

## **1 Background**

### 1.1

In response to the new strategic framework for housing set by Central Government the format and role of the Housing Strategy Statement has been revised. The Strategy Statement will provide a broad overview of the housing issues for Medway, covering all forms of housing tenure, supplemented as they are drafted during the life of the statement with detailed strategy and policy documents linked to service business plans ensuring that the links between service delivery, performance monitoring and review operate within an agreed strategic framework.

### 1.2

These documents will be collated in a ring binder format picking up on good practice adopted by high performing authorities so they can easily be updated and sections distributed to different audiences. As the process becomes more complete and sophisticated, service, team and individual performance targets can be traced through the documents. Similar links will be developed for the tenants compact. Separate strategies covering homelessness and supporting people are being produced with key issues included in the Strategy statement.

### 1.3

The new format will include the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Performance Plan, including National and Local Performance indicators. These plans will include a neighbourhood focus, reflecting the separation of the management of the Council's housing stock into three geographic neighbourhoods, managed by three multi disciplinary neighbourhood teams.

### 1.4

Reference is made throughout the text to the nine key regional housing priorities identified in the Regional Housing Statement 2002/2005. Each section will include targets and funding requirements, which will be collated in an executive summary. The following are the nine key Regional Housing priorities:

- Priority 1 - To meet the need for affordable housing
- Priority 2 - To help key workers access accommodation
- Priority 3 - To reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
- Priority 4 - To meet the needs of those who require supported housing
- Priority 5 - To meet the housing needs of black and minority ethnic people and asylum Seekers
- Priority 6 - To improve the quality and suitability of the housing stock
- Priority 7 - To promote regeneration and neighbourhood renewal
- Priority 8 - To encourage the development of sustainable rural areas
- Priority 9 - To support crime reduction through housing provision

## 2 The Strategic Framework

### 2.1

This Housing Strategy operates within a framework of national, regional and local Strategic Objectives.

In Medway our strategic objectives for the housing services are;

- In partnership with other providers, ensure that a broad range of new homes are built in Medway to meet local needs and support the competitiveness of the economy.
- By 2004 ensure that all people in Medway have a range of choice in housing provision.
- By 2004 enhance the energy efficiency of Medway's homes and businesses.

The council has six core values. We relate each of these to the housing services as follows;

#### *Promoting Physical, Social and Economic Regeneration*

Use housing investment to support the regeneration of high streets bringing property back into use and through the development of a range of housing assist in meeting the Council's target of 1000 new affordable homes by 2006. Housing resources to be used wherever possible to provide jobs and training opportunities.

#### *Improving the Environment*

Ensure that housing resources are used to enhance the energy efficiency levels of property both in the public, voluntary and private sector through the development of a Medway Energy Efficiency standard.

To maximise the use of existing stock and use of Brownfield sites to meet housing need.

Target grants to six of the more deprived wards which are Town, Holcombe, Luton Brompton, Gillingham North, Frindsbury plus the areas of Chattenden and Princes's Park (areas of specific neighbourhood need)

#### *Realising Everyone's Potential*

Use housing resources to meet the needs of the most vulnerable working closely with Social Services and Health to ensure all needs are addressed.

#### *Equal Opportunities and Access*

Develop a range of services that assist people with a physical disability to access housing and those with specific housing needs that are not catered for in the allocations process. Ensure there is no discrimination in the allocation of housing.

#### *Fostering Citizenship*

Use housing resources to address the sustainability of rural areas in terms of employment and affordable housing for local people.

Develop and implement the good practice outlined in the tenants compact.

### *Giving Value for Money*

Conclude a series of reviews on housing services using the Best Value Framework for Housing and incorporating a Best Value pilot review on homelessness, housing advice and allocations evaluating benchmarking as a methodology for assessing performance.

## 2.2

### **Local Strategic Partnership**

The Local Strategic Partnership has been working on the development of the Community Plan that has now been adopted. Key targets for housing in the section "A place built for the future" are;

- Assess and increase the affordable housing stock in the area for a range of population groups.
- Develop a local planning and development framework in consultation to address agreed design and sustainability priorities for the future.
- Reduce the level of homelessness in the area.
- Establish a partnership group to improve and upgrade council housing stock by December 2003.

## 2.3

### **Key Partnership Actions**

- The council will ensure that at least 70% of new development takes place on Brownfield sites.
- Establish a broad partnership, which can review and undertake upgrading of the existing housing stock in areas such as North Gillingham, Luton and central Chatham, where the standard of accommodation does not always meet modern requirements.
- Wherever possible ensure that new developments are environmentally friendly, make provision for open space, waste and recycling systems and, where practical, promote the use of innovative forms of energy management eg; solar and wind power opportunities.
- Assess the need for temporary accommodation in the area including needs of the homeless and those with mental ill health or drug dependency and identify a partnership strategy to meet unmet needs.

## 2.4

### **The Strategic Planning Process**

Housing services, in April 2001 joined Social Services to form the Health and Community Services Directorate. Housing is managed by the Assistant Director for Community Services, whose remit includes, housing, supporting people, health promotion, bereavement and registration services. The new structure provides an exciting opportunity to bring together the health, housing and social care agenda and embrace the challenges that the national agenda, in particular the creation of Primary Care Trusts, will present.

## 2.5

In recognition of these changes the Housing Strategy Group cross directorate working, ensuring housing issues are covered by other strategic forums. This ensures housing issues are incorporated in action planning and service delivery across the Council. For example, the Health Improvement Plan includes action points relating to fuel poverty, which will be led by private sector housing. The Drug Action Plan includes references to supported housing and rough sleepers, which will be picked up by the homeless and allocations team. This rationalisation and refocusing of strategic forums is in line with the development of local strategic partnerships.

## 2.6

The Development and Environment directorate has strong links with housing in its planning and regeneration role. The Assistant Director for Community Services sits on the Regeneration Management Board. Drafts of affordable housing policies and regeneration proposals large and small are considered by the board. Housing issues have a clear role to play in the development and implementation of regeneration. The Housing strategy will have clear links with the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy currently out for consultation, both on terms of informing and implementing the strategy.

## 2.7

The Council has split the management of the former Gillingham Council housing stock into three neighbourhood teams. The intention is to develop a neighbourhood forum, in partnership with Medway Residents' Group (MERGE) covering all residents, not just council tenants where they can raise issues of concern and where the Council can consult on wider strategic issues, eg MERGE were specifically consulted over the new political management proposals. This could form the nucleus of small-scale neighbourhood renewal projects in areas where we have strategic land holdings.

## 2.8

Three thematic reviews have been identified by the new Health and Community Services Directorate covering services for the disabled, the elderly and "somewhere to live". These reviews will help to integrate the new range of services provided by the directorate, identify overlaps and gaps in service provision, and inform strategies outside of the Directorate about service pressures; for example, the identification of sites suitable for nursing home accommodation in the Local Plan.

## 2.9

A Stakeholder workshop including tenants was held in May to help scope the terms of reference for the Best Value Review "Somewhere to Live" and update the Housing Strategy statement. Topics covered were Supporting People, Stock condition, Key workers, Affordable Housing and Homelessness. Information from these workshops and other forums, working groups and consultation events have been used to update this document. To ensure the needs of the black and minority ethnic community have been covered in the document a BME Housing Group have been established see appendix 2 for further details.

## **3 Best Value & Performance Review**

In addition to the nationally set performance indicators, the council has negotiated with the Government additional and enhanced targets under the Public Service Agreement. Targets relating to housing include the increased use of Brownfield sites for development and reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

### 3.1

Housing services will be reviewed under the thematic Best Value Review "Somewhere to Live" (STL) which is due to conclude in December 2002 consultation events relating to the Best Value Review and update of the Strategy Statement have been combined wherever possible to avoid duplication of effort and consultation fatigue. Under the new Corporate Performance Assessment regime introduced this year, Housing Maintenance was inspected in May 2002; the results of this inspection will be used to inform the Best Value Review STL improvement plan and option appraisal process.

### 3.2

The Housing Revenue Account, (HRA) Business Plan directly informs the Capital Investment Plan for the Council and includes bids to the single capital plot for resources to enable housing services to meet the requirements of the 'decent home standard' and the target dates for compliance with the standard. The Investment in Services Group which co-ordinates and prioritises all capital projects includes representatives from all directorates one of which is a representative from housing. The Capital Investment Plan will have clear cross-references with the HRA Business Plan.

### 3.3

The Corporate Best Value Review of Property will look at how the council utilises to maximum effect its property portfolio, this review will inform the Council Asset Management Plan. This review did not cover HRA stock, but a separate review conducted by housing services will incorporate non HRA assets like garages, allotments and shops. Reference is made in the Asset Management Plan to the Investment Priorities of the Council and how they could be funded through the better use of capital assets. The long-term Investment requirements of the housing stock will be built into the plan.

## 4 Affordable Housing Definition

- Regional Priority 1 – To meet the need for affordable housing

### 4.1

An adequate supply of Affordable Housing is essential to the economic viability of Medway and in supporting and sustaining local communities. It is important that what is perceived to be social housing is redefined as affordable housing and that it includes sub-market rent, shared ownership, equity release/loans schemes as well as conventional social housing for rent.

### 4.2

The definition of what is affordable will vary from area to area reflecting house prices and average earnings. In some areas professional staff like teachers and police officers may be unable to afford housing. It will also vary over time. There is a built

in prejudice to social housing which provides a barrier to the development of affordable housing.

#### 4.3

The development of sub-market rent initiatives will enable those in low paid employment to rent accommodation above housing benefit levels but lower than full market rent. This will be of specific interest to Key Workers. The council will actively explore opportunities with private landlords to develop this initiative thus reducing the pressure on conventional housing for rent funded with public subsidy.

#### 4.4

Projected demand for Affordable Housing needs to take into account an increase in the student population of Medway. The new Medway University Campus will bring some 5,000 students into the area by 2006. As a working assumption, it is anticipated that 2,000 will live at home, 2,000 in new Halls of Residence financed from private capital funded from rents charged. The remaining 2,000 will require private rented accommodation, placing increased pressure on an already over stretched sector. The demand for student accommodation could result in a reduction in affordable rented accommodation for these on low incomes and the homeless. Possible small scale neighbourhood renewal, especially if linked to bringing back into use empty property, encouraging landlords to provide student accommodation, could assist.

#### 4.5

A seminar on the Demographic Timebomb will be held in July to an invited audience of developers, housing and social care providers, planners, Health and Social Services. The purpose of the seminar is to explore the way good quality, high density, well designed property can meet the needs and aspirations of an ageing population across all forms of housing tenure. Retirement housing could become a key driver to regeneration projects. (To be updated following the seminar on the 12<sup>th</sup> July)

#### 4.6

A physical audit of existing council sheltered housing was commissioned this year to ascertain the long term use of the stock in meeting the decent homes standard and housing need. This research will link into the wider evaluation of the Council's responsibilities towards services for the elderly picking up issues arising from the health and social care agenda. From this research amendments to the local plan can be considered to ensure the wide spectrum of need for an aging population is taken into account in the development of policies and in the identification of suitable sites. The encouragement of leasehold schemes for the elderly, equity release loans and full market options to meet the needs of an ageing population will also be progressed, again reducing the pressure on the level of public funding required.

#### 4.7

There are a number of priorities with regard to housing that apply in varying degrees across the various North Kent 'Zones of Change' as set out in the North Kent Area Investment Framework.

