of the 1996 Housing Act.

The categories of reasonable preference are additional to each other, so if an applicant's needs mean that he or she falls into more than one category, the allocation scheme must ensure that all of those needs are reflected in the applicants relative priority on the housing register.

Section 167 (8) provides that the authority may not allocate housing accommodation except in accordance with its allocation scheme. The scheme includes a statement of the authority's policy on offering people who are to be offered housing accommodation:

- (a) A choice of housing accommodation; or
- (b) The opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.

The Council's aim in producing this scheme is to empower people to make decisions over where they live and exercise choice; to help create sustainable communities and encourage the effective use of the available affordable housing, giving customers as much opportunity as possible for their views to be taken into account when they are seeking a new home. Northampton Borough Council will also support prospective applicants to choose the

Housing Option which is best for them, including: promoting a wide range of options, including low cost home ownership, mutual exchanges, the private rented sector. Also providing information and advice about staying put options such as aids and adaptations, mobility schemes **and the sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme between Northampton Borough Council and Daventry District Council.**

The demand for secure affordable housing in Northampton far outweighs the supply. In order to maximise the supply of affordable housing the Council works closely with a number of Registered Social Landlords or RSLs, (also known as Housing Associations). Registered Social Landlords provide the Council with nomination rights for a percentage of their homes.

Northampton Borough Council is committed to offering choice to all applicants seeking housing. This will be achieved by operating the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. This Housing Allocation Scheme will also make it as easy as possible for applicants to move between local authority, housing association and privately rented accommodation by encouraging the extension of choice based to cover low cost home ownership options and properties for rent from private landlords as well as affordable housing.

Objectives

In allocating its vacant properties the Council seeks to:

- Discharge the Council's statutory duties as contained in Part VI and VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- Offer as much choice as possible to customers
- Offer customers information and advice to enable them to make informed choices about their housing options
- Create an easy to understand, fair and transparent system.
- House those in priority need as determined by the law
- Help prevent homelessness
- Make the most effective use of the local housing stock
- Support the principles of social inclusion, community cohesion and aim to meet customer expectations
- Respond to the circumstances of vulnerable individuals by joint working with other agencies
- Ensure **and promote** equality of opportunity in accessing the housing register and in the allocation of properties
- Promote sustainable tenancies and communities by acknowledging the support needs where appropriate
- Promote low cost home ownership schemes to customers on the housing register
- **Promote Private Rented accommodation to customers on the Housing Register**

The legal framework

As a result of the introduction of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Code of Guidance 2002 and 2006, and the Allocation of accommodation: choice based lettings code of guidance for local authorities published August 2008, **and the Fair and Flexible statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England published December 2009,** local housing authorities are no longer required to maintain a housing register and accordingly sections 161 to 165 of the Housing Act 1996 (the Housing Register) cease to have effect.

The Council has however, determined to maintain a housing register of applicants who have applied for accommodation, or a transfer from existing accommodation from either within its own stock or that of a participating Registered Social Landlord. Applications on the housing register have been assessed as being eligible for accommodation and prioritised as set out within this document (The Council's "Allocation Scheme") **The Housing Allocations Scheme is a Common Housing Allocations scheme between all Housing Associations, Accredited Private Landlords and Northampton Borough Council.**

In determining the rules within this Allocation Scheme, the Council has to comply with The Housing Act 1996, as amended by The Homelessness Act 2002. Additionally, the Council will have regard to case law, relevant legislation (including any amendments) relevant codes of practice and local policies.

For example:

Adoption of Children Act 2002

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Asylum and Immigration Act (Treatment of claimants etc) Act 2004

Children Act 1989

Children (leaving care) Act 2000

Civil Partnership Act 2004

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Code of Practice for Racial Equality in Housing

Code of Guidance on the Allocations of Accommodation

Data Protection Act 1998

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005

Equality Act 2006

Equalities Act 2010

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2007

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Gender Recognition Act 2004

Homelessness Act 2002

Homeless Code of Guidance

Housing Act 1996, 1985, 1988 & 2004

Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

Human Rights Act 1998

Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Land Compensation Act 1973
Mental Health Act 1983
National Assistance Act 1948 Section (21)
Northampton Borough Council Domestic violence strategy
Protection of Eviction Act 1977
Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended by the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000).
Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Statutory Code of Guidance Fair and Flexible on social housing allocations for local authorities published December 2009
The Tenant Services Authority new regulatory framework for Housing Allocations

When anyone applies for an allocation of affordable housing or to join the housing register, the customer must be informed by Northampton Borough Council of the customer's relevant statutory rights under the Housing Act 1996 section 166(2) and 167(4A) as follows:

- The right to request such general information as will enable the applicant to assess how the customer's application is likely to be treated under the allocations scheme, including whether the customer is likely to fall within any of the groups entitled to a reasonable preference;
- The right to request such general information as will enable the customer to assess whether accommodation appropriate to the customer's needs is likely to be made available and if so how long it is likely to be before an offer is made;
- The right to be notified in writing of any decision that the customer is **not** to be given any reasonable preference in accordance with (2C) and of the reasons for that decision;
- The right to ask Northampton Borough Council to inform the customer of any decision about the facts of the customer's case which has been, or is likely to be, taken into account when considering whether to allocate accommodation;
- The right to request a review of any decision that the customer is **not** to be given reasonable preference, any decision as to the facts of the customer's case, or any decision that the customer is not eligible for an allocation under section 160A(9) and the right to be informed of the review decision and the grounds of it.

Choice Based Lettings

The Council have adopted a Choice Based Lettings Scheme called *HomeChoice @ Northampton*. This allows customers on the Housing Register to express their property and area preferences and also provides information about a range of other housing options.

Full details about the scheme and how to participate can be found in our *HomeChoice @ Northampton* user guide.

As from Summer 2010 Northampton will join a sub regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme with Daventry DC.

Equality and Diversity

Northampton Borough Council is committed to delivering on the general duty to promote all aspects of equality and has outlined this commitment in its Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Scheme.

Our Housing Register will be accessible and sensitive to the needs of all taking account of age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation.

Data protection and freedom of information

The information that applicants provide may be personal and sensitive as defined under the Data Protection Act 1998. Data will only be shared with third parties with the applicant's permission and then only for the purposes of assisting with their re-housing. Applicants will be asked to sign a consent form on the housing application to enable the authority to share this information. Personal data will also be treated in accordance with the Electronic Communications Act 2000. Applicants have the right to see the information held regarding their application for housing.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives applicants a right to see information on how decisions were arrived at on the scheme.

Information on the Housing Register

Under section 166(1) of the Housing Act 1996 a person on the Housing Register of a local authority is entitled:

Free advice and information about the right to make an application for housing accommodation and;

Any necessary assistance in making sure an application is to be available free of charge to those who would have difficulty in doing so without assistance.

To be given such general information as will enable him/her to assess how long it is likely to be before housing accommodation appropriate to his/her needs becomes available for allocation. This will be provided on the Choice Based Lettings website and vacant property advertisements.

www.northampton.gov.uk

Information will be provided to each applicant on request at no charge.

Who can apply to Northampton's housing register?

Anyone aged sixteen years or over can apply to Northampton Borough Council **its partner Housing Associations and Accredited Private Landlords for accommodation.**

How to apply

Applications must be made in writing on the 'HomeChoice @ Northampton' housing application form, issued by the council. Forms are available at **The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE**, or can be downloaded at www.northampton.gov.uk

Completed forms along with all required supporting documentation (see below) should be returned to this address. Applicants will be issued with a receipt and should keep this safe for future reference. Applications, which do not have the necessary supporting documentation, will not be accepted.

Whether an application is accepted and placed on the Housing Register are subject to the eligibility criteria and the provision of all supporting documentation.

If information is requested from the applicant and is not received within 28 days the application will not be registered. The applicant will be notified in writing, all original documents will be returned by registered post and the application form and photocopies of documents destroyed.

Forms of proof for supporting documents

The Council will accept as proof only original documents, which should be provided in person if possible. All documents will be returned by recorded delivery.

Photocopies will not be accepted in any circumstances.

The Council will accept proof from the following list:

Proof of identification (any **one** of the following for each applicant) will not necessarily prove eligibility, as may have more than one of the following:

- Birth Certificate
- Passport
- Proof of Age Identification Card (with photo)
- Employee Identification (with photo)
- HM Forces Identification (with photo)
- EU Identification Card
- Approved Immigration Status Documents.

If an applicant is subject to immigration control, a national of European Economic Area (EEA) or an Accession State National, additional documents are required.

For applicants accepted as a refugee or granted Indefinite, Exceptional, Discretionary or Limited leave to remain in the UK, please provide Home Office Documentation.

Accession State Nationals – please provide registration documents and proof of current employment, i.e. current wage slips and contract.

Nationals of the European Union – Please provide proof of current employment, i.e. current wage slips and contract.

Proof of Residence (any **two** of the following for each applicant – documents provided must be recent):

- Household Bill (gas, electricity, water, Council Tax)
- Tenancy or Licence Agreement
- DWP Benefit Document
- Driving Licence
- Bank Statement, Credit Card Statement, Catalogue Statement or similar document with home address.

Proof of Present Tenancy (any **one** of the following for each applicant):

- Tenancy of Licence Agreement
- Rent Book
- Letter from Landlord.

Proof of Marriage:

- A recognised marriage certificate.

Proof of pregnancy:

- Maternity certificate or antenatal record

Proof of residency of children included on the application:

- Current Child Benefit award letter, which confirms names of the children
- Custody Papers
- Residency Papers
- Birth Certificate for any child born in the last 8 weeks.

Proof of contact with children from a previous relationship:

- Birth certificate for each child.

And any **one** of the following:

- Letter of confirmation from a solicitor
- Letter of confirmation from a social worker
- Letter of confirmation from the other parent or guardian
- Court Order.

If you own or have owned a property

One of the following:

- Certificate of Sale

- Completion statement
- Letter of confirmation from a Solicitor
- Letter of confirmation from a Building Society.

If you have previously owned a property:

- Letter from a Solicitor or Building Society confirming the assets realised from the sale or transfer of the property.

And **one** of the following:

- Certificate of Sale
- Completion statement
- Letter of confirmation from a Solicitor
- Letter of confirmation from a Building Society.

Eligibility and Exclusions

Section 160A of the Housing Act 1996 sets out those applicants who are ineligible for the allocation of housing. The following subsections apply:

- (1) A person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of subsection (3) or (5);
 - (a) A person who the authority has decided is to be treated as ineligible for such an allocation by virtue of section (7); or
 - (b) Two or more persons jointly if any of them is a person mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b)

(2) Except as provided in subsection (1), any person may be allocated housing accommodation by a local housing authority (whether on his application or otherwise).

(3) A person subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (c.49) is (subject to subsection (6)) ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by a local housing authority unless he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.

(5) The Secretary of State may by regulations prescribe other classes of persons from abroad who are (subject to subsection (6)) ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation, either in relation to local housing authorities generally or any particular local housing authority.

(7) A local housing authority may decide that an applicant is to be treated as ineligible for an offer of housing accommodation by them if they are satisfied that:

- (a) He/she, or a member of his/her household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority; and
- (b) In the circumstances at the time of his application is considered, he is unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority by reason of that behaviour.

When a housing officer considers that an applicant is ineligible for an offer of housing accommodation by reason of 7(a) or 7 (b) above then the application will be referred to the Social Welfare Panel for decision.

The Housing Social Welfare Panel will consist of 1 Chair and at least 2 other Senior Housing Officers comprised of the following:

Chair

Head of Housing Needs and Support or
Housing Solutions Manager or
Housing Services Manager

Panel Members

Housing Choice and Resettlement Team Leader
Senior Housing Choice Officer or
Senior Housing Gateway Officer

The full terms of reference of the Social Welfare Policy are available (Appendix A)

Section 160A of the 1996 Housing Act prevents Northampton Borough Council from allocating housing to a person who is not eligible. Northampton Borough Council will consider an applicant's eligibility: a) at the time of he or she applies to join the choice based lettings scheme; and b) at the point at which he or she is considered for an allocation of particular accommodation.

False statements

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 makes it an offence for anyone seeking assistance from a local authority to:

- Knowingly or recklessly make a false statement or
- Knowingly withhold information which the authority has reasonably required him/her to give in connection with the exercise of their functions under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine at the date of this scheme document of up to £5,000.

Local connection criteria

Applicants who do not live or work within the Borough will be placed in Band D with the exception of applicants who require to move into the Borough to provide care and support or to receive support for or be cared for. Applicants for whom a full housing duty has been accepted under the homelessness legislation need not have a local connection, but such cases may be referred to another local authority in accordance with that legislation.

Ensuring that where people are given reasonable preference because they have a need to move to a particular locality in Northampton, where failure to

meet that need would cause hardship section 167(2)(e) would be granted Band A status. Thus applies equally to people who are not resident in Northampton.

Section 315 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, establishes that a person serving in the Armed Forces can establish a local connection with a district or borough through residence or employment there, in the same way as a civilian person. Therefore, applicants who are serving in the Armed Forces and who are either employed or resident in Northampton will be able to establish a local connection with Northampton, and applications from serving or former members of the Armed Forces, who are not currently employed or resident in Northampton, but historically had this connection will be classed as having a local connection and will not be placed in Band D.

A customer who has been placed outside of Northampton by Northamptonshire County Council's Children's Services Department and Northampton is the location they would normally live in will not be a Band D customer but will be awarded the relevant priority for their housing application as in accordance with their housing needs.

Owner-occupiers

Owner-occupiers will be placed in Band D this will include caravans, boats and holiday homes (including those abroad). Applicants who have sold a property within the last five years will be asked to provide proof of sale as well as evidence of the proceeds of the sale. An assessment will be made as to whether the applicant can afford to purchase suitable accommodation locally.

Applicants may be moved to a higher band if there is a high medical, welfare need or are in a reasonable preference group set out on page 4 and the applicant is unable to purchase a suitable property.

Reduced Priority

Anti Social behaviour or applicants who owe rent arrears

If an applicant's behaviour as a tenant, or the behaviour of a member of their household, has not been acceptable, the Landlord has taken action to address this and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the applicant will not, therefore, be a suitable future tenant they may either be given no preference in the allocation scheme, or given less preference than others when determining priority between applicants.

