



Shropshire  
Council

# **Shropshire Council**

## **Housing Strategy 2009 – 2011**



**Annual review 2010**

**This Housing Strategy 2009 - 2011 (Review 2010); the detailed action plan review and the full Housing Strategy 2009-2011 are all available on the Council's website at [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk) or on the West Housing Partnership website at [www.westhousingpartnership.co.uk](http://www.westhousingpartnership.co.uk)**

**If you have any queries about the annual review or Shropshire's Housing Strategy; require this publication in large print, Braille or on audio tape or another language or want more information, please contact:**

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# Housing Strategy 2009-2011 action plan review and update (April 2010)

## Foreword



I am delighted to introduce the Shropshire Housing Strategy review for 2010. The document fulfils the commitment to report on the progress of the Housing Strategy on an annual basis.

The last 12 months have been a tremendously exciting time for the Council and its partners as we have been able to utilise our unified resources brought about by becoming a Unitary Authority to drive forward a range of improvements for our residents. This document outlines many of the key achievements over the last 12 months in the delivery of the Housing Strategy 2009-2011 and also highlights the key changes in national, regional and local policy since the strategy was published in April 2009.

The document will feed into the West Market Area Sub-Regional housing strategy which will be produced in partnership with colleagues in Herefordshire and published in 2011.

The development of a Sub-Regional Housing Strategy for the West Housing Market Area will help to further support improved partnership working with our colleagues in Herefordshire. It will also ensure that resources are maximised in order to more effectively tackle the broad range of housing issues, both now and in the future.

I would like thank our staff and partners for their achievements to date and look forward to working with them and our colleagues in Herefordshire in the development and delivery of the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Price', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Malcolm Price  
Portfolio Holder for Housing



## **Contents**

**Foreword**

**Executive Summary**

**The Changing Context**

**Housing Strategy Progress**

- 1) Housing provision and affordability
- 2) Decent Homes in the social sector
- 3) Decent Homes in the private sector
- 4) Vulnerable households
- 5) Gypsies and Travellers
- 6) Homelessness and prevention of homelessness
- 7) Landlord services
- 8) Housing Services – Housing Options and Allocations

**Glossary**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Scope of the Review**

The inaugural Housing Strategy for the new unitary Shropshire Council was published in April 2009. The Strategy covers the period 2009-2011 and makes a commitment to review the strategic action plan on an annual basis and report back to residents and other stakeholders. This review is the fulfilment of that commitment and considers progress achieved so far on the action plan and also looks forward to the next 12 months. The review also identifies recent changes at a national, regional and local level relating to housing which are, or will, influence how we deliver services both now and in the future.



The review complements rather than replaces the Housing Strategy and should therefore be read in conjunction with the main strategy document, which is available at: [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

The Council's Housing Strategy was developed as an interim response to the housing challenges faced by the Council prior to the development of a longer term housing strategy on a sub-regional basis from 2011, so was titled 'Foundations for the Future'.

The Sub-Regional Housing Strategy will cover the West Housing Market Area, which comprises the Shropshire and Herefordshire Council areas.

The strong links and opportunities for more effective partner working are well understood with the development of the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy specifically responding to the West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005, which states "The sensible way forward would be for Housing Authorities in Herefordshire and Shropshire to be working to a position where they produce a single Housing Strategy for the area". The development of a Housing Strategy at a sub-regional level will enable a clearer and more consistent approach to the development of improved housing and housing related services throughout the sub-region.

This review of the Housing Strategy will feed into the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy, which will be overseen by the West Housing Market Area Executive. The Executive comprises of Housing and Planning Portfolio holders and housing and planning policy officers from both Shropshire and Herefordshire Councils as well as key stakeholders from a range of organisations including Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM). Prior to its dissolution on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2010, West Midlands Regional Assembly was also represented. Arrangements will be made to ensure continued appropriate representation from the new regional bodies.

## Strategic Vision and Aims

Shropshire's Housing Strategy 2009-2011 was produced following extensive consultation with residents and other key partners and was approved by the Council in December 2008. The strategy makes a commitment to produce an annual review of progress which will be reported to residents and other stakeholders. It recognises the range of influences at a national, regional and local level and demonstrates the interconnection with other strategies and policies.

Housing markets at a national, regional and local level are subject to constant change and it is therefore essential to recognise and respond to these changes. The review provides an update of progress against the identified priorities and recognises where specific actions have been amended to reflect these changes. However, it is important to recognise that the review does not alter the overarching priorities or vision contained within the strategy.

The Shropshire Housing Strategy recognises the broad range of issues relating to housing need and includes a comprehensive range of measures to meet those needs, which are articulated through an action plan. The 8 key policy areas and overarching vision statement are shown below.