- Investment is needed in the existing housing stock to improve quality, enhance the environment of priority communities and to bring back into use empty stock.

The nature of existing housing needs to change to recognise the needs of older or smaller households

- Between 40,000 and 50,000 new houses need to be built in North Kent over the next 20-30 years if 'Zones of Change' objectives with regard to employment and population growth are to be achieved
- New developments must include affordable housing, provision for key workers, as well as executive style housing (important in 'selling' North Kent to potential inward investors) and there is a need to provide for an increase of 6,000 students

Exact dwelling numbers will need to be decided through the planning process. The figure of 40,000 to 50,000 shown above is one option for North Kent that is currently the subject of consultation. The table below illustrates the above:

<b>North Kent Areas</b>	<b>New Housing Capacity</b>	<b>%</b>
Kent Thameside	21,000	46.6
Medway and Grain	16,000	35.5
Swale	8,000	17.9
Total – North Kent	45,000	100.0

#### 4.8

Assuming 25% of the new homes will be for affordable housing in line with the Local Plan Policy and similar to those of other Local Authorities in North Kent, the level of public subsidy required to meet the projected demand for Affordable Housing over the next 20 years is £812m. Projected existing funding from the Housing Corporation and Local Authorities is £412m, leaving a gap of £400m. The projected shortfall for Medway based on a crude apportionment by population is £9m per annum.

#### 4.9

In addition to the funding for affordable housing for Registered Social Landlords, the cost of upgrading the private rented stock to meet the needs of the student population, renovation grants is £8m, the bulk of the provision would be located in Medway. These costs are reflect in Section 20 – Grant Policies.

## 5 Affordable Housing & The Planning Process

- Regional Priority 1 – To meet the need for affordable housing

### 5.1

The local plan is a key document in ensuring that sufficient sites are identified for affordable housing and that the planning process through section 106 agreements and exemption policies link sites to a supply of affordable housing. See section 4 for detail.

The Medway Towns local plan deposit version 1999 identified that there were significant numbers of people who need homes but cannot afford to buy on the open market.

There is a need to provide people in this situation with access to Affordable Housing. The ability therefore to meet housing need must be constantly adjusted to match

supply of accommodation as well as re-evaluate in terms of house prices and peoples ability to pay market values.

## 5.2

### Can they afford it?

- There is a correlation between earnings and house prices.
- If earnings are above average levels but property is at average levels then property prices appear relatively cheap and access to the property market is easier.

### Earnings

- Average earnings in Medway are below those of the South East or England.

### Average earnings

	Average gross earnings		Distribution of weekly earnings				Change 2000 to 2001
	annual	weekly	% earning under £250	% earning under £350	% earning under £460	10% earned less than	
2000							
<b>Medway</b>	<b>£20,957</b>	<b>£ 395.80</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>73.5</b>	<b>£183.80</b>	<b>£604.80</b>
GoSE	£23,015	£ 434.20	19.3	45.8	66.9	£212.30	£712.50
England	£22,183	£ 416.30	23.0	49.1	69.9	£199.70	£671.80
2001							
<b>Medway</b>	<b>£21,642</b>	<b>£ 427.70</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>£214.00</b>	<b>£704.41</b>
GoSE	£24,944	£ 473.00	16.0	40.8	61.8	£221.40	£790.01
England	£24,067	£ 451.50	19.8	44.7	65.2	£208.80	£737.01

- Between 2000 and 2001 earnings in Medway increased at a lower rate than in the South East or England.
- Average earnings for London in 2001 were £40,496.
- Particularly worrying is the proportion of people in the lowest income band although this did show an improvement over the period.

## 5.3

### Price of properties 1: to rent

- 1 bed flats can be regarded as the lowest entry point properties.
- The highest and lowest rent, as well as the average rent, is shown to illustrate the range of prices encountered.

### Private rented 1 bedroom flat

	Average Rent	Maximum	Minimum
Lordswood	£265	£265	£265
Strood	£300	£300	£300
Chatham	£328	£575	£195
Gillingham	£355	£450	£240
Walderslade	£356	£400	£325
Rochester	£395	£675	£200
Rainham	£398	£400	£395
Hoo	£463	£500	£425

- The Housing Needs Survey 1998 showed that the average HA rental figure was only 6% below the average private rent in Medway for these properties.
- This table shows all the locations where 1 bed flats were offered to rent.
- It is significant that only Hoo has such properties outside the main urban area. This has implications for housing needs in other rural locations.

### 5.4

#### Price of properties 2: to buy

- House prices in Medway are below those of the south east but are near the national average.
- The area is therefore attractive to people from outside who may not otherwise be able to purchase in their existing location.

#### Average house prices (@ March)

	<i>Terraced</i>	<b>Semi-detached</b>	<b>Detached</b>
2001			
<b>Medway</b>	<b>£77,456</b>	<b>£104,981</b>	<b>£173,816</b>
Kent	£72,384	£101,092	£171,483
South East	£102,447	£128,664	£242,249
England & Wales	£83,000	£95,001	£171,698
2002			
<b>Medway</b>	<b>£82,737</b>	<b>£109,073</b>	<b>£176,445</b>
Kent	£98,979	£125,946	£225,539
South East	£117,361	£145,411	£261,965
England & Wales	£91,201	£106,211	£187,835
Change 2001 to 2002			
<b>Medway</b>	6.8%	3.9%	1.5%
Kent	36.7%	24.6%	31.5%
South East	14.6%	13.0%	8.1%
England & Wales	9.9%	11.8%	9.4%

- Between 2001 and 2002 average house prices in Medway increased at a lower rate than the South East.
- Terraced houses in Medway increased at twice the increase in earnings.
- Prices in Kent increased at a significantly higher rate than those in Medway, widening the property price differential.

- In comparison to earning, the average house price in Medway rose by almost 19% between 2000 and 2001.

## 5.5

### Where to buy

- Within the borough there are significant variations in prices between localities.

### House price variations – highs and lows

	Type	Average Price
Walderslade	Terraced	£56,897
Upnor	Terraced	£161,475
Cliffe	Semi-detached	£74,998
Halling	Semi-detached	£148,299
Lower Stoke	Detached	£120,750
Cuxton	Detached	£251,330

- The highest prices seen are double those of the lowest.
- Terraced housing at Chatham Maritime is currently averaging £142,000.

## 5.6

### What to buy

- Size of property also affects price.

### Price range

	Type	Style	Average price
1 bed	Flat or maisonette		£21,661
1 bed	Terraced	House	£36,921
3 bedrooms	Semi-detached	House	£103,408
4 or more bedrooms	Detached	Bungalow	£234,482
4 or more bedrooms	Detached	House	£202,782

### Will there be properties for them?

## 5.7

Data on housing need, affordability, house prices and land supply is co-ordinated by the local plan team and a new software system is being purchased to monitor the progress of section 106 agreements to provide management information as there is a time lag between the agreement being signed and development taking place. This tool will assist in completing statistical returns and co-ordinating and maximising the impact planning gain can have in meeting Council objectives. A cross directorate council working group has been instrumental in progressing the corporate perspective to the process. A new housing need and affordability survey has been commissioned this year to inform the Best Value Review "Somewhere to Live" and policies on Affordable Housing, current data is based on the 1998 survey with updates which is now out of date.

## 5.8

Housing strategy links into this process providing data on housing need and a vehicle for the identification of suitable housing schemes and development partners. Funding for affordable housing is co-ordinated through the housing strategy as bids for funding for affordable housing to the Housing Corporation and to the Council's single capital pot are assessed and prioritised to ensure they meet Regional and local objectives and provide added value to an area over and above housing provision.

## 5.9

To streamline and simplify the development control process and the identification of suitable sites for affordable housing the Council has identified in the local plan a number of sites on which the Council has set a minimum target of 25% for the provision of affordable housing. A protocol is being developed, linked to the best value review of development control, to place the Development Control Officer in the centre of the development control process, seeking advice and assistance from colleagues as and when required. Requests about the suitability of sites for affordable housing will be channelled through the development control officers who will then seek assistance from housing.

## 5.10

This development team approach will enable the development control officer to assemble and evaluate competing requests for planning gain and look strategically at the impact individual development sites have on the Council's ability to achieve its corporate objectives. Forums like the Regeneration Board, led by the Development and Environment directorate include a representative from housing and will provide a co-ordinating and monitoring role for the regeneration process.

## 5.11

An example of the new Development Team Approach is the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. Development Control Officers, in close liaison with Housing Officers and Registered Social Landlords have developed a rural housing needs protocol illustrated by the case study below. Assuming 25% of the projected 40,000 new homes will be affordable housing in line with the Local Plan policy and similar to those of the other Local Authorities in North Kent, the financing of the Affordable housing in North Kent is £812m.

## 5.12

### **Upnor Quarry – Case Study**

- Site in a rural area, not welcomed by local residents.
- Opportunity to meet local housing need.
- Liaison with the Parish Council and key stakeholders in the area.
- Distributed and promoted a local housing needs survey.
- Funded by the developer
- Data used to inform development mix.

Assuming 25% of the projected 40,000 new homes will be affordable housing in line with the Local Plan policy and similar to those of the other Local Authorities in North Kent, the financing of the affordable housing in North Kent is £812m.

### 5.13

This protocol is being used to assess the level of affordable housing required in other rural areas as and when sites become available. Selection of sites will attempt to maximise the impact new development will have on service provision and neighbourhood renewal. A recent housing needs survey was commissioned by mhs Homes to determine future development opportunities for a Sheltered Housing Scheme that no longer met modern requirements.

### 5.14

In addition to the development of new homes, attention must be given to the better utilisation of existing stock, primarily long term empty homes and under occupied property. To assess the impact the better utilisation of existing stock will have on the supply of affordable housing the council has a separate empty homes strategy and commissioned an under occupancy survey, both of which are picked up in other sections in more detail. Resources will be allocated to where they will achieve the maximum impact to ensure small scale regeneration is achieved along side the larger regeneration projects. Key sites will be identified through the council's property portfolio, using the methodology developed through the Best Value Review on Property, deprivation figures, key routes through the towns and information on property values to identify areas in decline so that further deprivation is halted.

### 5.15

The process described above builds on good practice, in particular the report by Orbit Housing group, funded by the Housing Corporation by way of an innovation and good practice grant " delivery of affordable housing through planning obligations". It also reflects the work undertaken by SEEDA on barriers to affordable housing in the South East Region.

### 5.16

Another example of the development team approach being successful is the negotiations with the developer over the level of affordable housing at the former All Saints Hospital site.

- Public consultation
- Production of a development brief
- Level and type of affordable housing identified.
- Contributions to other Corporate & Community objectives identified.
- Negotiations balancing conflicting demands co-ordinated by the development control officer.
- Element of affordable housing to be provided on the site.

## 6 Housing Need

- Regional Priority 1 – To meet the need for affordable housing
- Regional Priority 8 – To encourage the development of sustainable rural areas
- Regional Priority 7 – To promote regeneration and neighbourhood renewal

### 6.1

In addition to the profile of housing provision in Medway the table below shows the current demand for affordable housing from those registered on the Register of Housing Need. The figures shown include homeless households in temporary housing awaiting permanent housing and those in specialist provision requiring move on housing, e.g. Hostels. These figures will be further refined during the housing needs survey to formulate a development brief identifying the demand broken down into areas. This will co-ordinate with the sites identified in the local plan for social

housing. The following table shows that to meet current demand without allowing an uplift for new applications there is a shortfall in provision.