An example of this might be where an applicant was previously evicted from accommodation because of serious anti-social behavior or rent arrears. Applicants in these circumstances may, however, sometimes be allowed to register on the Housing Register but are either given no preference in the allocation scheme, or given less preference than others when determining priority between applicants.

In exceptional circumstances the Council may consider applicants for an offer of accommodation where outstanding arrears exist. This may be where the tenant is the victim of domestic violence; racial harassment or other hate crime; or has urgent medical need.

The Housing Solutions Manager will make the decision whether to allow the applicant to move. Appeals regarding the Housing Solutions Manager decision can be made verbally or in writing to the Social Welfare Panel. If assistance is required please contact a member of the Customer Services Team who will advise you of the process.

In line with the Government's Respect Agenda, where an applicant or member of their family has had an anti-social behaviour order awarded against them by the Courts or a demotion order under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, then reduced priority will be given for an initial period of six months from application and will be actively monitored by the Council to encourage and support those applicants to address their behaviour or previous conduct. Thus the applicant will be given reduced priority until such time as they are able to demonstrate that the original issues are resolved.

In these circumstances, the applicant will be requested to provide accurate and recent information from the Police through the Data Protection Act 1998 to identify their previous conduct or give Northampton Borough Council written permission to request information from the Police. This will ensure that any decisions regarding eligibility, exclusion or reduced priority will be made taking account of factual and up to date information for the benefit of both the applicant and our communities.

Where an applicant is considered to be unsuitable to be a tenant due to unacceptable behaviour, the council will need to satisfy itself that the applicant is unsuitable at the time the application is considered. Each application will be considered on its merits and there will be no blanket policy.

Where an applicant has received a reduced priority, Northampton Borough Council will write to the applicant informing them of the decision and how it was reached. The applicant has a right to request a review of the decision. The review procedure is set out on page 29.

Transfers

Existing tenants of Northampton Borough Council or a Registered Social Landlord within Northampton can apply for a transfer to a different property. When considering transfer applications the Council will expect that tenants have complied with their conditions of tenancy and maintained their property in a satisfactory manner. A Housing Officer report will be requested for all transfer applicants to ascertain whether tenancy conditions have been met.

Transfer applications will be assessed on the same basis as new applications.

Transfer applicants will also be encouraged to register for a mutual exchange under the national HomeSwapper scheme as this may enhance their opportunity for re-housing.

Transfer applicants who hold an introductory tenancy and move to an alternative Northampton Borough Council property within the introductory period will continue to be an introductory tenant for the remaining period of their introductory tenancy.

Under occupation

Northampton Borough Council will run incentive schemes aimed at tenants transferring into smaller properties.

Mutual Exchanges

Tenants in either Housing Association or Northampton Borough Council properties who wish to undertake mutual exchanges will be encouraged to advertise their properties for mutual exchanges on the Choice Based Lettings scheme. Customers that wish to mutually exchange will need to exchange properties between each other and comply with the relevant policies and practices of each landlord and seek their landlords approval before a mutual exchange can take place.

Assessment and monitoring

The Banding assessment process, which is explained below, will be applied to all eligible applications and the applicant will be informed in writing of the assessment. We aim to assess complete applications within four weeks. Where the Council decides that a person is not eligible to be allocated accommodation and to join the housing register for any reason stated above, the applicant would be informed of this decision and the reasons for it, in writing within 5 days of the decision being made. Applicants have the right to request a review of this decision.

Northampton's banding scheme

Applicant's circumstances are assessed and placed in either the emergency group or one of four bands. In line with legislation, the greatest priority is awarded to those assessed as having the highest housing need.

Registration date

The registration date is the date a fully completed application with all supporting documentation is received by the Northampton Borough Council. This date affects priority within each band.

Change of circumstances

Where there is a change in an applicant's circumstances, their banding priority will be reviewed. This may result in the applicant moving up or down within the bands. Examples of changes in circumstances, which must be reported, are:

- A change of medical condition
- A change of address, for themselves or any person joining on their application
- Any additions to the family or any other person joining their application
- Any member of the family or any other person included in the application who has left the accommodation.

The onus is on applicants to inform Northampton Borough Council when there is a relevant change in the customer's circumstances.

Movement between bands

As a result of a change in circumstances, applicants may require a housing options interview. A change in circumstances may result in an application being moved up or down the banding scale in accordance with the following criteria:

- When an application is moved down the banding scale the registration date will remain the date that the application was originally registered
- Where an application is moved up a band the date will be known as the application date and will be the date that the application was moved to the higher band
- Preference within bands will be given to the applicant with additional stars awarded (as set out below) and with the earliest registration or application date. For example, an applicant in Band C with two additional stars will receive higher priority than an applicant with one additional star
- Where priority is the same, for example where two applicants have Band C with two additional stars, the earliest registration/priority date will determine the highest preference.

Emergency Group (time limited)

Applicants will be placed in the emergency group for a period of 12 bidding periods. During this time they will be expected to bid for suitable properties in their area of choice. If the applicant has not bid for a suitable property at the end of 12 bidding periods the applicant(s) will receive a direct offer of any suitable property within the borough. If during the 12 bidding periods there has not been a suitable property available for the applicant to bid for, the emergency group period will be extended for a bidding period and will be reviewed on a fortnightly cycle. (For definition of suitable accommodation see

page 19). This will also apply where an applicant has bid but not been successful in securing a property.

At the end of the 12 periods the Housing Solutions Manager will review all outstanding applications in the emergency group and will:

- Decide upon the suitable property to be offered to an applicant who has not bid during the 12 periods when suitable properties have been available.
- Decide if no suitable properties have been available for an applicant during the 12 periods or they had bid and been unsuccessful to extend the emergency group status for an additional bidding cycle. Such cases will be reviewed at the end of each subsequent bidding cycle to either offer a suitable property or to extend the status for an additional cycle as set out in this section.

Emergency group applicants include:

- Applicants whom the Council have accepted as being eligible homeless and in priority need (except those found intentionally homeless).
- Applicants who have been subject to a Multi Agency review (this includes MAPPA clients) and where immediate re-housing is required and an agreed support package is in place.
- Tenants who have to vacate their homes within six weeks due to a Compulsory Purchase Order or Northampton Borough Council tenant's who have to move permanently as their home requires major works within six weeks.
- **Tenants of Northampton Borough Council and our Housing Association partners who are under occupying 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 bedroom properties**

Applicants whom the authorities have accepted as being eligible homeless and in priority need (except those found intentionally homeless).

In order to allow applicants that the Council has accepted a duty to re-house under Part VII (s193 (2) or s195 (2)) a reasonable preference in the choice of areas, the applicant will be given a 12-week period to bid on properties of their choice as outlined above.

Applicants who fail to bid within the 12-week period where a suitable property in their area of choice has been available will no longer be able to participate in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme and Northampton Borough Council will make a direct offer of a suitable property anywhere within the borough.

If during this 12-week period there has not been a suitable property available for the applicant to bid for, the emergency band period will be extended for a further bidding period and will be reviewed on a fortnightly cycle as set out in section 21. If the applicant does not believe that a property is a suitable offer they retain the right under S202 to ask for a review of suitability and the Housing Solutions Manager who is independent from the original decision will make a decision on suitability. Northampton Borough Council will have discharged its duty, under the Homeless Persons legislation if the applicant fails to accept an offer of reasonable accommodation. The applicant's application will be placed in Band D. If an applicant is accepted on review through Section 193 (5) Part VII of the Housing Act, the time in the band will be dated from the original decision date, and not from the date of the review decision.

Suitable accommodation

For the purposes of suitable accommodation, an offer will be regarded as suitable where:

The accommodation is affordable having regard to the financial resources available to the applicant and the cost of the accommodation as determined under Homelessness (Suitability of accommodation) Order 1996.

The accommodation is of an appropriate size and type to meet the reasonable requirements of the household and satisfies the need for special features to meet any limiting illness or disability that exist within the household.

The location does not deny reasonable access to family support or a specialist medical or health facility where a member of the household has a severe long term limiting illness or permanent or substantial disability where their quality of life or health would otherwise be severely affected.

The location does not deny reasonable access to a specialist education establishment for a member of the household who has particular special educational needs which would otherwise result in a severe deterioration in that person's well being.

The location is not in close proximity to a perpetrator who has threatened or caused violence or domestic violence to a household member whose life or safety would otherwise be threatened.

Multiple Needs

This group comprises of applicants whose households are entitled to reasonable preference in the allocation of housing on more than one of the reasonable preference grounds, which are:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of The Housing Act 1996);

- People who are owed a duty by any local authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) (or under section 65(2) or 68 (2) of the Housing act 1985 or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3);
- People occupying in-sanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds; and
- People who need to move to a particular locality in their district of the authority where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.
- The scheme may also be framed so as to give additional preference to particular descriptions of people within the subsection.

In determining the multiple needs priority to be given to an applicant the following priority system will apply.

Homelessness

IF the household is homeless or owed a duty of homelessness and a decision has been made to accept a duty under provisions of the Housing Act 1996, Part VII, as amended and set out above.

AND the decision is that no suitable temporary accommodation is available

The applicant will score 1 additional star.

The assessment process will then go on to consider;

Unsatisfactory Accommodation

IF the household's current accommodation is statutorily overcrowded

OR subject to environmental health abatement action

The applicant will score 1 additional star.

IF the household's current accommodation is unsatisfactory accommodation

The applicant will score 1 additional star.

The assessment process will then go on to consider;

Housing Related Health

IF one or more members of the household have reasonable preference to move on medical grounds

1 additional star will be scored for each member of the household with a medical award.

The assessment process will then go on to consider;

Housing Related Welfare

IF the household have reasonable preference to move on welfare grounds

1 additional star will be scored.

The assessment process will then go on to consider;

Hardship

IF the household has a need to move to another part of the Borough to avoid hardship

1 additional star will be scored.

At the end of the assessment the number of stars will be added together to determine the priority level of the applicant within the band. The applicant with the highest number of stars within the Band will attract the highest priority and where two or more applicants have the same number of stars within a band then the application with the oldest registration date will have the greater priority.

Bands

Emergency Band – Time Limited

Applicants whom the Council have accepted as being eligible homeless and in priority need (except those found intentionally homeless).

Applicants who have been subject to a Multi Agency review (this includes MAPPA clients) and where immediate re-housing is required and an agreed support package is in place.

Tenants who have to vacate their homes within six weeks due to a Compulsory Purchase Order or Northampton Borough Council tenant's who have to move as their home requires major works within six weeks.

Tenants of Northampton Borough Council and our Housing Association partners who are under occupying 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 bedroom properties

Band A – Urgent Need

Applicants who have a severe medical, welfare award or disability where the current accommodation is unsuitable or it is unreasonable to remain in (This may include applicants who require an extra bedroom for a live in carer or medical equipment).

Applicants who have priority on welfare grounds and require to move urgently
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because of a risk to their well-being or health. (This includes victims of domestic violence & and hate crimes).
Applicants who permanently lack one or all of these essential facilities – hot water, heating, a kitchen, internal toilet and bathroom.
Applicants who are statutorily overcrowded as defined by Private Sector Housing Solutions service.
Customers moving from adapted properties in either Housing Association or Northampton Borough Council properties where the adaptations are no longer required, thereby making this accommodation available to a customer with mobility needs
Applicants who are freeing up a place in a specialist hostel such as the YMCA or Teenage Parent Unit and are ready for independent living. (Applications will only be actively considered once a notice to vacate has been issued until that date the application will remain deferred).
Tenants who have to vacate their homes due to a Compulsory Purchase Order or NBC tenants whose home requires major works.
Private sector tenants who are required to vacate their home as a result of enforcement action by the Local Authority.
Applicants who are in priority need who have been issued with an effective notice that the landlord requires possession, which has less than eight weeks to run.

Band B – Moderate Need

Applicants who are owed a duty under the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 and Northampton Borough Council service tenants who are due to retire or have their contract of employment terminated.
Applicants who are sharing facilities (bathroom, kitchen etc).
Applicants who require a move for moderate medical or welfare grounds where there is an acknowledgement that alternative accommodation would be beneficial but is not essential.
Applicants who require more bedrooms.
Applicants with children age under the age of 14 who are living in flats or maisonettes above the ground floor and who do not have access to a garden.
Northampton Borough Council tenants or Partner Housing Association tenants who have been accepted by Social Services to adopt or foster and require a larger home.
Applicant who is being discharged from the Armed Forces within six weeks prior to those applications will be deferred.
Applicant who is being discharged from Prison within six weeks (prior to that applications will be deferred).
Applicants who are not in priority need and have received a Notice to Quit, this includes private rented tenants, tied tenants, lodgers or people residing with family.
Applicants whose private sector home has been assessed as having serious disrepair as defined by the Private Sector Housing Solutions Team.

Band C – General Need

Applicants who have a need to move, which is not within Band A, or B. This may include being nearer family and friends, schools or other amenities.
Applicants with access to children where regular contact can be demonstrated.
Applicants who are key workers such as Police, Fire Officers or Nurses who need to move into the area to take up employment.

Band D – People with no entitlement to reasonable preference

Applicants who are already adequately housed
Previous owners who can afford to secure their own housing within the private rented sector or through house purchase.
Current Owner-occupiers with no other need to move.
All other applicants including those without a local connection.
Applicants who do not have a reasonable preference need as identified through the 1996 Housing Act.
Applicants who have had discharged duty under homeless persons legislation

Advertising properties

Empty properties will be advertised on a weekly cycle, details of available properties are available for collection at various locations around the borough including at Council offices. Property details are also available on the Internet at www.northampton.gov.uk

Within each advert the eligibility criteria will be set for the property.

The advert will also specify details of the property; its location and the rent to be charged together with the approximate date the property will be available to view.

Properties that will be registered on the home choice website will be Northampton Borough Council properties, Registered Social Landlord properties, private rented, **low cost home ownership and sub regional properties.**

First Come First Served.

On occasions the Council will advertise properties on a "First come, first served basis". These are properties, which have been advertised in at least two-advert cycles and have not received expressions of interest from eligible applicants.

The Bidding Process

Eligible applicants can make bids for properties up until the advertised deadline for that bidding round. Bids can be made by telephone or text bidding, online via the website or at the Guildhall One Stop Shop. Full details of how to bid are set out in the scheme User Guide, which will be sent out to all newly registered housing applicants. Bids received after the advertised deadline will not be considered.