### Shropshire Housing Strategy 2009-2011

**Vision:** Housing in Shropshire will meet the diverse and changing needs of our communities by providing pathways of housing choice to decent and affordable homes in sustainable communities.

#### Policy areas:

- 1 Housing Provision and Affordability
- 2 Decent Homes in the Private Sector
- 3 Decent Homes in the Social Sector
- 4 Vulnerable Households
- 5 Gypsies and Travellers
- 6 Homelessness and Prevention
- 7 Landlord Services
- 8 Housing Options and Allocations

Shropshire Council and our partners are committed to responding to the priorities raised in the Housing Strategy and also to identify new challenges as they arise. The Housing Strategy review has been produced in recognition of the need to ensure that the strategy is kept up to date and responds to these new challenges.

## The Changing Context

We are currently experiencing a time of significant change within the housing sector. The Review outlines the major changes and new policy developments at a national, regional, sub-regional and local level. This includes:

- Proposed cuts in Government expenditure on housing and the need to ensure that services are delivered in an efficient and cost effective manner
- Changes in the regulation of housing through the Audit Commission and Tenant Services Authority
- New freedoms for Local Authorities to develop new affordable housing
- The reform of the Local Authority housing finance system
- Changes in regional structures including dissolution of the West Midlands Regional Assembly
- The development of sub-regional working arrangements relating to housing and planning
- The development of a range of policies and strategies at a local level including the Shropshire Community Strategy and Corporate Plan, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

All of these will affect the way in which housing and housing services are delivered and this is further detailed within the Review.

## Key Achievements

The last 12 months have been a hugely challenging and exciting time for Shropshire Council and our partners in undertaking the actions set out within the Housing Strategy.

The Review outlines many of these achievements which include:

- The development of 159 new affordable homes between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009
- Obtaining Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits to develop 400 units of Extra Care Housing for older people and additional accommodation for people with dementia. Work is continuing in order to fully secure funding
- The development of the Rocks Green affordable housing scheme in Ludlow which won the Inside Housing/ Chartered Institute of Housing 'Most Sustainable Larger Housing Project of the Year' award in 2009
- Helping over 6,000 households to benefit from the Keep Shropshire Warm initiative since Autumn 2007

- Completing a comprehensive needs analysis of vulnerable people in February 2009. The analysis has informed the development of the Commissioning Framework for Supporting People
- Providing an additional 12 Gypsy and Traveller pitches between 2008 and 2010
- An increased focus on homelessness prevention which has resulted in a reduction of homelessness acceptances
- Establishment of a young persons' mediation service which helps to keep the young person in the home environment or keep them there while a planned move takes place
- Establishment of the repossession prevention fund through £76,000 of funding with Just Credit (credit union) for owner occupiers and Shropshire Housing Alliance for private rented and social housing
- Setting up a contract with Shropshire Housing Alliance for the Homelessness Prevention and Private Sector Accommodation Scheme. As part of this, Shropshire Council provided £60,000 for additional funds for rent in advance and deposits due to contract targets being met
- Improvements in the way that adaptations for people with disabilities are carried out and monitored in the Council's retained housing. This includes that now, all minor adaptations are carried out within the target time of 28 days. Over 40 major adaptations have been completed since April, and the average waiting times for major works to be carried out following notification of Occupational Therapist recommendations has been cut in half and is presently 9 months.
- The establishment of Shropshire's new Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy and Scheme
- Development of comprehensive policies and procedures for the management of Landlord Services and service standards agreed with tenants

### **Key priorities for the next 12 months**

Shropshire Council and our partners will continue to be involved in a wide range of initiatives in order to meet the housing and support needs of our residents. The list below is intended as an indication of some of the key areas of work for Shropshire Council and our partners over the next 12 months and beyond.