**Shortfall of Permanent Affordable Housing Provision 2002/3 to 2006/7**

Bedrooms	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms	5+ bedrooms	Total
Demand *	1378	688	674	42	52	2834
Re-lets over 5 years	975	725	425	10	0	2135
New Build in current programme (inc S/O)	28	105	15	0	0	148
Shortfall	375	-142	234	32	52	551

\* Some families are entered on to the Register showing a combination of bedroom need (e.g. 2/3, 3/4, 4/5). The figures shown are as at June 2002 and no provision has been made for uplift in demand.

NB Demand shown includes statutory register and transfer cases only.

6.2

Due to rising house prices and increasing private sector rents the demand for affordable housing is likely to increase. This together with an aging population and higher levels of vulnerable applications means that the Council has to identify a range of housing solutions to address the increasing demand. There is a particular pressure for larger accommodation and either adapted or adaptable housing for the disabled. It is therefore important for regular reviews of the housing needs data to be undertaken to ensure that accurate projections can be determined year on year.

6.3

The above data and the information contained in the profile of housing provision in Medway shows that a variety of provision is required to meet housing need across all forms of housing tenure. Resources will be targeted to where they will have maximum impact and used to facilitate and support other agencies in meeting housing need in Medway. It is important that the provision is considered within a matrix of wider issues such as social exclusion and the regeneration of local communities, together with allowing applicants more choice in their housing options.

6.4

In order to address the specific needs of people with a physical disability the following actions will be pursued:

- All property in Council Stock to be categorised according to suitability for adaptations.

- Also encourage RSL's to do the same.
- For each vacancy can then identify suitability for disabled applicant together with Occupational Therapist and Private Sector Housing Manager responsible for Disabled Facilities Grant.
- Continue to work with DPAA to identify alternative properties available in private sector and across local authority boundaries in Kent.

A thematic review of services for the disabled will be undertaken by the new directorate to ensure policies and procedures adequately reflect the needs of people with a disability as well as identifying any needs.

### 6.5

Priority will be given to identifying suitable development opportunities on sites identified in the local plan as providing an element of affordable housing, these sites will be assessed to identify those which meet the Housing Corporation's investment criteria so that bids for funding can be prioritised. Individual mixes for each scheme will be agreed with the development control officer, covering the whole spectrum of affordability for each site, the overall provision however is set out below;

- 60% rented with a RSL
- 25% shared ownership including key worker housing and lifetime homes
- 10% market rent and equity release schemes and sub-market rent
- 5% special needs

All schemes in excess of 40 units to include an element of mixed tenure.

### 6.9

Retirement homes, nursing homes, private and public sector will run in parallel with these proposals with an element of retirement accommodation being provided through all four sections.

### 6.10

The rented provision should be split between the following mix;

- 20% three bed
- 30% two bed
- 40% one bed
- 10% four-five bed

10% of all units to be built to Lifetime Homes standard.

### 6.11

It is important that the Council must at least keep pace with the most urgent demands to relieve the problems of homelessness currently being experienced. This will not only include provision to respond to the growing trend of people going in to temporary housing, but in order to be effective it should also include those in urgent housing need and some movement in those in moderate housing need. Those in urgent housing need are potential homelessness applicants and therefore a long-term strategic view must be taken to create movement on the waiting list, whilst at the same time responding to the growing trends in relation to homelessness. If the waiting list does not move sufficiently then homelessness figures will rise. The

solutions offered need not be confined to providing social housing as with assistance applicants may be able to and possibly prefer to find housing in the private sector. The table below tries to analyse this further to provide the minimum turnover required to keep pace with demands during 2002/3.

**MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS TO KEEP PACE WITH DEMAND 2002/3**

<b>ANNUAL DEMANDS</b>	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed +
No. currently in temporary housing	70	224	100
Average No accepted per year	123 draft	85	86
No. in urgent housing need			
No. in moderate housing need			
Total A			
<b>ANNUAL SUPPLY</b>			
No of lettings Council & RSL	195	145	87
New Build for rent			9
Shared ownership	3	24	0
Private sector lettings (assumed projection)	15	20	10
Total B			
<b>MINIMUM NO. ADDITIONAL UNITS TO KEEP PACE</b> (A minus B)			

NB This table does not include those in temporary housing with mhs homes as these applicants will generally be converted to assured tenants after a period of one year.

## **7 The Enabling Role Working in Partnership**

### **7.1**

All new housing is provided by Registered Social Landlords (RSL) and by the private sector. Medway has inherited a highly sophisticated enabling role from the

predecessor authorities. Medway's unique position further enhances the need to work in partnership with other housing providers as there are as many homes provided by RSL's as there are Council houses 3,500 each. The range of housing providers was further enhanced by the transfer of Rochester Upon Medway's housing stock of over 7,000 units to Medway Housing Society (mhs homes) in 1990. mhs is not a registered social landlord.

## 7.2

Medway Council has nomination rights to RSL property and contractual links with MHS Homes regarding the allocation of property to the homeless. The strategic role of the Council in co-ordinating the allocation and standard of housing provision is crucial in ensuring all resources are used to the maximum effect. The importance of the enabling role and working in partnership to achieve the Council's strategic objectives is reflected in the Council's adoption of the Common Register of Housing Need, the joint commissioning of projects and the development of a Medway Housing Standard.

## 7.3

Monitoring of performance by housing associations has, in previous years, concentrated on scheme appraisal, design, development performance and indicators such as rent levels policies and rent arrears policies. This will be broadened through the development of a Medway Housing Standard. The aim of this is to develop a quality standard for the provision of suitable homes in a healthy and safe environment.

It will -

- Be directed to all affordable housing providers in Medway and developed in partnership with them.
- Set targets for performance on factors such as rent arrears and repairs.
- Incorporate design criteria, including energy efficiency and crime safety.
- Set out evaluation exercises and tenant involvement.

## 7.4

The previous authorities had both approved policies for setting out the criteria by which housing association partners will be selected and the system for allocating resources, such as identifying a geographical area for working. The option of selecting RSL partners through the Joint Commissioning route will be appraised in the Best Value Review "Somewhere to Live".

## 7.5

Support will be considered for housing schemes that assist the local authority in achieving its strategic objectives set out in section 4. In particular housing contributions to urban renaissance and the housing needs of specific sections of the community e.g, black and minority ethnic groups, rural communities and supported housing.

## 7.6

All development carried out by the council must comply with the councils LA21 sustainability checklist. Developments with RSL's will be prioritised by their ability to meet the "Egan " principles of construction and good practice as identified in the

report “Rethinking Construction”. Medway has a pilot project in Gillingham High Street, which will be used to evaluate the use of off site timber frame construction.

7.7

### **Working with the Private Sector**

The Council has developed a variety of links with the private sector in particular the Private Sector Landlords Forum (PSLF). The views of the forum are incorporated in the preparation of the housing strategy, in particular on aspects relating to increasing the supply of private rented accommodation for the homeless.

Liaison with other agencies and programmes.

Examples of joint working with the private sector include;

- Involvement in the implementation of the Council’s empty homes strategy.
- Private nomination agreement to provide homes for people in housing need.
- Funds from English Partnerships to clear contaminated land for development.
- The provision of supported housing schemes by private landlords.
- Major regeneration projects.

7.8

### **Example:**

Already, Medway Council has been instrumental in developing a scheme for self - contained, semi supported accommodation to people with mental health difficulties in Chatham. It involves a private owner, social services and a housing association. In order to provide sufficient resources for the refurbishment of the buildings a contribution has been made of £20,000 from the renovation grant budget.

7.9

### **Working with the Voluntary Sector**

The Council, in accordance with the good practice outlined in the Government White Paper, Modernising Government has adopted a policy of supporting voluntary organisations where the strategic objectives of those organisations reflect the Council’s core values.

7.10

To ensure these proposals are both understood and in accordance with the voluntary sector's ability to cope with change, transitional arrangements for the last financial year were adopted and a consultation exercise undertaken with the voluntary sector to ensure their concerns and views are taken into account when implementing policy decisions.

7.11

The Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) (Medway), was engaged to provide training and support to the voluntary sector to ensure they are aware of the new requirements and to offer assistance in fund raising, using the Council’s funding as match funding as appropriate.

7.12

The Voluntary Sector are key players in the delivery of services in Medway. It is

important that the voluntary sector works with the Council in implementing Members' vision for Medway. Many housing services are provided by the Voluntary Sector. Local tenant and community groups form part of the voluntary sector and their involvement in the shaping and delivery of services in Medway has been acknowledged in the strategic planning process. A compact for working in partnership with the Voluntary Sector is being developed to improve clarity for all partners involved. Further consultation is now underway with regard to the creation of a Voluntary Sector forum to keep open the communication channel that has now been updated. A community investment strategy has been developed to raise income from within the local community to be distributed via charitable organisations in the area.

## **8 Key Worker Housing**

It is essential to a healthy local economy that people who work to support the local community can live in the community they serve. It is for this reason that the Government has funded the Starter Homes Initiative for key public sector workers. The programme was phased to assist 935 key workers nationally over 3 years.

A forum of key public sector agencies met to first identify the level of housing need for key workers and how to address that need, including a bid under the Starter Homes Initiative.

Initial investigation identified the following: -

- Low cost home ownership was not an option for new recruits who want to be mobile. More suitable for retention of staff.
- Market rented accommodation in the right location was wanted.
- Shared housing if property managed for nurses, teachers, support staff.
- Affordable housing to rent for those on low incomes
- Sub market solutions for specialist suppliers, eg students, nurses, hospital support staff if income guaranteed people from overseas on short placements
- Executive housing both permanent and temporary for senior managers.

House prices in Medway are still relatively low compared to the other areas in the region, so we have not yet experienced problems with key workers unable to buy. Time wasted finding the right solution and securing temporary accommodation while they look for accommodation was an issue. To address this problem information on local housing will be provided for new council recruits. If successful it could be shared with other large employers.

A successful bid was made in Phase 2 of the Starter Homes Initiative for 30 teachers to access equity loans up to £10,000 each as contribution towards the purchase of a property. A further 14 units of one and two bed units have been developed in a converted empty industrial building in Rochester High Street, which will be sold on a shared ownership basis, priority given to key workers.

The definition of what is a "key worker" will vary, reflecting local economic issues. Not all key workers will be public sector workers. Who is a key worker for Medway should be defined by an employers forum and form part of the economic development strategy for Medway. What is affordable will also vary and therefore a

key worker strategy and must be flexible to cope with change and to take advantage of funding opportunities as they present themselves.

Our allocation policy needs to define what is a key worker for Medway and the priority they will receive in determining their housing needs. An assessment of the current waiting list to identify existing key workers and potential alternative funding solutions will also be undertaken. This can be linked to the implementation of Choice Based Lettings.

## 9 Homelessness

- REGIONAL PRIORITY 3 – To reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
- REGIONAL PRIORITY 2 - To help Key Workers access accommodation

### Extent and Nature of the problem

#### 9.1

The table shown below shows the number of homelessness applications made between 1/4/99 and 31/03/02.

YEAR	APPLICATIONS	ACCEPTANCES	% ACCEPTANCE RATE	VARIANCE IN ACCEPTANCES
1999/00	1236	170	14%	N/A
2000/01	1357	355	26%	UP BY 185
2001/02	1455	463	32%	UP BY 108

#### 9.2

Despite a small increase in the number of applications as homeless, the number of acceptances has more than doubled. The effect of the considerable increase in acceptances has been felt by the Council's ability to provide temporary units of accommodation. The increase in numbers has seen an increase in the use of bed and breakfast as the temporary housing in Medway has silted up.