Eligible applicants can bid for up to three affordable properties **each week**, **and unlimited private rented properties each week** during the open bidding cycle. Bids can be cancelled and reassigned to another property if desired.

All bids for a property are checked by the Rehousing Officer, against the eligibility rules. Ineligible bids are excluded from consideration. It may be necessary to restrict the bids of applicants who pose a risk, to certain properties, or reserve the right to reject their bid in certain circumstances. Where Northampton Borough Council decides to reject a bid on risk grounds, which would otherwise have been successful, the applicant will be informed of the reasons for the decision and informed of the properties they can bid for.

At the point of checking the bids, the Rehousing Officer will check whether the circumstances of the prospective successful bidder has changed in any material way, which may make them ineligible.

The highest bidder is awarded priority in descending order between the Emergency Group and Bands A to D and within bands according to multiple needs and then registration date. However, there may be other reasons why it would be necessary or advisable to reject a bid that would otherwise have been successful: where for example the property would not be suitable for that particular applicant. However, Northampton Borough Council would not reject such a bid, unless, there are sound reasons for doing so, in accordance with the allocation scheme. Where Northampton Borough Council does pass over a bid, which would otherwise have been successful, Northampton Borough Council will provide the applicant with the reasons for this decision.

Once an applicant has been advised by the Rehousing Officer that they are the highest bidder and that they will be offered the property they will not be eligible to bid in further bidding cycles whilst they consider accepting a tenancy for the property. A property viewing will be arranged at which the successful bidder will have an opportunity to fully view the interior of the property under offer and discuss any other details of the tenancy.

On occasions multiple viewings will be arranged and the top three to five short listed bidders invited to view. Should the top bidder decide to refuse the property following viewing the next highest bidder will be offered the tenancy.

Applicants who are invited to view a property will be required to bring proof of their identification.

At the viewing if the highest bidder expresses an interest in being offered the property they will be given 24 hours to consider their decision. If they fail to arrange to sign for the property after that time the offer will be withdrawn and offered to the next highest bidder.

Although the bidding process is straightforward, Northampton Borough Council are aware that some vulnerable applicants may need assistance in order to complete both the registration and bidding process. The process for addressing this is described in section 44 of our Access Strategy.

Feedback on Let Properties

All properties let will be listed in future advertisements showing the number of bidders for each property and the band, number of stars for multiple need within the band and date of registration of the successful bidder.

Management moves/direct lets

On very rare occasions Northampton Borough Council may find it necessary to make a direct allocation, this means that a property may either be withdrawn from a bidding round or not advertised.

Circumstances where this would happen are:

- A tenant has to be moved urgently as there is a severe threat of violence.
- Households in the emergency group who have failed to exercise choice through the bidding system within the timescale.
- Applicants/Households seeking a move under a witness mobility scheme; and MAPPA clients who pose a very serious risk to the community.
- Northampton Borough Council tenants who require an urgent need to move due to serious disrepair as requested by the Housing Services Manager

Council property not included in this scheme

This scheme does not apply to:

- A Council property used as Temporary Homeless Accommodation pursuant of Part 7 of the Act.
- Northampton Borough Council tenants who have to move urgently on a temporary basis because of fire or flood.
- The offer of a Service Tenancy.
- The letting/leasing of Council property to another agency for a specific housing purpose.
- Very sheltered housing and supported units.

Medical, Welfare and Disability grounds

The Housing Act 1996 states that reasonable preference on the housing register should be given to applicants who have a need to move on medical or welfare grounds.

This category includes an applicant, or member of that applicant's household, whose health is being affected by their current property, and where a move to another more suitable property would alleviate their condition or make it easier to manage.

Where it appears that there is a need to make enquiries into an applicant's medical condition the Council will refer the case to an independent medical advisor. The applicant can provide their own medical evidence if appropriate along with a medical/welfare assessment form, which will be sent to the independent advisor.

If the Independent Medical Advisor considers that reasonable preference should be awarded then they will make a decision to award either:

- Severe medical award where it can be demonstrated that, due to an illness or disability, it is unacceptable for the applicant to remain in their current dwelling or
- Moderate medical award when it can be demonstrated that due to an illness or disability the applicant finds living in their current dwelling difficult and it is clear that remaining in that dwelling will contribute to deterioration in their health. Or it would be beneficial for the applicant to move to alternative accommodation but, at present, the applicant can manage in their present dwelling.
- Where appropriate, the medical advisor will also recommend the type of property most appropriate to the medical needs.

The medical award made will determine the Band the applicant is placed in and where two or more members of a household would qualify for medical priority the rules of multiple needs will apply.

Medical and welfare priority will be reviewed by the Housing Applications Officer prior to allocation if the assessment was made in excess of twelve months previously to ensure that the award is still appropriate.

Welfare grounds may apply to any member of the household and will include situations such as:

- Infirmary due to old age
- The need to give or receive care
- Behavioural difficulties
- The need to recover from the effects or threats of violence or physical or emotional abuse
- Young people at risk
- A mental or physical disorder

- A physical or learning disability
- Financial hardship.

Housing Options Officers will refer any application where the applicant's circumstances fall within the categories set out in this section to the Social Welfare Panel to determine the priority band to be awarded to the application.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the type of assistance and support which Northampton Borough Council will make available to all customers:

- advising individual disabled applicants when suitable accessible property is about to or has been advertised
- making arrangements to enable applicants with disabilities to visit properties
- using symbols rather than words in adverts
- enabling text messaging for people who have hearing impairments
- providing documents in large or clear print, Moon or Braille on request
- making information available on computer disk or audiotape on request
- ensuring that advice and information is available over the telephone – for those who cannot use a website or cannot get to a property or the One stop shop easily
- mailing out literature to the housebound and physically disabled
- ensuring that people with learning disabilities who do not have support from any other source (e.g. friend, relative or social worker) are assigned a suitably trained member of staff to support them.

We are working towards ensuring that the Choice Based Lettings website is accessible for people who may require a translation in to a community language, have visual impairments or learning disabilities and providing large print maps on websites.

Northampton Borough Council Joint Tenancies

Joint tenancies are normally granted where applicants have a long-term commitment e.g. married and unmarried couples, civil partners, siblings, and unpaid live-in carers.

Ending a joint tenancy

One party giving notice has the effect of ending the joint tenancy for both parties. In some cases the council will consider allowing one tenant to remain as a sole tenant, for example where children reside at the property. Joint tenancy issues resulting from family /relationship breakdowns are covered in the Tenant Handbook.

Access to children

Where children are involved in residence and contact cases they will be considered as permanent household members for the partner having the primary residence and control of the child/children. Where an application is made to the Council or Registered Social Landlord from the other partner who has regular contact with the child/children it will not always be possible due to

the demand on the Council's housing stock to consider the child/children as part of a housing application.

Local lettings policies

Local Lettings policies or plans are a tool, which can be used to stabilise an area that has specific and particular issues. The Government's Sustainable Communities Plan states the key objectives of providing stable, settled, safe communities. This means that there may be rules around child density or number of lettings to key workers. The Council may decide to operate one or more Local Letting policies within areas of the town. The need for such schemes will be clearly defined and relate to specific areas or types of property that will benefit from this type of proactive initiative.

A Local Lettings policy may be introduced, as part of a multi-agency approach with existing local communities or in partnership with registered social landlords to take account of social factors.

Local Lettings policies will be reviewed on a regular basis and equality impact assessments undertaken.

Properties with age restrictions

Northampton Borough Council have a limited number of properties in various locations that have been designated as being suitable for applicants over the age of forty only. These properties are in close proximity to some of our sheltered housing residents. Applications will not be considered for these properties if they include a person under the age of 40 or if the Council has reason to believe that there may be a conflict of lifestyle between the applicant and the sheltered housing residents in the neighbourhood.

Single persons accommodation

The Council currently have single persons blocks of studio flats.

These are:

- Overslade House in Hunsbury.
- Caledonian House in St James.
- Woodstock in the Town Centre.
- Dover Court in St James.
- Paget House

Additionally, if the Council have reason to believe that an applicant's behaviour may have a detrimental affect on the management of these blocks or the health and safety of other tenants, then an allocation will be refused. Applicants will be informed of this decision in writing and will have the right to request a review of the decision (see page 35).

Sheltered Housing

The term Sheltered Housing applies to a range of accommodation and tenancy related support designed to meet the housing and support needs of applicants over sixty or applicants who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

Before the applicant is accepted for a property that they have expressed an interest in or bid for, they will be visited and assessed to ensure sheltered housing can meet the support needs of the applicant and that the appropriate level of service can be provided.

The service is based around each individual's support needs. This service is provided by a team of sheltered housing co-ordinators who will ensure the appropriate level of service is maintained to meet the individual's needs.

Sheltered Housing Schemes consists of flats or bungalows, some of which are grouped around a community room where residents are able to enjoy social activities. All properties have an intercom system either hardwired or life line or pendant to enable residents to summon assistance in an emergency.

A sheltered housing panel allocates very sheltered housing accommodation on the basis of the assessed needs of applicants; this is outside of the Choice Based Lettings policy.

The council also has nomination rights to very sheltered schemes within the Borough, which is managed by Registered Social Landlord and the Sheltered Housing Panel allocates these properties outside of the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

Adapted/adaptable properties

Properties that have had major adaptations for tenants with a disability will be advertised as available for applicants who have a need for the adaptations. Advertised properties will include details such as whether they are suitable for a wheelchair user. The Housing Solutions team will liaise closely with the Occupational Therapy Service to ensure that applicants who require adaptations receive the priority that they require.

Where an applicant or another person on the application has a disability, which causes a mobility problem, then they will be prioritised on the following criteria:

Mobility 1- full wheelchair access. Property will include ramped or level access in and out of the property. Accessible kitchen and level access to the bathroom.

Mobility 2- partial wheelchair access. Property will include ramped or level access. Accessible bathroom facilities.

Mobility 3- assisted access. Property will include level access or shallow steps with handrail. Accessible bathroom facilities.

Where two or more members of a household would qualify the rules of multiple needs will apply.

Decisions on the level of mobility required will be decided by the Council's Independent Medical Adviser or the Occupational Therapist dependant upon the individual circumstances of the applicant.

While it would be lawful to provide that only disabled applicants can apply for accessible vacancies, it would **not** be lawful to provide that disabled people can only apply for accessible properties. However, where a disabled applicant applies for accommodation which does not meet his or her needs, Northampton Borough Council will need to take into account whether it is reasonable and practicable to adapt that property when assessing his or her bid (and will do so in accordance with our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996).

Introductory tenancies

Northampton Borough Council operates introductory tenancies.

All new tenants of the council will be introductory tenants for the first twelve months of their tenancy. Introductory tenancies can be extended for a further six months provided a Notice of Extension has been served no later than eight weeks before the tenancy ordinarily would become secure.

This will not apply to current Council tenants transferring, or to new tenants who were previously secure tenants of another authority or an assured tenant of a Registered Social Landlord.

A tenancy will remain introductory if proceedings for possession have been started but not yet resolved.

The rights of introductory tenants differ from those of secure tenants. Introductory tenants cannot:

- Take in lodgers.
- Exercise the right to buy (although the period spent as an introductory tenant will count towards the qualifying period).
- Sub-let.
- Carry out a mutual exchange.
- Vote on matters concerning changes in policy or practice concerning housing management.

Where action is taken to end a tenancy the council does not have to prove the facts in court only that it has followed the correct procedure particularly with regard to considering any appeal against the decision to go to court.

Priority for accessible accommodation is given to people who have access needs. This is consistent with the duty to promote disability equality.

Registered Social Landlords nominations

Registered Social Landlords, which are usually known as Housing Associations, are non-profit making organisations providing homes for people in housing need.

Northampton Borough Council has an agreement with the Registered Social Landlords that have properties in the borough that a negotiated percentage of their lettings will be to people on the Council's Housing Register. All of our Registered Social Landlord partners participate in a common housing register and advertise their properties through the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

Property Letting Criteria

The table on page 36 shows the type of property that you are eligible for, there may be some exceptions for example when an applicant requires an extra bedroom for medical equipment or a carer. Some properties will be advertised as only available to certain groups e.g. for pensioners or people over forty. You will be advised what type of property you can bid for when you receive your assessment letter.

This Housing Allocations scheme also follows section 170 of the 1996 Housing Act, to request that our Housing Association partners have a duty to co-operate to such extent as is reasonable on the circumstances in offering accommodation to people with priority need under this Housing Allocations Scheme. **This Housing Allocations scheme also complies with the Tenant Services Authority regulatory framework.**

Overcrowding

Statutory overcrowding as defined by Part X of Housing Act 1985 or a Court Order to re-house.

Bedroom deficiency

Property that has insufficient bedrooms to accommodate all the occupants within their household as detailed below. Reception rooms will not be counted as being suitable to use as bedrooms.

Bedroom deficiency will be calculated according to the following separate bedroom requirements:

- Each couple living together
- A parent in a single parent family

- Each child over the age of 5 who would otherwise have to share with someone of the opposite sex
- No more than 2 persons per room
- A single adult of 18 years of age or over.

Bed size eligibility

The maximum number of bedrooms for which applicants are eligible to bid is determined by the size of their household but, as there is a shortage of large homes, applicants may be able to bid for smaller accommodation than they would prefer. Where this is possible this will be indicated on the advert for the property.

Women who are pregnant will be classed as having a dependant.

The maximum bedroom size that members can bid for or is allocated is set out in Appendix B.

Vulnerable people

A key requirement for ensuring the success and fairness of the Allocation and Choice Based Lettings Scheme is that all customers can access available homes and that relevant support is provided where appropriate.

The Council will ensure that vulnerable applicants and those disadvantaged by the Choice Based Lettings process will be provided with support and assistance in accordance with the Councils Access Strategy.

Review of Register

Applicants are not required to annually re-register their housing applications after first applying. They are however required to inform the Council of any changes in their circumstances, which affect their housing application.

However, Northampton Borough Council will monitor the bidding patterns of applicants and will be able to identify applicants who fail to bid. The Council will contact registered applicants every month who have failed to bid for more than twelve months. If the Council is unable to make contact the application will be cancelled. The Council will notify the applicant in writing of the date and the reason for the cancellation.