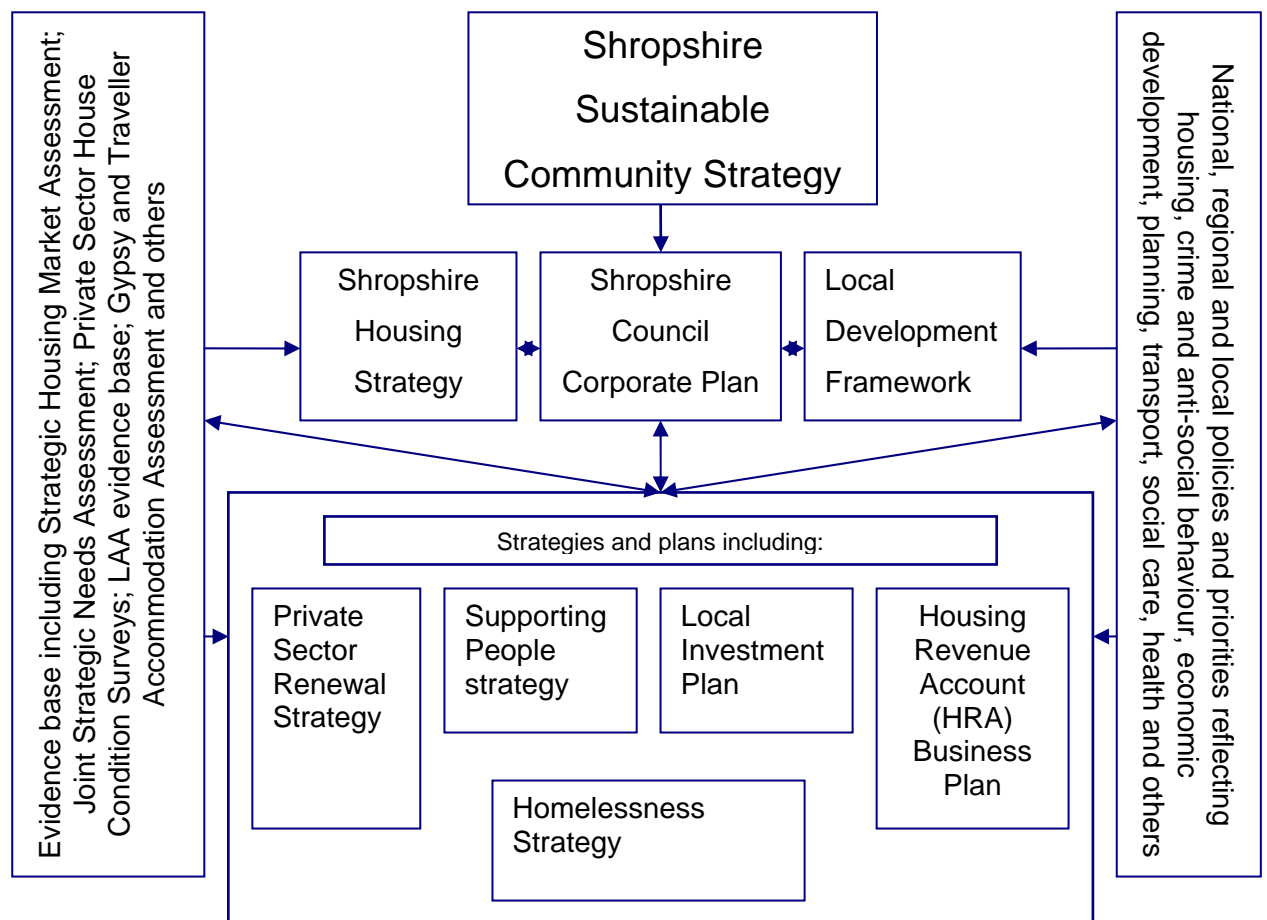
- Driving forward a range of initiatives in order to increase the supply of affordable homes including through the use of single plot exception sites and funding through off site contributions

- Working towards the development of more environmentally friendly dwellings. This includes working with a range of partners to progress Shropshire's first Code for Sustainable Homes level 6 development, which reflects the highest standard of environmental sustainability and working with a local company in the development of affordable system built housing in Oswestry
- Developing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by March 2011 relating to the type and affordability of housing in Shropshire. The SPD will provide guidance on how CORE strategy policy CS11 (Type and Affordability of Housing) will be implemented
- Progressing work to develop 400 units of extra care housing for older people and additional accommodation for people with dementia
- Working with partners including Herefordshire Council to develop a Sub-Regional Housing Strategy in late 2011
- Progression of the development of the Flax Mill site in Shrewsbury to potentially provide new homes and other facilities
- The development of an overarching Private Sector Renewal Strategy by the end of 2010
- There will be continued focus on work to address the housing and related needs of vulnerable households including the development
- Focus on bringing homes in the social housing sector up to Decent Homes Standards
- Responding to Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements as identified in the Interim Regional Spatial Policy Statement
- Development of a Homeless Strategy in Summer, 2010
- Continuing to further improve Landlord Services in Bridgnorth and Oswestry and meet the aspirations of tenants in those localities
- Undertaking a range of initiatives to reduce the number of long term empty dwellings, including employ two additional staff to supplement the activities of the Private Sector Housing Team to encourage the reoccupation of empty properties and increasing the funding provided to supplement the Empty Properties to Homes Grants

## The Changing Context

Shropshire's Housing Strategy 2009-2011 drew evidence from a range of sources, which were summarised in the strategy. This included the Sub-Regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which was published in June 2008 and the key policy and strategy documents at a local, regional and national level.