#### 9.3

This increased use of bed and breakfast at an average cost of about £350 per week has resulted in a significant overspend on the bed and breakfast budget in the region of approximately £400,000. This has placed considerable strain on the general fund. The Council is very concerned about the growing trend and has agreed new expenditure on an invest to save basis to attempt to halt the figures rising any further.

#### 9.4

A breakdown of the reasons for homelessness amongst those accepted is shown below.

### Reasons of Homelessness

	99/00	00/01	01 / 02	Increase
Parents no longer able/willing to accommodate	18	62	114	96
Relatives or friends no longer able/willing to accommodate	21	44	58	37

Breakdown of relationship with partner – violent	18	33	26	8
Breakdown of relationship with partner – non violent	14	32	43	29
Mortgage Arrears – repossession or other loss of home	9	12	9	0
Rent Arrears – LA/other public sector	0	1	1	1
Rent Arrears – HA	3	9	5	2
Rent Arrears – Private Sector	5	18	20	15
Termination of Assured Shorthold	43	66	103	60
Loss of rented/tied accommodation	11	26	23	12
In institution/care etc	8	11	11	3
Newly formed/split household	20	41	50	30
Refugee/asylum seeker	0	0	0	0

### 9.5

It can be seen that there are significant increases in acceptances in relation to evictions from friends and family and as a result of termination of assured shorthold tenancies in the private sector, with these two categories alone accounting for over half of the acceptances. These causes of homelessness have been difficult to prevent or delay as there is no defence in law to protect these applicants and often homelessness amongst these types of client has been difficult to disprove or deflect.

### 9.6

One major reason for these increases have been the buoyant housing market. With increasing house prices landlords have been deciding to sell rather than let their property out. Properties which are on the market have rents higher than housing benefits levels, and the demand for housing means that there is no shortage of people who can pay the higher rents and associated fees. This however means that availability of private rented properties for those on limited income is in short supply.

### 9.7

Another major factor is the shortage of the supply of affordable permanent social housing. Whilst our homeless acceptance figures have been increasing over the past few years the supply of new accommodation via social housing grant has declined and therefore nominations to Registered Social Landlords has similarly declined.

### 9.8

Finally major difficulties with staff recruitment and retention have resulted in the homelessness team being understaffed. There is a direct correlation between staff shortages or inexperienced staff and increased use of bed and breakfast or delays in making decisions on homelessness claims. Training and development of staff is very important.

### 9.9

Training for staff of both the Homelessness Team and the front line support staff in relation to the new Homelessness Act, Security of tenure and relationship breakdown have already been commissioned, however it would be desirable to extend this training to include other topics such as the verification of Housing Benefit claims.

#### 9.10

As a result of the increase in the numbers of people presenting themselves as homeless and the reduction in the supply of private rented accommodation, the council is placing more households in bed & breakfast accommodation. This action places considerable strain on both the people placed in the accommodation and on the Council's resources.

#### 9.11

The appointment of a Senior Homelessness and Allocations Officer was made in June 2000 specifically to procure more appropriate forms of temporary accommodation. In addition another temporary post was established of Accommodation Officer specifically to try to engage private sector landlords and to support the homelessness officers in identifying temporary accommodation for their clients. Demand has however outstripped supply and, in response to members' concerns over the increase in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, the Council developed an Implementation Plan. This plan is reviewed on a regular basis and elements adjusted to meet changes in demand and supply. The number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation broken down by size of household and age of children is reported regularly to the Corporate Management Team and members and is one of the suite of indicators to measure the Council's performance in critical areas.

#### 9.12

It can be seen that the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation has reduced to 21 cases since the last figures were presented to the Bed and Breakfast Unit, however this still relates to 33 children, 16 of whom are below the age of 6.

#### 9.13

A Homeless Families Support Panel has been set up to explore joint working arrangements with Education, Social Services and other voluntary agencies who provide support to families with young children attend this group. Amongst the topics to work on are notification procedures and also the development of information packs for those placed in temporary housing advising of relevant contacts for help and support.

#### 9.14

The Homelessness team is currently working with two RSL's for them to secure and provide temporary housing via private sector leasing. Renovation grant budget will be dedicated towards bringing empty property or leased property into use. Top up's are paid to the RSL's to allow them more flexibility in negotiating for private sector leases.

#### 9.15

A package of initiatives has been designed to encourage private sector landlords to provide their accommodation as temporary housing. This range of measures was presented to a local private sector conference in Medway on 28th May 2002.

#### 9.16

A Private Sector Forum is held on a regular basis and is well attended by a large number of landlords and the Rent Officer Service and Housing Benefits, the Empty Homes Officer and representatives from the Homelessness Team. It was a splinter group of this forum that advised on the package of initiatives during their development.

#### 9.17

The Council also uses 25% of its voids as temporary housing and is actively approaching RSL's for their assistance either in re-negotiating lettings plans for permanent housing or use of a percentage of lettings as temporary housing

#### 9.18

In terms of the Council's own allocations policy, the position of the homeless in temporary housing is actively being considered in the Choice Based Lettings Pilot which is currently underway. The new system is due for implementation in June/July 2002. It is intended that the Council will identify a quota of permanent lettings for the homeless in temporary housing in order to maximise permanent lettings to the homeless.

#### 9.19

The regional housing forum chaired by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) in preparation for the next Regional Housing Statement, undertook research on a number of topics, the Assistant Director of Community services led the research project on Homelessness. The aim of this piece of work was to evaluate current provision and also disseminate good practice in other authorities. In the event 19 local authorities in the region returned a questionnaire.

#### 9.20

One of the main findings was that there had been an increase in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation across the region due to a lack of suitable temporary accommodation in the private rented sector. The reliance of local authorities on the private rented sector in discharging their statutory duty to the homeless is significant, and this reduction in supply is having a severe impact; this was cited by 18 local authorities. The situation seems unlikely to improve in the near future as the market remains buoyant; and easier and more profitable clients can be found.

#### 9.21

New proposals for a fitness standard which links the suitability of private sector rented property to the user could further exacerbate the problem as landlords may find themselves facing additional costs and chose alternative uses for their properties. Most local authorities indicated that there had been an increase in the vulnerability of applicants seeking assistance via the homelessness route.

#### 9.22

A further problem cited by 8 local authorities was that the shortage of move on accommodation and supported housing resulted in existing temporary accommodation being silted up and new applicants being housed in bed and breakfast accommodation. Again the prospect of improvements in this area is

remote; the new legislation proposed with the Homelessness Act will further increase local authorities duty to 16 and 17 year olds; also there is anecdotal evidence that many providers are reluctant to develop supported housing accommodation at present until the impact of Supporting People is fully realised.

9.23

Building on this research, Medway recently also participated in a research project commissioned by SEEDA, the results of which were launched at a widely attended seminar in Reading on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2002. The results of this research can be seen in the report produced entitled 'Homelessness in the South East Region'.

9.24

The Council has identified that a vital part of the work to be done is around preventative measures. In particular the items already identified are the development of a family mediation service, the enhancement of the housing advice service and work with private sector landlords to support them and intervene in tenancy disputes to try to avert eviction action.

9.25

Staff must be trained and developed to provide all housing options to those presenting as homeless with the focus on them staying out of the homelessness system rather than how to get into the homeless system.

The staff must be supported in this by providing better quality information for the clients in the form of advice packs and leaflets.

9.26

The Council has developed an implementation plan to use as a tool to monitor progress in the action to reduce the use of bed and breakfast. The initiatives or actions in the plan are either partly or fully funded. By following the actions listed it is anticipated that we could reduce the use of bed and breakfast to 7% of the total households in temporary accommodation by December 2003.

9.27

A bid has been made to the Homelessness Strategies team at the DTLR for financial support for these initiatives and following submission of the Council's action plan to the Bed and Breakfast Unit funding of £105,000 has been awarded to assist in the delivery of the plan specifically to reduce use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

9.28

**SOURCES OF REVENUE AND CAPITAL FUNDING**

<b>Provision</b>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Funding source</b>
Permanent shelter for homeless,	About 1.6m	About	Housing

vulnerable single people	SHG LASHG 800,000	£60,000pa SHMG	Corporation and Local Authority (match funding)
Street properties purchase and repair by RSL	£760,000	£12273 pa	LA funding
Private sector initiatives (top up, damage guarantee etc)		£62,000 pa	LA funding
Housing Association initiatives (top ups, use of renovation grant money, etc)	To be confirmed	£26,000 pa	LA funding
Supported Lodging scheme		£52,000 pa	LA funding
Accommodation officer		£22,000 pa	LA funding
Homelessness and housing advice service		£80,000 pa	LA funding
Revenue funding to RSL to support Hostel		£40,000pa	LA funding

### 9.29

The table above shows the funding already identified and secured for the implementation of the plan.

In addition the Council is in the process of agreeing a local Public Sector Agreement included in which are targets for the reduction of Homelessness, and wherever possible supporting people funding will be utilised to ensure relevant support packages are available for homeless applicants (to be included when confirmed)

## **LINKS TO 'MORE THAN A ROOF'**

### 9.30

A stand alone Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan was produced at the end of last year and we are currently actively consulting on this. The focus of the Strategy is on prevention; and working with other strategies such as our Supporting People and Black and Minority Ethnic strategy in addition to our Housing Strategy. We are establishing a Homelessness Forum; this has wide membership including registered social landlord's, voluntary organisations and faith based and community groups. A Homelessness Conference is planned.

### 9.31

We already have a number of initiatives to reduce our reliance on bed and breakfast. These include a rent deposit scheme, top up funding, rent guarantees, insurance scheme etc. We have consulted with our Private Sector Landlords Forum on the sort of incentives they would consider to house homeless people, and will be launching a marketing campaign and holding a conference to attract new private landlords on the basis of this.

### 9.32

We have an advice service contracted out to CAB and Shelter and we are planning to employ a Resettlement worker to provide a tenancy support service to all households in temporary accommodation including bed and breakfast.

9.33

The new proposals will link into and enhance our existing initiatives. We believe them to be realistic and workable, and based on good practice elsewhere. For example, we regularly attend the Kent Homelessness Forum and were instrumental in conducting a survey on homelessness across the South East region. We have attended recent conferences held on homelessness and regularly review Best Value Inspections published on the internet.

## **10 Choice Based Lettings**

10.1

The Council was successful in being selected as one of 27 authorities to participate in the governments Choice Based Lettings Pilot. A sum of £274,000 was allocated to Medway over a two year period to implement and test the Choice Based Lettings approach. The new system will be more customer focused allowing applicants for housing a choice over the properties that they would like to be considered for. The scheme will also provide regular reports of how the available housing was allocated to increase the transparency of the process. This will enable the Council to become more realistic in the information given to applicants about how long they might wait for housing. For the first time applicants will be able to make an informed choice about whether they want to wait for specific locations when they can see the demand for those areas might mean a long wait, or they can think of other areas and other solutions. To support applicants in this process phase two of choice based lettings will seek to introduce a housing options approach with applicants both to the register of housing need and to the Homelessness team to inform them of ways to solve their housing needs without necessarily receiving an offer of social housing. This will require the specific development of initiatives to enable access to the private sector or shared ownership schemes.