Northampton Borough Council will check periodically whether there has been a change of circumstances of applicants on the Housing Register. This offers Northampton Borough Council an opportunity to discuss broader housing options with those applicants who are unlikely to be allocated accommodation in the near future.

Annual Lettings Plan

The Council will produce an Annual Lettings Plan; this will set annual targets for property types across priority bands.

Northampton Borough Council operates a robust monitoring mechanism in order to demonstrate that overall reasonable preference is given to those in the reasonable preference categories.

The right to appeal / review

Section 167 (4A) of the 1996 Housing Act gives applicants the following rights about decisions, which are taken in respect of their application:

- The right to be notified in writing of any decision not to give an application any preference under the scheme because of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make an applicant unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council and the grounds for that decision
- The right on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of the applicant's case which has been, or is likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to the applicant
- The right to request a review of a decision mentioned above, or a decision to treat the applicant as ineligible under section 160A(9). The applicant has the right to be informed of the decision on the review and the grounds for it.

Letters notifying an applicant that they have been refused access to the Housing Register or the band that they have been awarded will state that the applicant has a right to request a review of the decision.

A review should be requested within twenty-one days of the date of the letter advising of the decision. The council has discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable.

Request for reviews can be in writing or made verbally. The request for review should be made to the Housing Solutions Manager, Northampton Borough Council, The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton NN1 1DE. If you require assistance with the process please contact a member of the customer services team at the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall.

Procedure of review

Review of any decision will be undertaken by A Senior Officer in Housing Solutions An Officer involved in an original decision will not sit on the Welfare Panel or review the case.

The review will be carried out and the decision and the reasons for it will be given to the applicant in writing within 28 days of the request being received.

There is no right to request a review of this decision unless the member's circumstances change.

Any legal challenge to review decisions, or to any decisions that do not carry the right to request a review, can only be brought by Judicial Review, on the grounds that Northampton Borough Council has infringed administrative law.

Review of the Allocation Scheme

The Allocations Scheme is monitored to make sure that allocations made reflect the housing need, and meet with the requirements of legislation. This scheme will be reviewed **annually** to ensure that its aims and objectives are met.

Appendix A

Terms of Reference for the Social Welfare Panel

Emergency re-housing status on social welfare grounds is authorised by a Social Welfare Panel, containing senior officers from the Housing Management and Housing Solutions services at Northampton Borough Council. The Social Welfare Panel will consist of one chair and at least two other Senior Housing Officers comprised of the following posts:

Chair

Head of Housing Needs and Support or
Housing Solutions Manager or
Housing Services Manager

Panel Members

Housing Choice and Resettlement Team Leader
Senior Housing Choice Officer or
Senior Housing Gateway Officer

The criteria (one or more must apply) for emergency social welfare awards in this category are:

- Likelihood of admission to residential care of a family member if re-housing is not made
- Likelihood of a child being accommodated by the local authority if re-housing is not made
- Discharge from hospital or residential care is required and is prevented by the housing situation
- A child experiencing abuse needs to be moved away from the perpetrator
- The applicant, or member of their household, is at serious risk of harm either to themselves or to other people in their present accommodation
- The housing application does not fall within a single priority needs band and could possibly fall in to two priority needs bands.

In addition the following conditions also have to be met:

- The applicant has severe financial hardship
- The applicant's wellbeing is seriously affected by their housing situation
- The applicant cannot reasonably be expected to find accommodation for him or herself.

If the referring agency believes that a case does not comply with the above criteria but should be considered by the Social Welfare Panel, then a written submission explaining the urgency of the case should be made to the Housing Solutions Manager, who will make a decision on this matter. The decision will be communicated to the agency if the Social Welfare Panel will consider the case, and this will be communicated to the referring agency within 48 hours of receipt of the relevant correspondence.

The Social Welfare Panel will consider referrals directly from the customer, or from any support agency, any statutory agency, any voluntary agency, and a housing officer, any Officer from the Housing Solutions team and or from the customer's medical representatives.

At the Social Welfare Panel meeting, the Panel will consider the referral letter and the customer's file, plus a print out of the customers IT records to ensure a transparent and equitable decision is made on all cases. It is important that only written material is considered at the meeting, and if further information or clarification is required then no decision on that case will be made and the case will be deferred and additional written material sought to allow a correct decision to be made.

Minutes will be produced of each Social Welfare Panel meeting and the outcome of the Social Welfare Panel decision will be recorded on to the customers IT account within 24 hours.

The customer will be advised within 48 hours in writing of the outcome of the Social Welfare Panel's decision.

Social Welfare Panel meetings will be conducted on the first Monday of every Month at 11.00am.

The customer will have a statutory right to review the decision made by the Social Welfare Panel and this statutory review will be undertaken by the Director of Housing or a senior officer of the Housing Directorate who was not involved with the decision made by the Social Welfare Panel meeting.

Appendix B

Household Makeup	Bedroom Assessment
Single person	Bedsit/studio flat 1 bedroom flat
Couple	1 bedroom flat 2 bed 2 nd floor or higher flat
Single pensioner or applicant who requires ground floor accommodation	1/2 bedroom flat or bungalow
Couple pensioner or applicants who require ground floor accommodation	1/2 bedroom flat or bungalow
1 child family	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
2 child family	2 or 3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
3 child family	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
4 child family	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house 4 bedroom house
5 child family	4, 5 or 6 bedroom house
6+ child family	4, 5 or 6 bedroom house

Appendix B Tenant Services Authority Regulatory Framework Housing Allocations

Standard

Registered providers shall co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing function, and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements. Where, in exceptional circumstances, registered providers choose not to participate in choice-based lettings schemes in areas where they own homes, they shall publish their reasons for doing so.

Northampton Borough Council's compliance evidence

Northampton Borough Council established and operated the Choice Based Lettings scheme and the Common Housing Allocations scheme on the 31st July 2008.

Standard

Registered providers shall develop and deliver services to address under occupation and overcrowding in their homes, within the resources available to them. These services should meet the needs of their tenants, and will offer choices to them.

Northampton Borough Council's compliance evidence

Northampton Borough Council has developed the under occupation scheme and re-launched the under occupation scheme on the 1st December 2009, following the 25th November 2009, Cabinet report on this matter. From the 1st December 2009 to the 31st May 2010 Northampton Borough Council have completed 23 under occupation moves.

Northampton Borough Council have reduced statutory overcrowding on the Housing Register from 39 customers before the Choice Based Lettings scheme was introduced to 16 as at the 31st May 2010.

Standard

Registered providers shall provide tenants wishing to move with access to clear and relevant advice about their housing options. They shall participate in mobility schemes and mutual exchange schemes where these are available.

Northampton Borough Council's compliance evidence

Northampton Borough Council will be launching a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme in partnership with Daventry District Council and this sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme will be operation during the summer of 2010. This scheme will allow customers in Northampton to bid for and move to Daventry and allow customers in Daventry to move to Northampton.

Northampton Borough Council participates in the Seaside and Country homes mobility scheme to allow customers above the age of 50 to move to Northampton to occupy the Council's sheltered schemes. In addition to this Northampton Borough Council also participates in the Home swapper Mutual Exchange scheme that allows tenants of affordable housing landlords in Northampton to undertake mutual

exchanges. This scheme also allows customers to undertake mutual exchanges across the country within the affordable housing sector.

Northampton Borough Council also advertises Private Rented Properties in Northampton, Wellingborough, Daventry, and South Northamptonshire to allow customer's greater choice and access to the provision of high standard accommodation.

Standard

Registered providers' published policies shall include how they have made use of common housing registers, common allocations policies and local letting policies. Registered providers shall clearly set out, and be able to give reasons for, the criteria they use for excluding actual and potential tenants from consideration for allocations, mobility or mutual exchange schemes.

Northampton Borough Council's compliance evidence

Appendix A is the Housing Allocations scheme for Northampton. This Housing Allocations scheme is the common housing register and common housing allocations scheme for all affordable housing in Northampton and all registered providers of affordable housing in Northampton.

Standard

Registered providers shall develop and deliver allocations processes in a way which supports their effective use by the full range of actual and potential tenants, including those with support needs, those who do not speak English as a first language and others who have difficulties with written English.

Northampton Borough Council's compliance evidence

This area is a weakness and Northampton Borough Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme does not currently have a community language translations section or Browse aloud section as is common with the vast majority of other Choice Based Lettings schemes across the Country.

The Housing Solutions service has displayed posters within the Guildhall and through all Community organisations publicising the availability of the translations service. These posters

Standard

Registered providers shall minimise the time that properties are empty between each letting. When doing this, they shall take into account the circumstances of the tenants who have been offered the properties.

Northampton Borough Council's compliance evidence

The average letting period for all Northampton Borough Council properties was 23.99 days for the 2009/2010 financial year. This was an improvement from 29 days for the 2008/2009 financial year.

Standard

Registered providers shall record all lettings and sales in the Continuous Recording of Lettings Scheme.

Northampton Borough Council's compliance evidence

Northampton Borough Council piloted this scheme for the Communities and local Government Department and now records all lettings on this scheme.

Lettings 31/07/2008 to 31/05/2010**Introduction**

In total there have been **1,958** properties allocated in this period. However, there have been in total **108,631** bids made by customers in this period. This equates to **55** bids on average for every property allocated in this period.

Properties Allocated

1 Bedroom properties	1042
2 Bedroom properties	601
3 Bedroom properties	281
4 Bedroom properties	23
5 Bedroom properties	11
Total:	1,958

In the same period there have been 1015 customers refusing properties via the Choice Based Lettings scheme. These properties have been allocated, but the high refusal rate will impact on customer satisfaction and the average void turnaround performance. Further research in this area is required

The number of properties refused by each property type can be broken down as follows:

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered Bedsits (5)
Sheltered Flats (195)
Sheltered Bungalows (86)

General needs

Houses (127)
General needs Flats (455)
Maisonette (31)
Bedsit (89)
Bungalows (24)

72% of all refusals are general needs flats and 28% of all refusals related to Sheltered Accommodation.

The properties in the following areas have the greatest number of refusals:

1. Kings Heath 94 refusals
2. Kingsthorpe 80 refusals
3. Spring Boroughs 66 refusals
4. Briar Hill 62 refusals
5. St James 60 refusals

These five areas account for 36% of all refusals in Northampton.

The top four reasons for refusals are as follows:

1. customer dislikes the area 154 refusals (15%)
2. property too small 64 refusals (6%)
3. change of circumstance 43 refusals (4%)
4. not property type requested 36 refusals (4%)
5. Unsuitable Access 35 refusals (4%)

The type of properties allocated through the Choice Based Lettings scheme is as follows:

Sheltered Housing

Bedsits (2)
Flats (191)
Bungalows (144)

General needs

Maisonette (43)
Bedsit (126)
Bungalows (57)
Houses (462)
Flats (918)

The most popular method to bid is via the web site with 100,018 (92%) of all bids made by this source. 6055 (6%) were made by telephone, 1984 (2%) by text and only 574 (0.52%) by staff on behalf of customers. This shows that customers are clearly able to submit bids themselves with less than 1% of bids being made by staff of the Housing Solutions service on behalf of customers.

There are 8,356 applications on the Choice Based Lettings housing register 4,751 or (57%) are headed by Females and 3,605 (43%) are headed by Males.

During the last financial year the average time to allocate each Northampton Borough Council property was 24 days.

Ethnicity of customers on the Housing Register

This section shows that of the 8,356 households on the Housing Register 39.54% of households on the Housing Register are White British with 41.57% not stating their ethnicity. 18.89% of Households on the Housing Register are from the Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Northampton. Nationally 14% of households living in Affordable Housing are from the various Black and Minority Ethnic Communities. Of the total bids submitted (108,631) 39.23% of total bids submitted were made by White British Customers, 33.68% by customers not stating their ethnicity and 27.09% of all bids were made by people from the Black and Minority Ethnic community.

This section shows that 49% of all lettings compared to 40% of customers on the Housing Register are allocated to White British Households and 22% of all properties are allocated to customers from the Black and Minority Ethnic community with the Housing Register profile being 19%. Therefore, there is a high degree of fairness when comparing customers on the Housing Register, bids submitted or customers housed on ethnicity grounds.

Priority Status of customers on the Housing Register

Shows that there are 972 households in the Emergency Band and Priority Band A on the Housing Register. This figure represents 12% of the Housing Register but 57% of all Choice Based Lettings. Consequently, the opportunities to be re-housed in affordable housing from Priority Bands B, C and D are limited.

Of the 108,631 bids submitted by customers 6.01% (6,535) of these bids were submitted by Emergency customers, 17.94% (19,491) of these bids were made by Band A customers, 58.96% (64,052) were made by Band B customers, 0.41% (447) by Band C customers and 16.66% (18,106) by Band D customers.

Allocation of properties made via the priority Band on the Housing Register.

17.73% of all properties allocated were to customers from the Emergency priority Band, 39.24% were to Band A customers, 39.14% were to Band B customers 0.05% were to Band C customers and 17.73% to Band D customers.

Lettings made by property type and to the priority needs band

Count of Location Type		Band					
Location Type	Bedrooms	A	B	C	D	EMER	Grand Total
BEDSIT	1	24	89			4	126
BUNGALOW	1	24	9			1	34
	2	11	2			1	22
	3	1				8	1
FLAT	1	265	286		1	2	604
	2	115	142			19	311
	3	1	1			1	3
HOUSE	2	74	10			3	188
	3	104	29			1	244
	4	11	3				20
	5	5					10
MAISON	2	4	1			1	9
	3	16	11			1	32
	4	1	1				2
SHBEDSIT	0		1			1	2
SHBUNG	1	44	46			7	101
	2	32	6			1	43

SHFLAT	1	31	105	23	5	164
	2	3	17	6	1	27
VSHFLAT	1	5		4		9
Grand Total		766	764	1	75	346
						1952

It is clear that all Emergency and Band A customers can select the property type and area of their choice. However, Band D customers tend to be housed into Sheltered housing with 56% of Band D customers housed being re-housed into Sheltered Housing and 5% into Bedsits.

This section clearly shows that customers in Band B, C and D will generally not be re-housed in to Family houses.

Emergency Group includes homeless customers in priority need, customers needing to move for Compulsory Purchase Orders and Northampton Borough Council tenants needing to move for major repair work.

Band A includes severe medical needs, homeless customers given notice to quit within the next 8 weeks, risk of well being and health (includes domestic violence and hate crimes) lacking essential facilities such as hot water, heating, kitchen internal toilet and bathroom, statutory overcrowded, under-occupiers, no longer require adaptations in their home.

Band B medical or welfare needs, share facilities such as bathrooms and kitchen, require more bedrooms, children under the age of 14 living in a flat above the ground floor, discharged from prison or the armed forces, service tenancy with the Council that is coming to an end, given notice to quit but not in priority need, assessed by Environmental Health as unsatisfactory

Band C have access to children at regular intervals, key workers etc.

Band D adequately housed, owner-occupier, can afford to rent or buy, have no local connection.

The percentage of customers on the Housing Register from each priority needs group are as follows:

App Group	
Number of Lets	
Priority	
A	39.24%
B	39.14%
EMER	17.73%
D	3.84%
Grand Total	

The average time from the date being awarded the priority status to being re-housed for each property type and priority Band type is as follows:

Average of No of Weeks to being Re-housed			
Location Type	Band	Bedrooms	Total
BEDSIT	A	0	21
	B	0	51
	D	0	36
	EMER	0	17
BEDSIT Total			42
BUNGALOW	A	1	29
		2	116
		3	40
	B	1	51
		2	21
	D	2	39
	EMER	1	8
		2	11
BUNGALOW Total			46
FLAT	A	1	20
		2	22
		3	5
	B	1	77
		2	83
		3	56
	C	1	10
	D	1	12
		2	85
		3	27
	EMER	1	16
		2	12
FLAT Total			49
HOUSE	A	2	60
		3	64
		4	36
		5	59
	B	2	59
		3	143
		4	291
	D	2	12
		3	146
	EMER	2	12
		3	13
		4	17
5		17	
HOUSE Total			44
MAISON	A	2	35
		3	16
		4	9
	B	2	257
		3	105
		4	134
	D	2	18
		3	310
	EMER	2	10
		3	69

MAISON Total			60
SHBEDSIT	B	0	1
	D	0	7
SHBEDSIT Total			4
SHBUNG	A	1	24
		2	72
	B	1	64
		2	25
	D	1	74
		2	50
	EMER	1	5
		2	104
SHBUNG Total			52
SHFLAT	A	1	28
		2	5
	B	1	32
		2	30
	D	1	35
		2	97
	EMER	1	7
		2	16
SHFLAT Total			32
VSHFLAT	B	1	243
	D	1	31
VSHFLAT Total			149

It is clear that customers who are in Bands B, C and D have no real opportunity of being re-housed into highly popular family sized accommodation.

Religious breakdown of customers on the Housing Register

This table shows the various religions of households on the Housing Register and supports the multi-cultural society of Northampton. The total bids of 108,631 made through the Choice Based Lettings scheme show no real differences when compared to the religion of customers on the housing register.

Housing Register	
Religion	Total
Buddhist	31
Christian	3614
Hindu	33
Jewish	3
Muslim	563
None	1821
Not stated	1369
Other	303
Sikh	17
Unknown	602
Grand Total	8356

Percentage of properties allocated through the Choice Based Lettings scheme by Religion

42% of all properties allocated through the Choice Based Lettings scheme were allocated to customers regarding themselves to be Christian compared to 43% on the Housing Register. Given the profile of customers on the Housing Register and total bids made, is no discrepancy in the religion of people re-housed when compared to the base data.

Customers re-housed	
Religion	Total
Buddhist	10
Christian	824
Hindu	3
Muslim	119
None	523
Not Stated	272
Other	57
Sikh	1
Unknown	143
Grand Total	1952

Sexuality of households on the Housing Register

Only 1.56% of Households on the Housing Register have stated that they are Gay, Lesbian or Bi-sexual. 6% of the national population are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. Therefore, there is an underrepresentation of households on the Housing Register in Northampton who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

Customers on the Housing Register	
Sexuality	Total
Bisexual	49
Gay Man	47
Heterosexual	6089
Lesbian	34
Not stated	1370
Rather not say	271
Unknown	466
Unsure	30
Grand Total	8356

Allocation breakdown using sexuality of each customer housed.

Once again the Choice Based Lettings scheme is operating in accordance with best practice equality of opportunity principles with no real differences

between the percentages of customer on the Housing Register, compared to those bidding and housed on sexuality grounds. 2.30% of customers re-housed stated that they were Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual compared to 1.56% of the Housing Register.

Customers Re-Housed	
Sexuality	Total
Bisexual	17
Gay Man	10
Heterosexual	1435
Lesbian	18
Not Stated	273
Rather not say	82
Unknown	103
Unsure	14
Grand Total	1952

Mobility Levels on the Housing Register

5.09% of households on the Housing Register require accommodation with aids and adaptations to ensure they can live in accommodation that meet their housing needs of these customers 0.69% require full wheelchair standard accommodation. It is clear given the low level of historic provision of accessible accommodation in the affordable housing sector there is a low level of total bids submitted for this form of accommodation. We anticipate that demand is likely to increase which will naturally add pressure to the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant and Aids and Adaptations budgets and waiting lists.

Customers on the Housing Register	
Mobility Level	Total
Mobility Level 1	58
Mobility Level 2	138
Mobility Level 3	230
(blank)	7930
Total	8356

Customers re-housed via mobility level	
Mobility	Total
Mobility Level 1	22
Mobility Level 2	48
Mobility Level 3	75
(blank)	1807
Grand Total	1952

Mobility Level 1 relates to properties that has full wheelchair access throughout

Mobility 2 relates to properties have partial access (includes ramps and level access

Mobility 3 relates to properties that have assisted access includes level or shallow steeps with handrail.

Age profile of customers on the Housing Register

This shows a mismatch between the number of people above retirement age and the number of properties available leading to a surplus of sheltered housing accommodation. It also shows that the highest demand for properties is coming from the 26-40 age group.

Customers on the Housing Register	
Age Band	Total
<16	3
>65	593
18-25	1973
26-40	3322
41-55	1762
56-65	640
Unknown	10
16-17	53
Grand Total	8356

Customers
re-housed via
age band

Count of Refno	
Age Band	Total
>65	126
16-17	3
18-25	589
26-40	649
41-55	410
56-65	175
Grand Total	1952

Ian Swift Housing Solutions Manager

Appendix F

Service Improvements to the Choice Based Lettings Framework.

The following is a list of enhancements to the Choice Based Lettings scheme that Cabinet are asked to approve:

- Weekly Choice Based Lettings scheme adverts moving from fortnightly
- Weekly newsletters for customers replacing newspaper adverts
- Provide community language translation services on the Choice Based Lettings web site
- Introduce Browse aloud on to the Choice Based Lettings scheme web site for the benefit of people with sight impairment and dyslexia
- Developing a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme with Daventry District Council and be operational in the summer of 2010.
- Introduction of Mutual Exchanges on to the Choice Based Lettings scheme web site
- Publication of a six monthly newsletter to all customers on the Housing Register providing news on new initiatives and possible options to provide solutions to customers re-housing needs.
- Conducting six monthly customer satisfaction surveys in place of the current annual satisfaction surveys
- Extend the Choice Based Lettings scheme to advertise all low cost homeownership properties that are available in Northampton
- Extend the Choice Based lettings scheme to advertise Private Rented properties following the very successful 12 month pilot and to extend the availability of Private Rented properties for customers to bid for and access in Daventry, South Northamptonshire and Wellingborough
- Continue with the feedback of letting outcomes for all properties on the web site and in the Guildhall One Stop Shop area following the successful pilot
- Publicise on the web site, through the guide to the Choice Based Lettings scheme and in the Guildhall One Stop Shop area the likely waiting times for each type of property for each priority band group
- Publicise on the web site, through the guide to the Choice Based Lettings scheme and in the Guildhall One Stop Shop area the type of properties that Northampton Borough Council and its partner Housing Association own to enable customers to be aware of the stock profile and the availability of affordable housing
- Publicise information on the web site, through the guide to the Choice Based Lettings scheme and within the One Stop Shop area the frequency of properties that become available broken down by type of property, size of property and accessibility
- Develop an on line housing application form to allow customer to directly input their details on the Housing Register by September 2010.
- Produce a DVD explaining the Choice Based Lettings scheme for people who would find this method useful.
- Provide the anticipated letting date on the Choice Based Letting advert for each property to be allocated in order to allow customers greater choice
- When advertising Northampton Borough Council properties that are located within the Private Finance Initiative area provide advice to customers on the Choice Based lettings scheme web site and adverts of the proposals for this area.
- Providing a seamless service between the Choice Based Lettings scheme, the home improvement and aids and adaptations service to reduce the need for multiple completion of forms and assessments
- Give increased priority to customers under occupying all affordable housing including Housing Association and Council properties from Band A to the Emergency Band as in accordance with section 30 page 14 of the statutory guidance on allocating affordable housing Fair and Flexible report. This will

then release 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6-bedroom accommodation for reasonable preference groups.

- Establish a Chain Lets framework to attempt to match overcrowded households to customers under occupying. This would be an additional service to the existing mobility and mutual exchange schemes
- Provide information on the web site highlighting the location of all affordable housing in the Borough with information on each individual property type when the cursor hovers over the mark on the Geographical Information System

Agenda Item 11

Appendices

[2]



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No.

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	VOIDS LETTABLE STANDARD
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 June 2010
Key Decision:	YES
Listed on Forward Plan:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	YES
Directorate:	HOUSING
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Sally Beardsworth
Ward(s)	ALL

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To consider the changes necessary to the existing lettable standard (attached at Appendix A) and to approve the revised draft in Appendix B.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members approve the draft lettable standard in appendix B.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 The lettable standard specifies the work that will be carried out to void properties to make them ready for the new tenant. The existing lettable

standard is attached in Appendix A.

- 3.1.2 The existing lettable standard was produced in 2007 and needs to be reviewed to ensure it reflects tenants' views and that all necessary work is covered. It was produced for tradesmen working in voids rather than as a guide for tenants.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 There were 1,141 void properties during 2009/10. The total spent on voids amounted to £3,535,227. The average cost per void amounted to £3,098, made up of an average revenue spend per property of £1,611 and £1,488 capital.
- 3.2.2 The current lettable standard pre-dates the Decent Homes contracts; did not provide sufficient guidance – for example whether single glazed UPVC windows should be upgraded, and gave no choice to residents over decorating. Nor did it give guidance on whether improvements carried out by tenants and carpets and flooring should be left for the new tenant, provided they were in good condition. These issues were raised by the Tenant Auditors during their recent inspection. Although the existing lettable standard states that any new kitchen will be fitted after tenants have moved in, in most cases, due to hygiene or the very poor condition of the kitchen, this has been done during the void period and clarification is required.
- 3.2.3 Once approved, the new lettable standard will be produced in a leaflet form with pictures, on a room-by-room basis, as requested by the Tenant Auditors. It will be given to all prospective tenants when they view the property so that they know what to expect in their new home.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 There is an option to bring all voids up to the Decent Homes standard. Whilst this would ensure a very good standard for the new tenant, it also needs to be considered that existing tenants living next door may be some time away from having decent homes work in their properties; that to increase void expenditure to cover decent homes costs would take money from the existing decent homes programme, and could cost more because of the dispersed, pepper-potted nature of the location of voids. It is, therefore, recommended that this approach should not be adopted. However, where kitchens and bathrooms are either unhygienic or beyond repair, then they will be replaced. Heating will be in good working order, but partial or warm air heating will not be upgraded. If there is no central heating at all in the property, a new system will be fitted. Single UPVC windows will remain and will not be replaced with double glazed units. All such outstanding work will be noted and included in planning improvement and Decent Homes programmes for the future.
- 3.3.2 The tenant auditors requested that any improvements carried out by tenants should remain where possible. Improvements will be removed only if they are in poor condition or do not meet regulations. The same principle will apply to any adaptations carried out for disabled tenants.

3.3.3 Some work could be carried out after the tenant has moved in. This shortens the void period and does allow the tenant's own circumstances to be taken into account – for example, if a new kitchen is to be fitted it can be designed around the new tenant's appliances. Tenants were asked for their views on this. Seventy nine per cent said they would be happy for some work to be carried out after they had moved in: 7% said they would not support this. Details are shown in the table below.

Type of work	Tenants happy for this to be done after they have moved in	Tenants not happy for this to be done after they have moved in
Cutting down overgrown garden	76%	8%
Minor repairs (e.g. broken wall tiles, fencing, repairs to kitchen units, window catches unless unsafe, doors (unless fire doors)	77%	15%
If a new kitchen to be fitted	42%	47%

3.3.4 The lettable standard in appendix B reflects the results of this consultation. Minor repairs and work to clear overgrown gardens will be carried out after tenants have moved in. Where kitchens are being replaced, it is recommended that this work be done during the void period where the existing units are unhygienic.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 Cabinet has recently approved a new tenancy agreement specifying that tenants must leave their properties in a good condition when they move out and has also approved a recharge policy outlining the circumstances in which tenants will be charged for the damage they cause, the aims of which include reducing the costs of repairing void properties.

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 The voids budget remains under pressure due to the fact that a significant number of properties do not yet conform to the Decent Homes standard.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 The Council is required to carry out gas and electrical safety checks. These are done in every void and certificates given to the new tenant to confirm this.

4.4 Equality

4.4.1 An Equalities Impact screening assessment was carried out. New tenants with disability needs are assessed by Housing Solutions and adaptations provided where necessary. Decorating is not normally carried out but can be

done where the disability need supports this. This is being addressed by a Vulnerable Tenants Strategy that is in preparation.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 4.5.1 All tenants were sent a copy of a draft of the revised lettable standard together with a questionnaire for comments on the proposals. There have been over 2,000 replies. Details of tenants preferences are shown in paragraph 3.3.2
- 4.5.2 Officers have also worked closely with the Tenant Auditors to draw up the revised standard.
- 4.5.3 Consultation also showed support for a change in the approach to decorating. At present, the Council delivers a decoration pack to new tenants for them to use. Sixty per cent of tenants stated they would like to see a choice of vouchers (this would probably be an electronic pre paid card) or the decoration pack. Eighteen per cent stated that the existing decoration pack system should be kept, but 81% did not express a view on this. It is recommended that tenants be given the option to choose which they would prefer. The current cost of a decoration pack for a one-bedroom property is £110, rising by approximately £30 per additional room, awarded where decoration is necessary.
- 4.5.4 Consultation also showed that tenants would like to see a welcome pack left in the property, with bin liners being the most popular item, closely followed by cleaning materials. Only ten per cent of tenants felt this would not be useful. This will be accommodated within existing resources.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

- 4.6.1 The recommendations support the Corporate Plan priorities of
- * Improved homes, health and wellbeing, and
 - * An efficient, well-managed organisation that puts our customers at the heart of what we do.