10.2

Extensive consultation has taken place with existing tenants, the voluntary sector, RSL's, members and staff. Specific care has been taken to consider the needs of the disabled, those with support needs and those from minority ethnic communities so that they are able to participate in the new choice based system. It is important for the public that our efforts to develop this new approach are co-ordinated with our RSL partners and mhs homes and to assist in achieving this we have included representatives from an RSL and mhs homes.

10.3

Under the new process the majority of all voids will be advertised and applicants will be invited to express an interest in the properties they choose. A closing date will be published for expressions of interest to be made by and following this date the expressions of interest will be shortlisted using a banding system to identify priority.

10.4

## **The Allocations Process**

As part of the implementation of Choice Based Lettings the Council has reviewed the allocations policy and is moving from a points based system to a banding system. Applicants will be banded according to their housing needs factors and will be grouped into urgent need, moderate need, low need and no local connection. It is intended to identify a overarching lettings plan which will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect the changing demands on the service. The lettings plan will identify how lettings in the available affordable housing should be targeted. This will be achieved by the use of a quota system whereby a quota of lettings will be targeted to specific groups for permanent housing. The Councils lettings plan can then be used to negotiate lettings plans with RSL's for lettings within their stock.

By using this approach we can ensure that there is adequate move on accommodation supplied to supported housing schemes, and that a reasonable supply of accommodation is offered to the homeless to prevent numbers building up in temporary housing. It will be important when determining the quota's to ensure that an appropriate number of lettings is targeted towards existing social housing tenants to maximise mobility and release housing which is under-occupied, and that we promote movement on the housing waiting list.

The quota system may also be used to ensure that cases with challenging behaviour are shared between all of the social housing landlords in Medway and that these cases are more appropriately placed. At local level the lettings plans will help to identify issues relevant to the area and inform future lettings to the area to create more sustainable communities.

<b>REGIONAL PRIORITY 4 – To meet the needs of those who require Supported Housing</b>
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### **11 Supported Housing**

#### **11.1**

The Shadow Supporting People Plan is the precursor to the final Supporting People Plan, which will influence capital, and revenue funding for housing/housing related support services to vulnerable people in Medway. It has to be sent to the DTLR by September 02, having been approved by members. The plan must reflect DTLR priorities to be issued formally in January 2002. It sets out plans to develop a full 5-year strategy.

#### **11.2**

##### **Scope**

The shadow strategy must reflect the priorities of key partners. It will need to include

- Local vision
- A position statement of current information and anticipations of future trends
- Strategic options
- Where Supporting People is located within the wider local strategic framework
- Links to Best Value reviews
- Cross authority implications

- An annual plan for 2003/2004 including proposed details of expenditure against priorities in the plan

11.3

The following sets out our vision, planning approach and consultation arrangements.

## **LOCAL VISION AND PLANNING APPROACH**

### **Supporting People Vision**

Our mission statement is:

*‘to provide a comprehensive framework to support and enable people to sustain their tenancy, accessing quality services and funding appropriate to need’*

11.4

We want to place users at the heart of the service, maximising choice and independence. We want to ensure that services are focused on tenancy sustainment and that users become an inclusive part of the local community. This may include raising awareness and tackling prejudice amongst the community. We want to put in place processes that prevent the re-occurrence of homelessness that often typifies such groups.

11.5

We intend to maximise our opportunities for grant funding from the government and ensure that the delivery of services throughout these far reaching changes is maintained. This will necessitate the use of up to date ICT and business management systems, which will assist us in mapping needs and supporting the contract and payment system. We are planning a single point of contact and assessment for users to ensure a effective life event management. Finally we intend to be in the top quartile of council's in the implementation of Supporting People

11.6

### **Planning Approach**

Medway has a combined Housing and Social Services Directorate and thus our opportunities for joint working are maximised.

11.7

The Community Services includes Housing Management, Homelessness & Allocations, Supporting People and Health Promotion, Bereavement and Registration Services, which provides an exciting opportunity to bring together the health, housing and social care agenda and embrace the challenges that the national agenda will present.

11.8

Medway has joined the Kent Commissioning Forum, pooled resources given by the DTLR to cover the implementation process and jointly appointed staff.

11.9

A providers conference has been held and the team is in the process of setting up a local providers forum, which will enhance the consultation arrangements and reflect Medway's specific requirements.

11.10

Two internal officer groups have been set up to oversee the implementation at an operational level; a Medway Supporting People Implementation Team and a separate IT Supporting People Project Board. These groups include representatives from social services, finance, housing benefits, IT, health promotion and the council's own housing stock.

11.11

A BME Housing Strategy group with wide representation has been formed and they will be consulted extensively.

11.12

### **Consultation and Involvement**

Medway council is a member of the Kent wide commissioning forum for Supporting People who includes representatives of all district councils, health, probation, and KCC Social Services. Inclusive forums have been established for Home Improvement agencies, registered social landlord's/managing agents, and sheltered housing.

11.13

The team is in the process of setting up a local forum, which will enhance the consultation arrangements and reflect Medway's specific requirements

11.14

A key element of Supporting People is that it will be user led rather than service led. We will be liaising with providers to see what they have been doing and to possibly develop feedback surveys that they can use with service users to build on existing user involvement structures.

11.15

There are clear links between Health Promotion and Supported Housing

### **Current Situation**

The Medway Ten Year Teenage Pregnancy Strategy recognises the need for the provision of supported accommodation to all parents under 18 who require it. The Medway Council has negotiated with a local RSL to refurbish an existing homelessness accommodation unit and convert it into a supported housing unit for teenage mothers. A specification for the required support package has been drawn up in consultation with Social Services and has been put out for tender by agencies specialising in providing supported housing packages for teenage parents.

11.16

Medway Council currently spends a significant amount of money on residential care for Social Service clients. It is proposed to extend the current community alarm scheme to pilot a 'Telecare' smart homes initiative whereby monitoring sensors such

as movement, fall detection, heat, flood and front door opening are installed in clients' homes and monitored through the Medway Council control centre. Research and evaluation from Edinburgh Social Services suggests such a scheme to be very effective in allowing elderly clients and clients with mild dementia to remain within their homes rather than having to be placed within residential care settings. Fall sensors also provide 24 hour monitoring. National research suggests an additional week is required within hospital for every hour an elderly person who has suffered a fall remains undetected on the floor.

Local authorities should:

- Work to meet the target that by 2003, all teenage parents under the age of 18, who are unable to live with family or friends, are housed in supported accommodation.
- Should make maximum use of Transitional Housing Benefit (until 2003), and other statutory funding streams to develop a range of flexible support packages for those living in general need tenancies

11.17

### **Identified Priorities**

The supply mapping shows a number of key shortages in the provision of supported accommodation.

In future we will aim that up to 20% of social housing is designated for supported housing groups, with at least one allocation of social housing grant annually for supported housing.

There is a shortage of supported accommodation for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. There is a need for independent accommodation and we are supporting the provision of floating support funded via transitional housing benefit, and are in the process of identifying service users.

There is a lack of supported accommodation for people who mis-use substances and the provision of clustered accommodation (self-contained units with communal facilities) is required.

It is anticipated that there will be a significant future need for elderly extra care schemes, and a need to provide short stay assessment accommodation to release hospital beds, it is possible that an existing hard to let scheme could be re-provided for this latter use.

There is a need for good quality self-contained temporary accommodation for homeless people. We additionally want to expand floating support services funded by THB to all homeless households in social housing, and to offer a similar service to private sector households.

There is currently a shelter for single homeless people in Rochester, the lease is due to expire shortly and we need to find alternative provision for up to 20 clients.

We believe there is hidden demand for victims of domestic violence and a need for outreach and floating support.

With respect to offenders an accommodation need has been identified for: -

- Emergency short-term
- Women offenders
- Sex offenders, high risk offenders and mentally disordered offenders
- There is also considerable scope for the development of floating support schemes.

Generally there is a shortage of move on accommodation and this needs to be addressed jointly by all providers.

**REGIONAL PRIORITY 5 – To meet the housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic people and Asylum Seekers**

## **12 Black and Minority Ethnic People and Asylum Seekers**

### 12.1

The Government has issued an action plan for addressing the housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people. It outlines the role of local housing authorities in developing their understanding of race and housing issues and making sure their housing strategies include a strong BME component. Developing and implementing a BME element to the housing strategy will help local authorities fulfil their general obligations to 'work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups' (Race Relations Amendment Act 2000).

### 12.2

Medway council is committed to developing a Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy. Last year the Housing Strategy Statement identified a number of areas that needed following up: -

- The numbers of minority ethnic applications for Housing Services is very low; this appears to be linked to difficulties in the dissemination of information about the council's services.
- Information sharing and jointly developing priorities is seen as a way forward.
- Information sharing needs to be improved; this could include wider publication of the council's services/awareness sessions in a range of appropriate languages and formats.
- The implementation of the Supporting People programme, and Choice Based Lettings all require an appraisal to ensure that they will meet the specific needs of black and minority ethnic groups.
- There are issues of staff awareness and training

### 12.3

The council has formed a BME Housing Strategy Group with wide representation. An initial statement has been drafted, this is summarised below. This is to be further developed along with an action plan, which will be monitored.

#### **Summary**

This strategy document is in 2 parts: -

- Policy framework
- Implementation Plan

The policy framework addresses BME housing issues in the following areas:-

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homelessness and allocations</li><li>• Housing Advice</li><li>• Private rented housing</li><li>• Supporting People</li><li>• Registered social landlord's</li><li>• Gypsies and travellers</li><li>• Regeneration</li><li>• The council's own stock</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homelessness and allocations</li><li>• Housing Advice</li><li>• Private rented housing</li><li>• Supporting People</li><li>• Registered social landlord's</li><li>• Young people</li><li>• Older people</li></ul>
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### 12.4

This policy is based on the Government's Action Plan for Addressing the housing needs of BME people (DTLR 2001). Underpinning the strategy is also the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000), the CRE Code of Practice, the HIP guide for LA's and the MacPherson Report.

### 12.5

The implementation plan (to be written) sets out how we intend to achieve this. It outlines the tasks that need to be done, a timescale and how progress will be monitored. The plan will be a working document; i.e. it will evolve and may be amended as required.

A housing needs survey is being commissioned, this will address BME issues and may highlight specific needs/gaps in services, which will inform this strategy

### 12.6

#### **Aims of Strategy**

- To make fair and effective use of social housing to develop and provide a quality service that meets the needs of the BME communities in Medway
- To eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- To promote equal opportunities for all ethnic groups
- To deliver a high standard of service to people from black and minority ethnic communities within a framework of empowerment and Best Value
- To provide services that are sensitive to differences in needs, language and culture
- To recognise the diversity of local communities and to foster good relations between communities

- To take positive action to address existing disadvantage and encourage a more inclusive society
- To develop networks to ensure that information is disseminated

Further information on the BME Housing Strategy is shown at Appendix 2.

### **13 Management of Unauthorised Encampments**

#### 13.1

The Council has a major problem with the unauthorised occupation of mainly Council owned land by travellers.

#### 13.2

The Council's current policy is to remove the travellers as soon as the legal processes permit. The Council owns and manages a caravan site for 10 families, but vacancies rarely occur as most of the residents are long term.

#### 13.3

The Council recently introduced a number of measures to manage the problem and most recently in December 2001, Officers sought a High Court Order to cover the ten most commonly used sites for which the Council had a bona-fide use and which when occupied by travellers without authority denied the public use of facilities. Following three judicial reviews, the Council was successful in obtaining this Order and now applies the Order to all unauthorised occupations.