4.7 Other Implications

- 4.7.1 None

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 None

Report author: Christine Ansell, Head of Landlord Services
Extension 8584

APPENDIX A: EXISTING LETTABLE STANDARD

1.0 General

1.1 Evidence of damp, wet rot, dry rot, rising damp, penetrative damp, vermin and infestation will require further investigation and treatment.

2.0 Floors and Stairs

2.1 Repair or renew broken/cracked stair treads or risers

2.2 Repair or renew broken and/or missing handrails and/or balustrade

2.3 Repair or renew damaged/uneven floorboards/floor panels

2.4 Remove nails from floors/stairs

2.5 Repair broken/uneven floor screed or asphalt

2.6 Patch only loose, cracked and missing floor tiles (nearest colour match only – do not expect exact match). Paint splashed or scratched/scored tiles are not to be replaced.

3.0 Windows and Doors

3.1 Renew front and rear door locks unless already changed through eviction/repossession process. Ensure that xxx copies of keys are made, labelled and kept secure.

3.2 Ensure that windows are secure – repair or renew defective window furniture.

3.3 Check glass for cracks and breakages and replace if security/safety risk.

3.4 Ensure that external doors are secure and lockable.

3.5 Replace any missing/badly damaged bathroom and/or w/c doors. All other internal doors will be replaced when new tenant is in-situ.

3.6 All fire doors must operate effectively and correctly.

3.7 Fire door closers must be in situ and in working condition

4.0 Heating System

4.1 All appliances for heating will be in good working order.

4.2 There will be a basic heating source i.e. gas fire in main living room until a heating replacement programme is implemented.

4.3 The installation of central heating, where none currently exists, will be carried out before the tenant moves in (Ref. Tenant Handbook page 37)

5.0 **Gas and Electric Safety Checks**

5.1 Carry out a full safety check and test of the electric system, replacing any unsafe sockets, switches or lamp holders.

5.2 Replace missing smoke alarms

5.3 Test smoke alarms for correct operation, replacing battery if necessary.

5.4 Carry out safety check of gas supply and appliances that are the responsibility of the Council.

6.0 **Kitchen**

6.1 Units to be functional and in a hygienic condition.

6.2 Worktops to be in a hygienic condition.

6.3 Ensure that there is provision for gas and electric cooking appliances (if the property has both facilities)

6.4 Where kitchen units are coming to the end of their serviceable life a full kitchen replacement will be installed ***after the tenant has moved in***. (Ref. Tenant Handbook page 37)

7.0 **Bathroom**

7.1 W/C's to be fully operational and free from cracks.

7.2 Bath to be free from chipped surfaces and sharp edges

7.3 Sanitary ware to be cleaned and toilet seat replaced if necessary

8.0 **Walls and Ceilings**

8.1 Ceilings to be in a sound condition with polystyrene tiles to be removed and ceiling to be skimmed if necessary.

8.2 Walls should be free from large-scale damaged/loose plasterwork.

8.3 Stud partition walls should be secure and free from large-scale damaged plasterboard.

9.0 **Decoration**

9.1 No decoration shall be carried out unless the existing standard of decoration is very poor and has been authorised by the Team Leader/Supervisor (Ref. Tenant Handbook page 37)

9.2 Emulsion walls containing offensive, or racist, graffiti/drawings, will be over painted with emulsion, papered walls will be stripped.

9.3 In all other instances, a decoration pack will be issued.

External (Note: Not usually part of voids work)

- The roof will be watertight and safe – check for sagging/tile slippage.
- The guttering and down pipe will be secure and clear from blockages and leaks.
- All steps, paths and any handrails leading up to a property will be safe.

Cleaning and Clearing

- All of the previous tenant's belongings and rubbish and bulk refuse will be cleared from inside and/or outside of the property.
- The property will be left clean and tidy.
- The loft space and garden will be cleared of rubbish and bulk refuse.
- The garden will be cleared of any rubbish and if overgrown will be chopped back but nothing more. (Ref. Tenant Handbook page 38)

APPENDIX B: REVISED LETTABLE STANDARD

WORK TO BE DONE BEFORE TENANT MOVES IN

- ☒ The property will look in good order and be clean, tidy and secure.
 - It will be free from damp, mould or infestation.
 - Broken/cracked stair treads or risers will be repaired
 - Broken and/or missing handrails and/or balustrades will be repaired or replaced
 - Damaged/uneven floorboards/floor panels will be repaired or renewed
 - Nails will be removed from floors/stairs
 - Broken/uneven floor screed or asphalt will be remedied
- ☒ Kitchen units will be clean and in good condition. Where the kitchen is unhygienic or beyond repair, a new kitchen will be fitted. There will be two rows of tiling above the sink, worktops and behind the cooker space.
- ☒ Bathroom fittings will be clean and in good condition with no chips or cracks. Tiles and grout will be clean and sound. There will be a minimum of two rows of tiling behind the wash hand basin and bath. Any shower area, including showers over baths will have tiled walls. Plugs and chains will be in place. New toilet seats will have been fitted.
- ☒ New locks will be fitted to front and back doors.
- ☒ Existing windows will be secure and in good working order. Any broken glass will be replaced on the day the new tenant moves in. Defective catches or hinges that are a safety issue will be repaired or replaced as necessary.
- ☒ Good decorating will be left in place. Wall plaster will be sound. Offensive graffiti/drawings will be painted over, and heavy nicotine stains covered. In other cases, where decorating is required, tenants will be offered a choice of a decoration pack or vouchers/electronic pre-paid cards for use in a retail outlet.
- ☒ Roofs will be checked to ensure they are watertight and safe. Guttering and down pipes will be similarly checked and secured. Any steps, paths or handrails leading to the property will be checked to ensure they are safe and repaired as necessary.
- ☒ If the property has been adapted for a disabled person, for example, by removing the bath and fitting a walk in shower, this will remain. Every effort will be made to offer the property to someone who needs these adaptations, but if there is no one on the housing register, who needs them, they will remain. The shower will not be removed and the bath refitted. Stair lifts will be removed if not required by the new tenant.
- ☒ Gas and electrical safety checks will be carried out in all void properties. The new tenant will be provided with certificates to confirm this.
- ☒ Carpets and laminate flooring will be removed unless in good condition unless they need to be removed for access to sub floors or electrical wiring. Damaged floor tiles will be replaced and floors cleaned. Any polystyrene ceiling tiles will be

removed.

- ☑ All heating appliances will be serviced and in good working order. In the case of a property, which is heated by only a coal fire, or has no central heating, a new system will be fitted.
- ☑ Any rubbish and items left behind by the previous tenant will be removed, including anything left in gardens, sheds/bin stores or loft spaces.
- ☑ Improvements made by the previous tenant that are safe, meet regulations and are in good condition will be kept and maintained. Any that do not meet these requirements will be removed.
- ☑ Fire doors will be checked and repaired where necessary, ensuring there are no breaches, that door closers are fitted and working and that intumescent strips are fitted as appropriate. Smoke alarms will be tested. Missing smoke alarms will be replaced.

WORK TO BE DONE AFTER THE TENANT HAS MOVED IN

Some repairs will be done after the tenant has moved in. If this is the case, this will be discussed with the tenant when they view the property and at sign up they will be advised of completion dates. Examples of work that can be done after a tenant has moved in include:

- cutting back an overgrown garden and any necessary tree pruning
- minor repairs such as replacing broken wall tiles, repairs to kitchen units, window catches unless unsafe, fitting new or repairing internal doors, unless they are fire doors
- replacement of damaged fencing where security is not an issue

Appendices
1



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No.

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Income Recovery Strategy – rent arrears
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 June 2010
Key Decision:	YES
Listed on Forward Plan:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	YES
Directorate:	HOUSING
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Sally Beardsworth
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To approve the draft strategy for the collection and recovery of rent arrears.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the draft strategy attached at appendix.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1** There has been a significant reduction in rent arrears since April 2008. Arrears at that date stood at £1,774,466 compared to £1,356,689 at the end of March 2010. However, during the last quarter of 2009/10 arrears remained more or less static and there was little overall reduction compared to the beginning of the year. Arrears rose during the year to £1,568,571. This

increase was recovered by the end of the financial year.

- 3.1.2** The strategy is intended to ensure that reasons for arrears have been considered and that all necessary steps are in place to prevent arrears and to recover them where they do occur. There is an emphasis on prevention.

3.2 Issues

Vulnerable tenants

- 3.2.1** The strategy ensures that there will be mechanisms in place to identify vulnerable tenants – those that might due to their circumstances need more support to meet their commitments and recovery actions will be tailored to individual circumstances. For example, there will be referral to the Council's Gateway Officers for support and in increase in personal visits.

Prevention

- 3.2.2** Prevention is a key theme of the strategy. Improvements being delivered include a new process for signing-up new tenants to ensure they receive housing benefit advice on sign-up together with a financial health check to identify any under claiming of benefits and debts which might affect a tenant's ability to pay their rent on time. Where this is case, there will be referrals to appropriate advice agencies.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1** Choices exist in the area of rent arrears recovery in terms of when enforcement action should be taken and tenants evicted. The strategy addresses the need to take action early, to prevent arrears occurring but also recognises that in the case of vulnerable tenants, recovery is likely to be more successful if the appropriate support mechanisms are put in place before considering enforcement and eviction.
- 3.3.2** There are also options over which recovery methods to use. Consideration has been given to the use of distress (removal of goods) but this is not recommended. It is considered inappropriate and unduly harsh taking into account that over 60% of tenants are in receipt of housing benefit, income levels are low and there is doubt over the cost effectiveness of this method.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1** This strategy will form the policy that will govern procedures and rent arrears recovery actions.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1** The policy will be delivered within existing resources. Rent arrears are a loss of income to the Council and it is important that income collection is

maximised to support the financial resources available to deliver the service.

- 4.2.2** The current economic situation could result in difficulty in meeting the arrears reduction targets if tenants face greater financial difficulty. Over 60% of tenants are in receipt of housing benefit. However a significant minority are in employment and there has been an increase in speculative housing benefit claims and officers report more cases of tenants facing reduced hours or becoming single-wage households.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1** None

4.4 Equality

- 4.4.1** An Equalities Impact screening assessment was carried out. The issues of vulnerable tenants were highlighted and addressed within the strategy to ensure that there are appropriate advice and support mechanisms in place

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 4.5.1** A group of tenant auditors examined the rents service and this strategy addresses their recommendations. The Head of Revenues and Benefits has also been consulted, including joint working over the Corporate Debt Policy and Fair Debt Principles.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

- 4.6.1** The recommendations support the Corporate Plan priorities of

- * Improved homes, health and wellbeing, and
- * An efficient, well-managed organisation that puts our customers at the heart of what we do.

4.7 Other Implications None

5. Background Papers: None

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RENT ARREARS RECOVERY STRATEGY

2010 – 2013

DRAFT

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Northampton Borough Council owns and manages over 12,000 properties. The level of arrears amongst current tenants placed the council in the Housemark bottom quartile for percent of rent collected in 2008/9 when compared with other similar organisations. Results for 2009/10 are awaited. There has been a significant reduction in arrears over the past two years. The amount owed at the 31st March 2010 was £1,356,689 compared to £1,777,466 in April 2008.
- 1.2** The Council is committed to achieving excellence by delivering high quality services to all tenants. This over-arching strategy will steer the recovery of arrears for the next three years.

2. PURPOSE OF THE RENT ARREARS RECOVERY STRATEGY

- 2.1** The aims of this strategy are to:
- improve performance and reduce arrears
 - analyse reasons for arrears to aid more effective recovery;
 - analyses the profile of those in debt as an aid to targeting recovery action;
 - ensure there are effective mechanism in place to support tenants and sustain tenancies.
- 2.2** This strategy is a living document and will be updated in response to continuing best practice, national and local circumstances. It has been developed taking account of the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry and the Tenant Services Authority Service Standards.

3. DRIVERS FOR THE INCOME COLLECTION STRATEGY

3.1 Northampton Borough Council's Corporate priorities

The Council's priorities are clearly specified in the Corporate Plan for the period 2010-2013 and are shown below.

1. Safer, greener and cleaner communities
2. Improved home, health and wellbeing
3. A confident, ambitious and successful Northampton
4. Strong partnership and engaged communities
5. A well-managed organisation that puts our customers at the heart of what we do

3.2 Housing, health and well being

A key aim of the Council is to reduce and prevent homelessness. This strategy supports this by promoting a rent payment culture whilst addressing arrears prevention, support for those in debt, support for vulnerable tenants, financial inclusion, and overall tenancy sustainment.

3.4 Strong partnership and engaged communities

The Council also aims to understand its customers. The profile of tenants in arrears has been analysed to enable targeted, more effective support and action. We will enhance this further by setting up a focus group of tenants in arrears and carrying out a survey of tenants to seek their views on the effectiveness of the service provided.

3.5 A well-managed organisation that puts our customers at the heart of what we do

The Council aims to

- provide excellent customer services
- improve financial management
- ensure value for money services
- provide efficient and effective management

In addition to the profiling and customer engagement work above, we have become members of the Housemark value for money benchmarking club, reviewed rent service standards and set up a rent strategy group to steer and monitor progress of the action plan.

When working with customers we aim to ensure that:

- there are mechanisms in place to ensure that tenants' views are influential in shaping current and future services;
- customers are important and that their opinions count;
- there are effective communication mechanisms in place to enable customers to be well informed, participate and challenge service delivery;
- there are effective mechanisms in place to negotiate and produce the Tenant Services Authority new local service delivery offer which is required to be in place from April 2011.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RENT ARREARS RECOVERY STRATEGY

4.1 The Council aims to deliver an excellent service in the recovery of rent arrears through the delivery of the objectives listed below.

	Objectives
1	Ensure that there are effective mechanisms in place to prevent debt occurring.
2	Where debt does occur, proactively take early action to make contact, make tenant aware, provide advice and seek recovery, aiming to ensure that arrears do not escalate.
3	Reduce arrears and provide sustained performance improvements.
4	Provide benefit advice, support and access to debt counselling and money advice to help low-income and vulnerable households and tenants with financial difficulties to maximise their incomes and manage any debts effectively.
5	Work in partnership with internal partners such as the Council's Revenues and Benefits Section and the Housing Solutions team. Work in partnership with external organisations such as Citizens Advice and Community Law to maximise effective support for those in arrears.
6	Ensure there are mechanisms in place to promote a rent payment culture.
7	Ensure that there are mechanisms in place to identify the needs of all communities, including minority groups, vulnerable and low-income households, and that these are supported and managed.
8	Ensure there is excellent access to services, including clear and effective information and advice in place, and that there is easy, fast access to information on balances.
9	Provide support to address worklessness amongst tenants, and address issues arising from the recent economic situation.
10	Ensure that customers have the opportunity to influence the service they receive through negotiation of the 'local offer' to tenants, using effective consultation and feedback mechanisms.
11	Ensure the income collection service is providing value for money

5 SERVICE STANDARDS

- 5.1** Revised service standards are in place for rent arrears. These are interim measures and will be replaced by the new Tenant Services Authority 'local offer' to tenants from April 2011.

Service standards

- Tenants will be given clear information on what they need to pay.
- There will be a range of ways to pay so tenants can choose which most suits their needs.
- Tenants will be sent quarterly rent statements and provided with a statement upon request.
- Tenants will be given advice and help to claim housing and other welfare benefits.
- Tenants will be given advice on how to get more in-depth help if they have other debts to pay.
- New tenants will be given a financial health check including a housing benefits assessment at sig-up.
- If tenants get into arrears, we will agree a repayment plan with them - but if this is not kept to legal action may be taken.
- Checks will be made with housing benefits regarding any pending or outstanding claims before legal action is taken.

6 PERFORMANCE LEVELS

6.1 Arrears owed by current tenants

- 6.1.1** Rent arrears in April 2008 stood at £1,774,466 compared to £1,356,689 at the end of March 2010. However, in 2009/10 there was a very small reduction in arrears from £1,358,086 compared to £1,333,106. During the year arrears rose as high as £1,530,463 in September but reduced in third quarter to £1,333,106 and then remained more or less static.
- 6.1.2** The per cent of rent collected in 2009/10 was 96.2% against a target of xxx. This was based on the old Best Value Performance Indicator Definition BV66a and includes the carried forward arrears from previous years.
- 6.1.3** Arrears as a percentage of the debit amounted to 3.29%. There were 37 evictions in 2009/10.

6.2 Arrears owed by former tenants

- 6.2.1** The Amount owed by former tenants at the end of 09/10 amounted to £1,446,678. The amount written off as irrecoverable was £63,695 and the amount collected was £86,150.

6.3 Rechargeable repairs

- 6.3.1** The amount owed at the end of 09/10 amounted to £133,563. The amount written off as irrecoverable was £53,306 and the amount collected was £34,033.

7 REASONS FOR ARREARS

- 7.1** There are a number of different circumstances that cause tenants to fall into debt and these are outlined below. Action and support are tailored to the cause of debt – for example for someone recently becoming unemployed, or on a low income, housing and other welfare benefit advice will be given and arrangements made for the tenant to pay by instalments. In other cases where there are no special reasons and where advice has been given, enforcement action in terms of a notice of intent to seek possession, extension of the introductory period of the tenancy if relevant, and court action where there is a continued failure to respond.

7.2 Housing Benefit not being claimed promptly

This has an important affect on rent payment. Officers will make contact with customers in order to give advice and assistance in claiming any housing benefit that they may be entitled to. They also record details of any social worker or other contact, in order to advise them promptly of any problems with a housing benefit claim. Customers are encouraged at every opportunity to claim any housing benefit that they may be entitled to. Officers will also liaise with the Housing Benefits Service and the customer, in order to advise the customer of any documentation needed to enable a claim to be assessed. Sign up procedures are being changed to provide benefit advice on sign-up.

7.3 A change in family circumstances

Arrears can occur if there has a relationship breakdown within the family, and this can temporarily result in rent not being paid. Officers liaise with the tenant and the Council's housing benefits section in order to give advice, resolve any tenancy issues and minimise the amount arrears that may occur.

7.4 Bereavement

This can have a pronounced affect on rent payments. Officers give advice to the customer on succession issues and housing benefit and will liaise with The Council's housing benefit section in order to resolve issues promptly.

7.5 Ill health

Advice and assistance is given to ensure all relevant benefits are claimed. There will be an increased emphasis on home visits and where appropriate, referral to the Council's Gateway Officers for support.

7.6 Loss of employment

The reduction in income resulting from the loss of employment can have a significant effect on a customer's ability to pay rent. This is a particular problem for customers who are have a series of temporary, often low paid work. Tenants may face reduced hours or becoming a single wage household. They may still be above the housing benefit threshold, with commitments to meet arising from when their income was higher. Officers will provide advice and assistance, referral to the Council's new debt counselling service, referral to the Citizens Advice Bureau or the Community Law

Service. Payment of arrears by instalment will be accepted.

7.7 Imprisonment

Officers liaise with the Probation Service, Relatives and the Housing Benefits Service, to ensure that assistance is given to customers where appropriate. In some cases, housing benefit may cover the rent for a limited period. However, if the arrears are likely to increase, there is no benefit entitlement or rent being paid, legal action is taken to recover the property.

7.8 Vulnerability

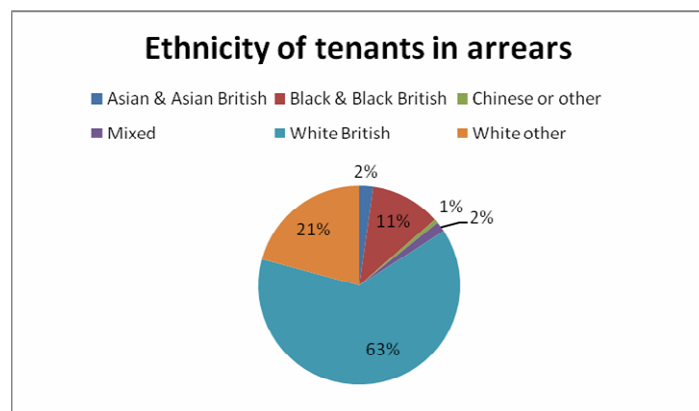
Vulnerable tenants may be less able to manage their finances. This is covered in section 10.

8 PROFILE OF TENANTS IN ARREARS

8.1 Customer profiling information showing details of tenants in arrears has been analysed to show which groups of tenants are more likely to be in arrears. This will enable recovery action to be targeted so it can be more effective. It also acts as aid to prevention – for example, when signing up new tenants aged 35 to 54 extra emphasis will be placed on stressing the importance of rent payments, providing help with housing benefits and also on identifying any other debts that might prevent the payment of rent arrears. Support can be provided from the in house debt counselling service and there will also be sign-posting to external organisations that can provide support such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Community Law.

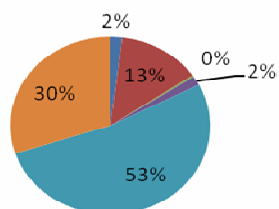
- The majority of tenants in arrears are white British or fall into the white other category (84% of those in arrears)
- The largest minority group in arrears is the Black or Black British or African category at 11% of those in arrears
- Tenants in arrears are more likely to be in the 35 to 54 year age group – nearly twice as large as the next highest age group of 25 to 34 year olds
- Of those in arrears 91% are secure tenants and 9% are introductory tenants
- 95% of rent debt is owed by secure tenants – 5% by introductory tenants
- 85.77% of tenants give their nationality as being from the UK
the remaining groups are from Eastern Europe. The largest group are Polish but these are still in the minority with only 20 tenants declaring themselves as Polish.

8.2 This information will be used to target additional support such as help to apply for housing benefits and ensuring tenants are claiming all the benefits to which they are entitled. Details are shown in the charts that follow.



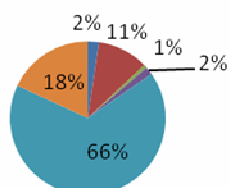
Ethnicity of tenants owing more than £500

■ Asian & Asian British
 ■ Black & Black British
 ■ Chinese or other
■ Mixed
 ■ White British
 ■ White other



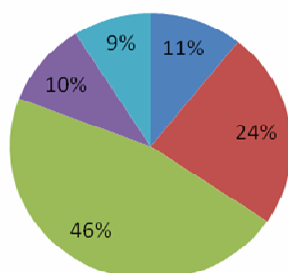
Ethnicity of tenants owing under £500

■ Asian & Asian British
 ■ Black & Black British
 ■ Chinese or other
■ Mixed
 ■ White British
 ■ White other



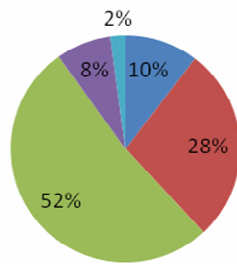
Age of tenants in arrears

■ under 25
 ■ 25-34
 ■ 35-54
 ■ 55-64
 ■ 65+



Age profile of tenants with high arrears £500+

■ under 25 ■ 25-34 ■ 35-54 ■ 55-64 ■ 65+



9. PREVENTION

9.1 Procedures are being reviewed to ensure that there are effective mechanisms in place to reduce rent arrears and where these do occur, to prevent these escalating out of control.

9.2 Mechanisms in place include

- Use of introductory tenancies, including extensions of the introductory period where arrears do occur
- Rent obligations explained at sign-up stage for all new tenants and importance of regular payments stressed in order to promote rent payment culture
- A new tenancy agreement explaining more clearly the obligations to pay rent in order to assist in the promotion of a rent payment culture
- Effective benefit advice, capturing of information by housing staff and fast receipt to the benefits service to reduce arrears and prevent housing benefit overpayments.
- Visits to all new tenants within four weeks of their tenancy start date
- Quarterly rent statements sent to all tenants
- Advice leaflet for those in financial difficulties
- Personal visits to those in arrears
- Regular promotional campaigns to promote a rent payment culture
- A range of payment options, including on line and telephone payments
- Early intervention and personal visits if arrears do occur
- Benefit take up campaigns
- Tenancy support for vulnerable tenants
- A choice of four payment dates for direct debit payments

9.3 Improvements being introduced include

- Affordability health check to ensure that new tenants will be in a position to pay rent
- A revised sign up procedure in place from June 2010 to include a housing benefits advice and a financial health check to identify potential problems such as unclaimed benefits or other debts that could prevent rent being paid, with advice and referral for debt counselling or help from Citizens Advice or Community Law

- A new debt counselling service for council tenants in arrears
- Self help pack for tenants worried about rent arrears
- The ability for tenants to view their balance on line from July 2010
- A second visit to new tenants aged 35 to 54 within the first three months of their tenancy – the group most likely to be in arrears
- Incentives to pay by direct debit
- Incentives to maintain a clear rent account and incentives to pay regularly for 13 weeks.
- Housing staff completing E benefit forms – this will automatically update the benefits system and mean that housing benefit staff do not need to key in information – they would only need to verify and assess. This will reduce over payments and speed up processing of new claims.

10 SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE TENANTS

10.1 Some tenants will be less able than others to manage their tenancies and their financial affairs. Vulnerability will be determined by individual circumstances – for example, not all elderly people will fall into this category but some may be vulnerable for medical reasons. The categories below will be used as triggers to alert officers to the potential of vulnerability.

10.2 Vulnerability is not an excuse for not keeping to tenancy conditions and paying rent on time. However, recovery procedures do need to be and will be tailored to individual circumstances. The more appropriate the support is, the more likely arrears are to reduce.

10.3 The following may be vulnerable – these are examples and this is not an exhaustive list:

- Young people leaving care
- The elderly, particularly frail elderly
- Tenants with mental health needs affecting their ability to sustain independent living and sustain their tenancies
- Tenants with learning or physical disability support needs
- Victims of hate crime
- Victims of domestic violence
- Tenants with a recent history of homelessness or those who have not previously been responsible for managing household bills

The vulnerability may arise in the tenant's family rather than with the tenant themselves. An example would be a tenant who has a depend child with a disability.

10.4 Mechanisms in place to support vulnerable tenants include:

- Once the vulnerability has been identified, it will be logged on the IBS system so that all those who engage with the customer will be aware.
- Support from a Gateway Officer
- Floating support

10.5 Improvements being introduced include

- Additional visits for those in arrears to increase the level of personal contact, tailoring standard procedures to individual circumstances.
- Training for rent income officers and housing officers on the identification of vulnerability and how to provide support.
- Introduction of a tenancy sustainment contract – an agreement between the tenant and the Council clearly outlining what help the Council will provide, and the actions the tenant agrees to take to help them keep their tenancy.

11. ADDRESSING WORKLESSNESS – HELPING TENANTS INTO WORK

11.1 The issues raised in the recent publication by the Chartered Institute of Housing entitled: “Tackling Worklessness: A toolkit”.

11.2 Actions in place include:

- focus on young people and care leavers in terms of enhanced advice through our Gateway Officers and floating support;
- additional advice and support for homeless 16 to 18 year olds;
- Advice on benefits for those starting work

11.3 Improvements planned

- working with the Job Centre to sign-post tenants to advice and assistance in relation to job seeking

12. CHALLENGES

- 12.1 There are a number of challenges to be addressed in the period 2009-2012 which may have an impact upon service delivery and the ability to meet targets. These will need to be managed effectively.

Challenges

- Current economic situation with a subsequent potential increase in unemployment and tenants facing financial difficulty.

We will address this by providing early intervention, benefit advice, referral to the Council's new debt counselling service or a referral to independent advice such as the Citizens Advice Bureau or Community Law.

- The level of worklessness amongst tenants – over sixty per cent of tenants are in receipt of housing benefit .

We will address this by referral of tenants to advice and working with the Job Centre to address this.

- The need to achieve a step change in performance to reach the Housemark upper quartile.

We will address this by further development of the IBS software which will enable officers to increase the amount of time spent with tenants, a review of rent arrears procedures and the new debt counselling service which is now in place. We will monitor take up and waiting times for this service.