Notwithstanding this the Council would welcome intervention from the Government that resulted in funding for a network of authorised sites.

REGIONAL PRIORITY 6 – To improve the quality and suitability of the housing stock

### **14 Utilisation of Existing Stock**

#### 14.1

##### **Under Occupation Survey**

An under-occupation survey was carried out on Medway Council stock and mhs homes in the year 2000. A total of 7348 survey forms were delivered made up of 2180 to Council properties and 5168 to mhs homes stock.

#### 14.2

A total of 5135 survey forms were returned representing a return rate of approximately 70%.

#### 14.3

Information obtained from the returned forms indicated that 805 units in Medway Council stock are under-occupied with a further 361 properties requiring further investigation.

#### 14.4

The data also showed that 1190 of mhs properties are under occupied with a further 560 requiring further investigation.

#### 14.5

The survey also asked what would encourage those who were under-occupying property to move. A total of 3012 responded to the question and the results were as follows:-

- Money – 345
- Help with moving – 338
- The right property – 527
- Nothing would encourage them to move – 1805
- Same size of accommodation – 1003

#### 14.6

The key findings of the DTLR Housing Research Summary Number 141, Under-occupation in social housing, reflected that whilst under-occupation strategies are useful, it may be desirable in certain areas to allow under occupation to assist in balancing local communities.

Based on the Council's findings and the DTLR Good Practice Guide the Council will now work with MERGE, the tenants' forum, to formulate a policy to encourage under-occupiers to move. It is clear however that money is surprisingly not the biggest incentive here as other factors such as being offered the 'right property' may be significant factors. This issue will be developed further following the seminar on the demographic time bomb in July.

REGIONAL PRIORITY 6 – To improve the quality and suitability of the housing stock

## **15 Energy Efficiency**

### **Local Statistics/Health Data**

#### 15.1

Fuel Poverty is defined as having to spend more than 10% of your household income to achieve adequate warmth for health and comfort.

Fuel Poverty is strongly correlated with ill health. It is estimated that 30 000 excess deaths occur in winter in the UK as a result of Fuel Poverty, 1000 of which occur in Kent. Living in a cold environment adversely affects health in the following ways:

- Resistance to respiratory disease falls increasing the likelihood of suffering a heart attack or stroke.
- Living in a cold environment increases a person's likelihood of having an accident.
- Living in a cold environment accelerates admission to care.

It has been estimated that every 1 degree drop in home temperature under 20 degrees relates to a 1% increase in mortality in the over 60s. In Kent there is a 40% increase in over 60s deaths in the winter. Cold related illness has been calculated to cost the NHS £1000M per year and Social Service £2400M per year.

15.2

**Current situation**

Medway Council has undertaken a Fuel Poverty campaign, implementing objective five of the Kent Strategy for Affordable Warmth. The campaign centred on a) encouraging take-up of benefits by Medway residents and b) encouraging take-up of grants to improve house insulation and heating systems. A benefits free phone help line was set up and staffed by trained personnel. A local energy efficiency charity was used as a telephone contact point to put Medway residents in touch with the most appropriate grant scheme and also to provide energy efficiency advice.

Frontline training of primary care staff that access client's homes, and presentations to targeted community groups on fuel poverty have been undertaken. A media campaign including radio, newspaper and bus advertising was also undertaken (the campaign needs to be run on a yearly basis to ensure continuing success).

15.3

The Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP) has recently set up a county-wide works group to consider the implementation of the remaining aims of the Fuel Strategy Policy.

15.4

The recent Best Value Review for Private Sector Housing indicated the need for a full time Energy Efficiency Officer to take forward the responsibilities of the Council as an "energy authority". This proposal has been accepted and the council is likely to appoint to this position in the near future.

15.5

In the meantime the Council fulfils it's obligations through membership and subscription to the Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP – a consortium of all local authorities in Kent).

15.6

KEEP provides the Council's freephone energy efficiency advice service for Medway residents through a contractual arrangement with Creative Environmental Networks (CEN), based in an office at Ashford.

15.7

CEN also provides Medway residents with information about the availability of grants for energy conservation measures and acts as an agent for collating and passing on requests for Government grant assistance.

15.8

Membership of KEEP has also enabled the Council to benefit as follows:

- A discounted cost for carrying out the annual Home Energy Conservation Act Monitoring Survey (HECAMON)
- Has been successful in obtaining two Energy Savings Trust grants (EST) the Kent Action to Save Heat (KASH) Scheme which provided cavity wall and loft insulation at heavily discounted rates and the MASH scheme to provide energy conservation measures coupled with ventilation systems in four West

Kent local authority areas for persons who suffer from asthma and to include the monitoring of improvements, if any, to the sufferers as a result of the installation of the measures.

The development of a Countywide Affordable Warmth/Fuel Poverty strategy.

This strategy was launched countywide in November 2001.

The main aims of the strategy are:

- To establish a co-ordinating mechanism to oversee the continuing development, delivery and review of the Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- To ensure the Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy is integrated with other relevant national and local initiatives and strategies.
- To raise awareness of fuel poverty and to promote the Health and Affordable Warmth strategy in Kent.
- To work towards ensuring that the housing stock is capable of delivering affordable warmth.
- To promote benefits awareness and take-up with the aim of maximising the income of vulnerable and socially excluded residents.
- To establish a single referral system.

#### 15.9

Separate from activities connected with membership of KEEP the Council has initiated or is proposing to initiate the following:

- During 2001/2002 the Council carried out a project with EAGA for the insulation of Council stock. At the same time Council properties sold under the right to buy scheme were surveyed and occupiers encouraged where eligible to take up Warm Front Grants. During the year this resulted in 560 Council owned properties receiving a combination of cavity wall insulation, cylinder lagging, draft proofing and loft insulation at a total cost of £41,600. It is proposed that this scheme of energy insulation improvements to Council owned stock will continue in the current and future years.
- The expenditure of £90,000 on a CRISP Scheme (Capital Receipts Initiative Scheme Partnership) to introduce the following measures for persons over the age of 60 years.  
This has resulted in 182 properties being improved with cavity wall insulation and 131 with loft insulation, 62 with draught proofing, 26 with hot water insulation and 1 compact fluorescent lamp.
- The printing of 100,000 "Energy Efficiency Logbooks" for distribution to all householders with the intention of issuing a certificate showing the energy efficiency rating of the property and capable of being updated as the energy efficiency status increases. The database is in place to record this information and distribution is set to commence in June 2002.

REGIONAL PRIORITY 6 – To improve the quality and sustainability of the existing housing stock
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## **16 Council Housing Stock**

### 16.1

Details of the issues relating to the Council housing stock are contained within the HRA business plan and performance plan. Key strategic issues which will impact on the Council's over arching housing strategy are listed below:

- The contribution the Council's sheltered housing stock can make to services provided to elderly residents.
- The contribution the allocation of adapted or adaptable Council housing stock can make to meeting the needs of people with a disability.
- The impact a bid to the single capital pot to meet the requirement of the decent homes standard will have on other corporate investment priorities, in particular the specific investment requirements of sheltered housing which will be identified following an audit of the stock.
- The contribution housing can make to neighbourhood renewal and the development of local strategic partnerships.
- The impact alternative models for the delivery of the service will have on other council services and the general fund.

Issues relating to fuel poverty, equal opportunities, access and health promotion cut across all housing provision.

## **17 Improving the Quality and Suitability of the Housing Stock (Private Sector)**

### 17.1

The Government has introduced the Decent Homes Standard and all properties owned by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords must meet the standard by 2010, 1/3 by 2004. No similar standard exists for private rented property other than the fitness standard. The Council's policy is to enforce fitness standards where there is a reluctance on the part of the landlord to comply with legislation. However this approach together with limited financial resources has not provoked a discernable improvement in levels of unfitness and disrepair.

### 17.2

The new hazard rating and risk assessment system to be introduced takes into account the fitness and safety of private property and there will be a change in implementing this. However there are also opportunities contained within the Regulatory Reform Order for a change in the funding arrangements for renovation programmes.

### 17.3

The private sector house condition survey carried out in 1998 identified the following:

- Higher levels of unfitness in Rochester and Chatham
- Higher levels of unfitness in the private rented sector
- 60% of unfit houses have a SAP rating of less than 40

- The cost to tackle general disrepair is £76.53 million and unfit and the most urgent repairs above £45.17 million
- Chatham and Gillingham offer the best opportunities for block repair
- 3.2% of the total housing stock is empty closely following the national position
- 1 in 14 dwellings have poor energy efficiency
- The main environmental problems include heavy traffic, street parking, condition of roads/paths/pavings and adequacy of car parking provision.

The Council will consider making available resources for 2003/2004 to update the 1998 house condition survey and to expand the work to carry out more detailed investigations to determine local areas with the highest levels of unfit, disrepair and unsafe housing to enable resources to be targeted effectively.

#### 17.4

##### **Local Statistics/Health Data**

Medway has high levels of social deprivation and ill health relative to the county of Kent as a whole. The Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for Medway is higher than the average for Kent and Medway ranks as the second most deprived PCT area in West Kent. As a result, Medway also has high levels of health deprivation. The Standard Mortality Rate (SMR) across all causes for Medway is higher than any other PCT area in West Kent. Medway also has the highest SMR for Cancer and Coronary Heart Disease and the second highest for Stroke. Despite being a relatively small area of Kent, the six most deprived wards in Medway all feature in the top 20 most deprived wards in Kent. One ward in Medway ranks second in the list of deprivation scores across all Kent wards.

#### 17.5

##### **Current Situation**

Medway Council in conjunction with Council for Voluntary Services and Medway PCT are implementing 'Project Sunlight' a Healthy Living Centre and Community Health Development network working across the six most deprived wards in Medway. The project will deliver a new building consisting of a health centre housing three GPs and associated primary care facilities, a community pharmacy, IT training suite and Cyber Café, crèche, community café, voluntary sector office space, community facilities and social services family centre. An innovative range of initiatives around education, health, childcare and employment will also be provided from the centre.

In addition, three community development health networkers will across the six most deprived wards in Medway building capacity within local communities to tackle health inequalities and promote health.

#### 17.6

##### **Private Landlords**

The landlords forum and accreditation scheme are methods of securing voluntary improvement in the stock.

The recently introduced accreditation scheme awarded primarily to landlords who have received grants and upgraded properties as a result of the empty homes

strategy to meet the need for persons in housing need from the private rented sector will be extended to all landlords.

The landlords forum continues to meet regularly and has been active in developing and promoting the Councils policies for providing for persons in housing need from the private sector. A Landlords Open Day in May 2002 launched the initiatives to 40 landlords. This was a co-ordinated exercise and in addition to the landlords empty homes grant included a package of other initiatives, mortgage rescue scheme, mediation service, rent top-up etc.

#### 17.7

In Medway HMO's provide valuable accommodation in the lower end of the housing market for a transient population and partly for those in housing need. It is likely that there will be an increasing use of this type of accommodation as the University of Medway based at Chatham grows, and the change of legislation produces the predicted change in homeless legislation and a rise in 16-17 year olds seeking accommodation.

#### 17.8

The Council will continue to operate a risk assessment policy, concentrating resources on a worst, first basis, but awaits a notional licensing policy. There is a regular liaison meeting with the fire service to agree a common approach to fire standards in HMO's.

#### 17.9

The development of the new Medway Campus at the University at Medway will generate 6,000 new students. It is assumed that 2,000 of which will seek private rented accommodation. A grant scheme of some £4,000 per usable room could help to bring under utilised dwellings into use.