- Direct debit take up needs to increase to allow resources to be diverted to providing support for vulnerable tenants and work with those in severe financial difficulties.

We will address this by carrying out further take up campaigns and the use of incentives.

- We need to meet the diverse needs of our tenants. This was recently highlighted by the tenant auditors' work into rent arrears.

We will address this by continuing to analyse the profiling information for tenants in arrears, and further identifying whether there are any translation needs.

13. MANAGING ARREARS

13.1 Development of the IBS System

The IBS software which is used to manage rent arrears is being enhanced so that stages that are currently carried out manually will be automatic. The software improvements will identify who has not paid or kept to an agreement and will produce

an action list for officers. This should be in place from summer 2010. This is currently a manual exercise for officers and the improvement will release a significant amount of time for officers to provide support where needed, take enforcement action where needed and provide more home visits and a more personal service.

13.2 Review of Procedures

Procedures have been reviewed to reduce the number of stages in the arrears process from over 30 to 11. This will provide a more streamlined approach and will enable the stages to be set up on the IBS software so that officers can be automatically prompted to take the appropriate action – rather than manually looking through accounts to identify what needs to be done as happens now. This will provide an automatic escalation and recovery process.

13.3 On line balance enquiries

Improvements are being made to the IBS software to allow tenants to see their balance on line. This will be available from July 2010, subject to satisfactory testing.

13.4 Corporate debt policy

A corporate debt policy has been developed to aid recovery where tenants owe more than one debt to the Council. This identifies priority debts and contains processes to ensure the tenant is in a position to pay. More information is given in section 14.

13.5 General approach

13.5.1 Support and advice is in place for those in financial difficulties through the new debt counselling service. Independent advice is available from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Community Law. Contact details are provided in leaflets and arrears letters. The Council's Gateway officers provide support to vulnerable tenants and this can include a referral to floating support.

13.5.2 Annual targets are set and these are translated into individual reduction targets for officers. This ensures that there are mechanisms in place to deliver the overall target. Performance closely monitored by managers and reported on a weekly basis. Rent arrears clinics are held quarterly to challenge performance and to review cases.

13.5.3 A Rent Strategy Group has been set up to monitor the progress of the strategy and to monitor performance.

13.5.4 Early action is taken to prevent arrears. The automatic escalation policy commences within x weeks rent amounting to a debt of at least £70 – in excess of one week's average rent.

13.5.5 A new sign-up procedure is being introduced to provide housing benefit advice on sign up and to carry out a financial health check, the purpose of which is to identify whether there is any under claiming of benefits or tax credits or any debts that might prevent the new tenant from paying their rent. Where this is identified, referrals will be made to appropriate advice and support.

13.5.6 A new affordability check for applicants will be introduced to ensure that they will be in a position to pay rent if they successfully bid for a tenancy.

13.5.7 Tenants are advised to seek independent advice from external agencies, throughout the recovery process. Details of advice providers are contained on appropriate

standard letters.

- 13.5.8** Officers work with the Council's Housing Benefit Service to promote the take up of housing and other benefits, particularly to groups of tenants who are less likely to claim housing benefit. The aim is to collect rent rather than to evict tenants. We therefore advise and assist tenants to seek advice regarding debts and will take into account individual circumstances and try to assist tenants wherever possible.

13.6 Enforcement mechanisms

- **Court Proceedings**

Court Applications are made only as a last resort. The County Court Protocol will be followed and tenants informed by letter of the court application. We will make every attempt to contact and interview them prior to the case being heard at court.

- **Payment by instalments**

- We will firstly ask for the whole debt to be cleared, if this is genuinely not possible, we will accept repayment agreements, which are realistic and affordable for the tenant. For those paying by standing order we will explain that it is their responsibility to amend the standing order details with their bank, should their rent level change.

- **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)- payment of rent direct from benefit**

We will continue to request rent direct payments from the Department of Work and Pensions for tenants in arrears and where the arrears meet the DWP criteria for direct payment.

- **Type of Orders**

- When taking customers to court, we will ask for Outright Possession Orders for all Non-Secure Tenants. For Secure Tenants we will also ask for Outright Possession Orders, unless the customer has maintained regular payments prior to the Court Hearing. In this case we will ask the Court for a Suspended Possession Order.

- **Evictions**

Eviction is used only as a last resort where all reasonable steps for prevention and recovery are exhausted. Where we have to take such action we will advise tenants to seek independent advice. Should we receive an offer to reduce the arrears in order to suspend the eviction, this can only be agreed by the case being returned to and heard at court. Tenants have the right to appeal to the Court for the eviction not to take place and the vast majority of tenants exercise this right. The Judge will consider all the circumstances and decide if it is appropriate for the eviction to proceed or whether a repayment agreement should be entered into. Tenants can appeal against each eviction date set and it is not uncommon for there to have been a number of successful appeals before the judge decides that the eviction should proceed.

14. CORPORATE DEBT POLICY

The Council has recently introduced a corporate debt policy that aims to:

- ✓ identify which debts owed to the Council should be given priority;
- ✓ facilitate a coordinated approach to managing multiple debts owed to the Council;
- ✓ identify where support is required to those owing money to the Council ensuring their circumstances are taken into account; and
- ✓ Apply best practice in relation to debt collection.

14.1 Hierarchy of debt

The corporate debt policy gives priority in terms of recovery of debts owed to the Council where non-payment could lead to the loss of the customer's home or imprisonment and these relate to current rent arrears and Council Tax debts.

Where a customer owes multiple debts to the Council, former tenant arrears and rechargeable repairs are not considered priority debts and collection of current arrears and council tax payments will take priority.

Where a tenant has a housing benefit overpayment to pay, the recover rate will be set at a rate that will allow the tenant to pay any priority debts of current rent arrears or council tax.

14.2 Fair debt principles

The corporate debt policy and this strategy for the recovery of current rent arrears are based on the principles shown below.

The Council takes its financial responsibilities in maximising income very seriously and aims to continually improve its financial management. The Council however is equally serious about its social responsibilities in ensuring that fair debt principles will be considered as part of debt collection.

The Council's aims are shown below:

- A significant proportion of debtors are on low incomes or housing and council tax benefit. Debtors may owe more than one debt to the Council. As a result we will always consider their total indebtedness. We will always endeavour to:
 - Not add to the debt owed due to inability to pay through additional costs being applied,
 - Not cause arrears to occur elsewhere i.e. through unrealistic recovery rates applied to individual debts,
- To ensure this we will facilitate a coordinated approach to sharing information in order to assist in managing multiple debts owed to the Council
- We will be clear and concise in managing debts by:

- Providing assistance to avoid and minimise debts occurring, through implementation and review of preventative actions taken across the Council,
- Ensuring that appropriate support is given to those owing money to the Council,
- Considering the circumstances of individuals particularly where it is identified that they are vulnerable,
- Providing customers with information on where to get help and advice about benefits and debt problems. This will include information and advice from the Council and independent advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Law Services, Northampton Credit Union and other independent advice organisations.
- By providing information on payment options,
- By encouraging self-help,
- We will assist in maximising customers income by:
 - Ensuring we take a proactive approach to advertising eligibility to benefits,
 - Provide information about claiming housing and council tax benefit within arrears letters.
 - Ensure all new Council tenants receive both a housing benefit entitlement check and a financial health check when signing up for their tenancy.
- Work with welfare agencies to ensure that a co-ordinated approach is made in making arrangements to pay a debt. In these cases we will set frameworks that enable arrangements to be made by employees of trusted partners that are implemented by the Council
- Take every opportunity to engage with debtors prior to them incurring additional costs.

15. WORKING WITH TENANTS

15.1 Tenant auditors

Tenant auditors have recently audited the rent arrears service and have made a number of suggestions to improve the service.

Recommendations not covered elsewhere in this strategy includes the actions listed below.

- Producing CDs about rent arrears in various languages to circulate amongst different communities. Language needs are currently being identified so that this can be actioned.
- Holding arrears surgeries at community centres. Plans are in place for a trial in areas of high arrears.

- Revising rent arrears letters with a traffic lights system to alert tenants to the seriousness of their individual situation. These are in preparation.
- Making rent statements clearer by producing a 'Your Statement Explained' leaflet. This is in preparation.
- Use text messaging more effectively. Enhancements to the IBS software are being costed at present.
- Setting up robust targets to increase direct debit payments. These have been set and are supported by an incentive scheme.
- Prioritise home visits. Enhancements to the IBS software will release more time for home visits.
- Investigate the possible use of a mobile cash office – similar to a library van. This was considered but not supported due to safety and security reasons and also due to the cost of administration. The aim is to try to reduce cash payments and increase direct debits.
- Publicise evictions without naming individuals and detail the number of evictions over a specific period stating the total owed by each tenant. This will be considered, subject to legal advice.
- Create on line access to rent accounts. This will be available from July 2010.

15.2 Satisfaction levels

A sample satisfaction survey of tenants in arrears is being carried out and will be carried out on an annual basis. This will seek views on how easy it is to contact the service, and measure the quality of advice given and overall satisfaction.

15.3 Focus group

Tenants are being asked to take part a focus group so that the effect of service improvement can be measured and further service improvements identified. The group will meet twice a year.

15.4 Local offer to tenants

During 2010/11 consultation will be carried out with tenants to put together and deliver the Tenant Services Authority new 'local offer' to tenants. This will be a review of service standards and procedures and will be in place from April 2011. This strategy will be updated to reflect that offer.

16. PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR 2010

Performance Indicator	Outturn 2009/10	Target 2010/11
% of rent collected	96.92%	97.2%
Total arrears	£1,356,689	£1,220,784
Arrears as a per cent of the debit	3.29%	2.9%
Tenants paying by direct debit	919	1885
Former tenants arrears: amount collected	£86,150	£94,750
Rechargeable repairs: amount collected	£34,033	£37,500

17. ACTION PLAN

Action	Milestones	Target	Lead officer
Identify user satisfaction levels	1.Despatch survey 2. Analyse results	1. June 2010 2. July 2010	Philip Ralph
Set up rents user group to actively canvass views of service users on ongoing basis as recommended in KLOEs	1. Survey to ask for volunteers June 2010 2. Hold meetings	1. Sept 2010 2. December and March 2011	Philip Ralph
Ensure front-line staff have a wide range of knowledge about the full range of benefits available, managing debt and reducing indebtedness	Training on update on welfare benefits and debt counselling	Oct-10	Philip Ralph
Promote direct debit through take up campaign	Produce leaflet to promote and advertise incentives	June and December 2010	Clive Perry
Publicise incentives to pay	Next edition of newsletter, web site and flyers in arrears letters	Spring newsletter. Web site by end April. Flyers December 2010	Clive Perry
Monitor effectiveness and take up of new in house debt counselling service	1. Review Performance information monthly 2. Review sample of cases to measure effect on debt.	End Sept 2010	Philip Ralph
Ensure effective signposting to Gateway support	Clarify referral mechanisms, targets, objectives and feedback mechanism with Housing Solutions Manager by end May 2010. Completed	May-10	Tim Ansell
Ensure needs of vulnerable tenants are identified and met	Review approach to vulnerable tenants by producing vulnerable tenants strategy	End June 2010	Chris Ansell
Review new tenancy visits	Revise new tenancy visit check list and hold briefing session for staff	Mid June 2010	Peter Haytack
Review Customer Profiling information to identify needs of service users	Repeat profiling review by end May Identify actions required by end June 2010. Completed	End May 2010	Chris Ansell
Consult tenants on revised rent service standards	Review at first meeting of focus group	Sep-10	Tim Ansell
Review rent arrears letters	1. Tenant auditors views 2. On System	1. March 2010 2. July 2010	Clive Perry
Ensure strategic approach to recovery of rent arrears	Produce income recovery strategy, including approach to prevention of arrears	Jun-10	Chris Ansell
Ensure strategic approach to recovery of rent arrears	Analyse reasons for non payment and ensure strategy addresses these. Completed	May-10	Peter Haytack
Ensure strategic approach to recovery of rent arrears	Review rent arrears policy and procedures to reflect income recovery strategy	Jul-10	Peter Haytack

Ensure strategic approach to recovery of rent arrears	Work with Head of Revenues and Benefits to produce Corporate debt policy. Completed	May-10	Chris Ansell/Robin Bates
Ensure new tenants receive full induction and gain a full understanding of obligation to pay rent	Review sign up procedure	Jun-10	Peter Haytack
Review value for money of the service	1. Analyse costs of rent arrears collection, including staff and costs of each payment method July 2010 2. Benchmark through HQN and produce action plan	Sep-10	Tim Ansell
Ensure there are effective working arrangements with Housing Benefits	Review SLA with housing benefits by end Feb 2010	End June 2010	Philip Ralph
Ensure there are effective working arrangements for tenants to access Housing Benefits	Review HB advice given at sign up	Jun-10	Philip Ralph
Hold rent arrears clinics to identify issues to be addressed	Review sample of debts and action taken	quarterly	Chris Ansell
Implement Agreement Screen on IBS	1. Transfer to IBS project team - completed 2. Visit Luton to learn from their experience. 3. Implement	1. March 2010 2. May 2010 3. July 2010	Steve Bromley
Implement IBS Progression screen	1. Transfer to IBS project team 2. Visit Luton to learn from their experience. Completed 3. Implement	1. March 2010 2. May 2010 3. July 2010	Steve Bromley
Refine rent statements	Ensure rent debt kept separate from other debts	Jul-10	Steve Bromley/Philip Ralph
Refine rent statements	Produce leaflet explaining rent statements	Sep-10	Tim Ansell
Ensure tenants can look up balance on line	Transfer to IBS project and implement	Jul-10	Steve Bromley
Enhance monitoring of rent arrears	Review monitoring and recording process of one to one supervision	Jun-10	Tim Ansell
Ensure new tenants are able to afford rent payments	Carry out affordability check at short listing stage on those not entitled to housing benefit to ensure that applicant has ability to pay rent	Jul-10	Ian Swift
Consider language needs	Identify language needs and need for CD or other mechanism in alternative language	Sep-10	Tim Ansell
Set up rent arrears surgery on pilot basis	Identify area by Jul 2010	Aug-10	Tim Ansell
Review use of texting	Review IBS options - Completed Jun 2010. Consider budget availability by Sept 2010	Sep-10	Chris Ansell