## 18 Empty Homes

Regional Priority 7 – To promote regeneration and neighbourhood renewal Regional Priority 6 – To improve the quality and suitability of the housing stock Regional Priority 3 – To reduce the homelessness and rough sleeping
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#### 18.1

The Council's empty homes strategy adopted by the Council in 1998 is operated by two Officers on a job share basis.

#### 18.2

There are estimated to be in excess of 3000 empty homes in Medway at any one time, of which approximately 1000 have been empty for longer than six months. This long term empty rate represents 1% of the total stock. The Council recognises the importance of an empty homes strategy and that it is integral to the overall housing strategy and corporate aims of the authority in the context of area regeneration, the improvement and utilisation of derelict or otherwise vacant property is linked to the Council's strategy to encourage landlords to provide houses from the private sector for persons in housing need.

#### 18.3

To address this problem the Council introduced the following initiatives.

- Introduced a database system to record details of empty homes and to monitor progress to ensure compliance with the Council's Compulsory Purchase Order procedure and to gather information to meet the following best value performance indicator.  
" The number of private sector stock empty homes brought back into use"

#### 18.4

Currently there are in excess of 650 properties on the database which are regularly monitored, 280 of these have been filled as a result of initiatives introduced by the Council.

- The Council has introduced a procedure which results in compulsory purchase where the owner does not respond to a series of letters to encourage the owner to arrange for the property to be occupied.
- The Council operates a Landlords Forum meeting every four months at which there is an exchange of information about the empty homes strategy and advice given to landlords about the various initiatives available to bring empty homes back into use. Landlords on the forum will be invited to assist with the development strategies for housing standards in HMO's.
- The Council works with two housing associations who lease empty properties from landlords, and manages and lets them through a private leasing scheme, accepting nomination rights from the Council from persons in housing need.

The scheme is linked to the empty homes strategy ensuring that there is double benefit to the Council. As a further incentive to landlords the Council offers a landlords grant for empty properties up to a maximum of £15,000.

#### 18.5

The rental difference between housing benefit rent levels offered to landlords through the private sector leasing scheme and what they might achieve in the private rented sector is a disincentive to landlords to offer their properties. To address this the Council has introduced a system to pay the Housing Association's Management fees, thereby increasing the rental income to the landlord. The payment of the management fee is on a percentage sliding scale based on the level of landlords grant if any, awarded to the landlord. The higher the amount of grant the less percentage reduction in the management fee. There are indications that this policy is partly effective and the Council proposes to continue with this initiative, although changes in the Housing market may influence this.

#### 18.6

##### **Gillingham High Street Regeneration Scheme – Case Study**

##### **REGIONAL PRIORITY 7 – Promote Regeneration & Neighbourhood Renewal**

The former Gillingham Borough Council acquired empty properties on all four corners of the junction between Arden Street and the High Street. Many of these properties were empty and in a derelict state. An officer working group including the Town Centre Manager developed a brief for the site. Phase 1 was funded by the Housing Corporation as one of the rethinking construction pilots, providing an innovative and exciting new milestone building. Phase 2 was market tested and part of it will be developed by a housing association with the ground floor providing opportunities to expand services currently provided by the adjacent library, lifelong learning initiatives and links with the education action zone in the area. These proposals will be evaluated against the library strategy to ensure they fit with the long term vision for library services in Medway.

## 19 Grant Policies

### 19.1

The Councils current policy is to award the full range of mandatory and discretionary grants as resources permit. For the current financial 2002/2003 year resources were allocated from the single capital pot and supplementary credit approvals as follows:

- a) £350,000 – Discretionary Renovation grants to owner occupier
- b) £840,000 – Discretionary Landlords grants for empty properties
- c) £150,000 – Discretionary Home Repairs Assistance
- d) £750,000 – Mandatory Disabled facilities grant

### 19.2

#### a) Renovation Grants

Awarded to owner/occupiers on a points based system which prioritises the application. The table illustrates the past and proposed activity for the grants.

Year	Spend £	Number of properties	Budget £	Proposed number of properties
2000/2001	370,000	37		
2001/2002	421,000	51		
2002/2003			350,000	35
2003/2004			750,000	75
2004/2005			750,000	75
2005/2006			850,000	80
2006/2007			850,000	80

### 19.3

#### b) Discretionary Landlords Grant

Linked to the empty homes policy and is awarded subject to the Council having 100% nomination rights for the five year grant condition period and with the property being managed and let by a Housing Association. The grant offered is 75% of a maximum of £20,000, and up to a maximum of £15,000 grant.

The past and proposed activity as illustrated in the table below:

Year	Spend £	Units produced	Projected Required budget £	Units
2000/2001	40,000	6		
2001/2002	519,000	38		
2002/2003			840,000	56
2003/2004			750,000	50
2004/2005			750,000	50
2005/2006			750,000	50

2006/2007			750,000	50
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19.4

### Home Repairs Assistance

The Council has an agreement and funds, together with Government grant an outsourced Home Improvement Agency to provide services to the elderly and vulnerable. The agency provides a service to make grant applications for Home Repair Assistance, Disabled facilities and Renovation grants. The service also provides additional charitable funding and includes a handyman, decorating and gardening service for the elderly.

The role of the Home Improvement Agency was part of a best value review undertaken in 2001/2001. The recommendation from the best value review was that the Home Improvement Agency service should be market tested and evaluated against other service providers with the Council considering the best option for the service later in 2002.

The table below illustrates past and proposed activity:

Year	Spend £	Number of properties	Budget £	Properties improved
2000/2001	154,000	139		
2001/2002	182,000	162		
2002/2003			150,000	136
2003/2004			150,000	136
2004/2005			175,000	145
2005/2006			175,000	145
2006/2007			175,000	140

19.5

### Disabled Facility Grant

The demand for disabled facilities grants continues at a high level. The expenditure for the last three years has been approximately £750,000 per annum and adapts approximately 150 properties. The annual supplementary credit approval is approximately £550,000.

The table below illustrates past and proposed activity:

Year	Spend £	Number of properties	Budget £	Proposed number of adaptations
2000/2001	797,240	137		
2001/2002	789,680	121		
2002/2003			750,000	115
2003/2004			750,000	115
2004/2005			800,000	120
2005/2006			800,000	120

2006/2007			800,000	115
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## 19.6

To manage the problem of escalating demand for disabled facilities grant the Council has introduced the following:

- Obtained Member approval for a three year rolling programme from the years 2001/2002, 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 to commit to an annual expenditure of £750,000. This introduces confidence to Officers at the end of each financial year to continue approving grants in the knowledge that funding is available.
- Continued to operate a “panel” where the client is invited to discuss the options available with the Private Sector Housing and Occupational Therapy Service. This is particularly relevant where the house is unsuitable for adaptation and the adaptations are expensive. The opportunity is taken to advise the client on the alternatives such as re-housing into Council or housing association stock and/or Do it Yourself Shared Ownership Schemes (DIYSO) for properties already adapted or more suitable for adaptation. The Council has made some funding available for the DIYSO scheme for the 2002/2003 financial year.
- Funding was made available in 2000/2001 to The Disabled Persons Accommodation Agency (DPAA) located in Medway, to build a database capable of storing information based on their property classification of properties adapted with a disabled facilities grant. These 450 properties have been entered on the database and it is intended to introduce a system requesting the owners of these properties to give the DPAA and the Council first choice to enable the adapted properties to be recycled.

It is intended to extend this system following a survey with details of the Council’s housing stock regarding the adaptations already carried out or the suitability of the property for future adaptation.

It is also proposed to investigate the possibility of linking this database to the Council’s “Academy” database system for management of the Council stock.

## 19.7

During the early part of 2000 it was recognised by a number of agencies that there was not a cohesive approach to tackling the housing problems of people with a disability, and particularly in relation to the re-housing of disabled persons. Consequently a working group was set up to formulate the protocol comprising Council Officers, Occupational Therapists the DPAA and mhs homes a Social Housing provider.

## 19.8

### **Future Proposals**

The group proposes that the problems of resourcing adaptations and meeting the current and future needs of people with disabilities will be served best by adoption of the following proposals.

- Agreement to a common procedure and advisory literature to encourage a comprehensive and consistent approach to the problem.

- The agreed procedures to be adopted by all agencies and launched to all staff engaged in the process of client assessment, adaptation, rehousing and new housing provision.
- A policy for all housing providers that is consistent and transparent for people with disabilities to access housing adaptation funding from a variety of sources.
- Identification of the properties available for adaptation and those that can provide housing accommodation for people with disabilities so that existing housing may be used more effectively.
- Development of a common approach to prioritising the needs of disabled people who require rehousing.
- Flexibility in the system of housing allocations so that specialised adapted housing is recycled for those people with disabilities.
- A regular forum of all housing providers to consider those applicants whose needs are difficult to resolve within the agreed procedures and which require specialist resolution.
- Planning new specialised housing provision for people with severe disabilities or complex housing needs.
- A strategic approach to the future planning of housing and financial resources to meet the needs of disabled people in Medway.

#### 19.9

The Council is to carry out a thematic review of services for the disabled, with the intention of reviewing the opportunities provided by unitary authority status to operate a one-stop-shop for this client group.

#### 19.10

The Council will seek to introduce a new renovation grants policy based on the proposals in the Regulatory Reform Order from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003. In partnership with other agencies it is proposed to consider the introduction of all other funding programmes, equity release, loans etc to maximise the availability of funding to improve levels of fitness repair and safety in the housing stock.

REGIONAL PRIORITY 9 – To support crime reduction through housing provision
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## **20 Anti-Social Behaviour and Social Exclusion**

### 20.1

Anti-Social behaviour and social exclusion are a common and widespread problem affecting most localities throughout the Medway area. The Council takes anti-social behaviour very seriously led by the cabinet portfolio holder for Community Safety and the Neighbourhood Renewal Manager in Development and Environment Directorate. The Council, in partnership with key agencies has developed and recently updated the Community Safety Plan \*, there are clear links with housing, both at a strategic level covering all providers and at an operational level for council stock. These actions will be incorporated into the Anti-Social behaviour strategy for the councils housing stock.

### 20.2

Work is progressing on the development of a Medway Housing Standard with other Housing providers for tackling anti-social behaviour. This will incorporate the protocols developed between the Police and the Council in the Crime Reduction Partnership for responding to requests for information sharing and for the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. The standard will also include the use of introductory tenancies, the use of CCTV and give guidance on the most effective remedies to a range of problems. The Council will also research how Housing Associations can be supported to gather evidence and take legal action against perpetrators where they do not have easy access to legal advice.

### 20.3

Staff have been involved in workflow analysis in relation to anti-social behaviour issues so that our procedures can be streamlined to become clear and more effective. This process has involved liaison with other sections and directorates where necessary. Liaison with the police at community level has improved, often involving the police carrying out joint visits with estate management staff where necessary. Staff, Council members and tenant representatives will be invited to take part in a series of workshops in December 2000, facilitated by TEST (tenancy enforcement support team). The purpose of the workshops was to:-

- Receive feedback regarding procedures.
- Jointly review and improve procedures.
- Raise awareness regarding the remedies to anti-social behaviour at anti-social behaviour at the Council's disposal. The results from the workshop will be used to develop a guidance manual.

### 20.4

These policies and procedures have now been drafted and will be presented to members for approval.

### 20.5

A further example of joint working involves a project in conjunction with the Police and NACRO called Radium. The Council has provided funding to develop the scheme for Council tenants. Tenants are offered improvement of locks bolts and bars to improve the security of their home and also the provision of smoke alarms and property marking. This will focus initially on those who have been the victim of burglary or those in high risk areas.

## **21 Summary**

### 21.1

Investment in Affordable housing is funded primarily by Social Housing Grant (SHG). Only housing providers registered with the Housing Corporation (HA) are eligible for SHG they are referred to as Registered Social Landlords. Local authorities can act as agents for the Housing Corporation and provide Local Authority Social Housing Grant. This grant is reimbursed in full to the LA by the HC but the receipt has to be set aside against former debt.

### 21.2

The allocation of SHG is made through the Area Development Programme annually, investment decisions made on the basis of Regional Priorities as set out in the

Regional Housing Statement matched to local need. Bidding for funding is competitive and Medways allocation has increased over the last three years as we have schemes that meet Regional objectives and we have a track record on delivery.

2000/01	-	£3,156,129
2001/02	-	£4,248,724
2002/03	-	£4,551,169

The 2002/03 allocation of £4,551,169 Social Housing Grant is matched by £4,714,414 of private finance raised by RSL. The total investment in Medway being £9,265,583 producing 118 units in total. The Area Investment Framework for North Kent has identified a projected shortfall in SHG Investment of £9m per annum over the next 20 years for Medway is housing targets set in the 'Zones of Change' are to be met.

### 21.3

#### Resource requirements – LASHG

Year	Rent	S/O	Supported Housing	Temporary	Total no Units	Total Bid
2002/03	470,000	182,000	800,000	763,000		
2003/04						
2004/05						
2005/06						
2006/07						

### 21.4

#### Summary

Year	Disabled Facilities Grant	Home Repair Assistance	Discretionary Landlords Grant	Renovations Grant	TOTAL Units Spend	
2002/2003	750,000	150,000	840,000	350,000	312	2,090,000
2003/2004	750,000	150,000	750,000	750,000	376	2,400,000
2004/2005	800,000	175,000	750,000	750,000	381	2,475,000
2005/2006	800,000	175,000	750,000	800,000	385	2,525,000
2006/2007	800,000	175,000	750,000	850,000	380	2,575,000

## Health Promotion Action Plan

Objective	Milestones	Timescale	Funding	Agencies
To ensure that the Teenage Pregnancy Unit's recommendations that all under 18 teenage parents are housed in supported accommodation if they request it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable building identified</li> <li>• Completed negotiation with RSL</li> <li>• Support requirements agreed and tendered</li> <li>• Support package agreed</li> <li>• Referral criteria agreed</li> <li>• Referrals taken</li> <li>• Scheme operational</li> </ul>	By April 2003: Successful tender of support package By April 2004: Scheme operational	Supporting package funded from Transitional Housing Benefit  Refurbishment cost met by RSL	Medway Council Orbit Housing Association
To pilot a Telecare initiative for a selected client group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project costed</li> <li>• Funding identified and agreed</li> <li>• Client group identified</li> <li>• Sensors installed</li> <li>• Pilot period undertaken</li> <li>• Evaluation undertaken</li> <li>• Scheme extended if successful</li> </ul>	By August 2003: Project costed and funding identified By December 2004: Pilot complete By April 2005: Evaluation completed	£40K start-up costs for sensor  Monitoring funded from THB	Medway Council

Objective	Milestones	Timescale	Funding	Agencies
To implement a Fuel Poverty campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits hotline set up and staffed</li> <li>• Cooperation of Energy Efficiency Charity obtained</li> </ul>	Implemented once per year from October to February	£40K per annum. (Currently funded from	Medway Council Kent Energy Centre

to encourage the take-up of home insulation grants and benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media campaign launched</li> <li>• Training of front line primary care staff undertaken</li> <li>• Presentations to community groups undertaken</li> <li>• Campaign evaluated</li> </ul>		Medway Council).	CAB Benefits Agency
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<b>Objective</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Agencies</b>
To implement Project Sunlight – a Healthy Living Centre (HLC) and Healthy Living Network across the six most deprived wards in Medway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community networkers recruited</li> <li>• Community health development undertaken within six most deprived wards</li> <li>• Phase I of the HLC reopened</li> <li>• Phase II of the HLC constructed and opened</li> <li>• Development of additional health and community services within the HLC.</li> </ul>	<p>By May 2002: Phase I of HLC opened</p> <p>By June 2002: Community networkers recruited</p> <p>By November 2002: Health Living Centre fully constructed and opened</p> <p>Ongoing until November 2007: Development of community initiatives to tackle ill health and promote community</p>	<p>Capital:</p> <p>£500K NOF</p> <p>£250K Medway Council</p> <p>Revenue (over 5 years)</p> <p>£500K NOF £300K Medway Council</p>	<p>Medway Council</p> <p>Medway PCT</p> <p>CVS Medway</p>

		regeneration		
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<b>Objective</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Agencies</b>
To undertake comprehensive health needs assessment with clients accessing Direct Access Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview schedule designed and piloted</li> <li>• Clients recruited</li> <li>• Interviews conducted</li> <li>• Results analysed</li> <li>• Report produced</li> <li>• Recommendations implemented</li> </ul>	By April 2003	From existing health promotion resources	Medway Council Project Sunlight Winter Warmers
To implement a specialist drug/alcohol support and counselling service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project costed</li> <li>• Worker identified/ recruited</li> <li>• Service implemented with Direct Access Hostel</li> <li>• Service implemented as street outreach</li> </ul>	By August 2002, project costed By Dec 2002: funding ident. By April 2003: service implemented in hostel By April 2004, street outreach service implemented	Possible sources:  DAT Medway PCT Drug and alcohol service	Medway Council Drug Action Team (DAT) Medway PCT Winter Warmers
To implement a mental health support / advocacy service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project costed</li> <li>• Cooperation from MH services obtained</li> <li>• Worker identified / recruited</li> <li>• Service implemented with Direct Access Hostel</li> <li>• Referrals to services undertaken</li> </ul>	By August 2002, project costed By Dec 2002: funding identified By April 2003: service implemented in hostel	Possible sources:  West Kent NHS trust	Medway Council West Kent NHS Trust Winter Warmers
To provide health promotion advice / advocacy to hostel clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Sunlight Networker time agreed</li> <li>• Networkers in Hostel</li> <li>• Advice / advocacy provided</li> </ul>	By April 2003	From project Sunlight existing resources	Medway Council CVS Medway Winter Warmers



**BME Strategy****Homelessness and Allocations**

Attention needs to be focused on fair policies and procedures; and Medway will need to work with registered social landlord's to ensure that nominations systems are non-discriminatory. People in housing need must be made aware of housing and related services on offer.

It is important to provide clear and comprehensive information using accessible formats. This needs to include advice about options and an explanation about the process. There needs to be access to staff who can speak appropriate languages or access to interpreting services.

- We will evaluate Medway's Choice Based Letting (CBL) pilot to assess its impact on BME groups, i.e. does it benefit or disadvantage BME communities and if the latter what barriers there are and how they might be overcome
- We will review our allocations policy to ensure that it does not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, against BME groups, or lead to segregation etc property size etc
- We will ensure that information on allocations and choice based lettings are produced in a range of ethnic languages appropriate to the area and accessible to BME people and utilise the in-house Interpreters service.
- We will ensure that our guidance also (in relation to homelessness) identifies issues of relevance to BME groups

(N.B. the DTLR are to produce a revised Code of Guidance on Allocations and Homelessness in 2002, which will identify BME issues. When this is produced we will undertake an audit to see how we compare with its recommendations)

We will produce regular monitoring information, which will, in due course inform this strategy.

**Housing Advice and Information**

It is important that the ethnic origin of users of these services is monitored to see whether: -

- BME people are using the service to the degree expected given the numbers within the local population. Low levels may suggest a need for publicity campaigns
- There are patterns in the problems that are presented
- Good, culturally sensitive advice is essential. This advice should be communicated to communities via outreach workers but we need also to reach those who are unwilling to approach their own groups for reasons of confidentiality.

We need to ensure that our new contract for Prevention of homelessness and housing advice addresses this issue.

## **Young People**

Young people from BME backgrounds can become homeless because of a rejection of cultural and family traditions, which causes isolation and can require support. This is particularly an issue for those of Asian background

Additionally, homelessness can be hidden, as Asian people are less likely to turn to agencies for help. (DTLR Addressing the housing needs of BME people) Footnote: Asian women's refuge.

We need to ensure that our new contract for Prevention of homelessness and housing advice addresses this issue. Young people with support needs will be dealt with under our Supporting People Strategy.

## **Supporting People**

We will ensure that the BME housing group is consulted on Medway's Supporting People Strategy and Vision, and that they contribute to areas of policy development and to the communications strategy.

We need to ensure that small BME organisations are able to prepare for and participate in the Supporting People programme; this may include capacity building and additional support. Case study: Sheltered Housing Scheme.

## **Registered Social Landlords**

The Housing Corporation outlines expectations of registered social landlord's through its Regulatory Code and Guidance and monitor registered social landlord performance as part of its regulatory and inspection function. It is expected that all registered social landlords will comply with Housing Corporation (HC) guidance and this will not be replicated here. In addition to registered social landlord's following HC guidance we will expect: -

- Reports of racial incidents will be submitted to MAARA on the appropriate Racial Harassment Monitoring Form
- Registered social landlord's to work with the council to ensure that nominations and allocations are non discriminatory – this may include targets for percentage lettings that should be made to those from the BME community
- Registered social landlord's to submit monitoring data for the Medway area.
- Asian women's refuge
- Medway Domestic Violence Forum
- MAARA – Medway Action Against Racial attacks

## **Private Rented Sector**

The council is committed to trying to improve the standard of accommodation offered in the private sector and the standard of management.

The DTLR are encouraging local authorities to run accreditation schemes, for private landlords, training and tenancy deposit schemes. It is felt that this will assist in combating the spiral of decline often experienced in these neighbourhoods.

Medway is currently running a rent deposit scheme and is introducing an Accreditation scheme. We need to ensure that these initiatives address the needs of BME groups, and that resources are targeted at deprived areas (where BME groups are over represented)

## **Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

This area will be covered by the Supporting People strategy

## **Gypsies and Travellers**

Section 13

## **Community Regeneration**

We will consult with local BME communities to explore cultural dimensions to location and design issues in order to promote the development of housing that meets specific needs. There must be a better understanding of need, and we have to assess whether wards with BME communities are in re-generation areas.

Section 106 agreements need to be more specific about non-standard housing types, that will meet BME requirements. The council's cross Directorate forum, that oversees Section 106 agreements will be consulted on these proposals.

## **The Council's Own Stock**

We need to comply with

- CRE Code of Practice on Rented Housing
- Code of Practice for social landlords on tackling racial harassment

The Action Plan will include an audit of how Medway performs in relation to the above.

## **Housing for Older People**

It is of great importance that cultural needs and preferences are understood and respected. Many elderly members of BME communities do not access available support services.

Medway has commissioned a physical audit of its own stock and is planning a review of all sheltered accommodation in the area, to address future needs, the Decent Homes Standard requirements and other recent legislation.

We will ensure that BME communities are represented in this forthcoming review of sheltered housing. This will include Supporting People issues.

A sheltered housing scheme for ethnic elders is being developed by Orbit Housing in Chatham High Street, close to the existing ethnic community.