Specifically, the Strategy recognises that it forms part of an interconnected suite of strategies and policies as shown below:



It is currently a time of significant change for the housing sector. At the time of writing, all major political parties have announced that there will be major cuts in Government spending in the future which is likely to severely impact upon housing provision and services. Whilst it is not possible to predict the likely scale of the cuts, it does mean that it will be even more important to ensure that services are delivered in a cost effective way. It will be necessary to review services in order to ensure that there is no duplication and ensure that services are targeted appropriately. This will mean that difficult decisions will need to be made in forthcoming years as to where diminishing resources will be utilised.

## Reform of Local Authority Housing Finance

At the time of writing, the Government was proposing to significantly change the national housing financing system. Currently, all local councils that continue to directly provide social housing are part of the Housing Subsidy System and are subject to an annual assessment of the estimated cost of running the service, the cost of servicing the assumed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) debt and an estimate of income from rent. Where estimated costs exceed income, the local authority receives an annual subsidy payment from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG). However, where estimated income exceeds costs, a payment (which is referred to as negative subsidy) is demanded by CLG. Currently Shropshire is in negative subsidy and is required to pay over £4.7 million of its rental income to CLG in 2009/10. This equates to around 35% of total rent. It is acknowledged that not all of the money obtained from negative subsidy is redistributed within the system and that the Government currently gain from the overall surplus of funds. The assessment of debt is complex and based largely on which authority was building at what time and under which financing regime.

It is proposed to distribute the debt among all local authorities in exchange for a valuation based on the landlord's business. Authorities with a negative subsidy are likely to have to make a one-off payment and those Authorities which currently receive subsidy will receive a one-off payment, in return for the ending of the subsidy system with all authorities meeting the costs of managing and maintaining their housing stock and servicing the HRA debt through retention of rental income. It is envisaged that the cost of paying off the one-off payment would be equivalent to the negative subsidy costs and that any subsequent efficiency savings could be used towards service improvements.

Further proposals include:

- Allowing local authorities to retain 100% of the capital receipts arising from the sale of Right to Buy properties (currently, 75% of all receipts are paid to the Government)
- Enabling the current backlog of repairs to be addressed by capital grant (i.e. Government funding) programmes

Following a period of consultation, if proposals are agreed by local authorities, they could be in place as early as April 2011.

## **New freedoms to build council housing**

In June 2009, the Prime Minister launched the document 'Building Britain's Future' which detailed proposals to allow local authorities to build new affordable housing. This heralded the start of the largest council house building programme for almost 20 years and as a result of this, in September 2009, the Housing Minister, John Healey, announced that 47 councils had been successful in round 1 of bidding for resources. Shropshire Council will consider this and every opportunity to maximise the delivery of affordable housing in the future.

## **Changes in regulatory guidance**

There have been significant changes recently in the approach to the regulation of housing providers and the Council's strategic housing function. Regulation of the housing service and our RSL partners is undertaken by two organisations. These are the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), who are responsible for the regulation and inspection of RSLs and the Council's landlord services function and the Audit Commission who, among other things, regulate the Council's strategic housing function. Recently, the regulatory guidance of both of these functions has changed in order to more fully reflect the need for extensive partnership working and focus on customer choice.

## **Tenant Services Authority (TSA)**

As outlined in the Housing Strategy, the TSA is responsible for working with landlords and tenants to improve services for existing and prospective tenants. This primarily involves regulating social landlords and ensuring that standards are met. The TSA's new regulatory system was put in place in March 2010 and is based around six service areas:

- tenant involvement
- repairs and maintenance
- allocations
- neighbourhood and community
- value for money
- governance and viability

From October 2010, landlords with over 1,000 properties will be required to publish a self-assessment of compliance with national standards and a report on plans to develop local standards. Local standards should be put in place by April 2011. This will mean that all tenants in social housing will have the right to clear information about the standards achieved by their landlords.

## **Audit Commission Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) for Strategic Housing**

The Audit Commission's updated Strategic Approach to Housing Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) was published in January 2010. The KLOE provides guidance for Local Authority strategic housing departments and their partners as to what is expected of the services across all housing and tenure types. It is designed to assess how well a council works with its partners and other stakeholders to address the housing needs and challenges within its area. It also looks at whether the council is making best use of its powers and influence to drive forward the housing vision for the locality and deliver better housing outcomes for the community. It particularly recognises how important political leadership, joint working and spatial planning are in developing effective approaches, and makes it clear that the housing vision must support wider plans to create sustainable communities and in particular, links to the health and wellbeing agenda.

## **Warm Homes, Greener Homes Strategy**

The Government is increasing its focus on ensuring that homes are energy efficient and produce significantly less carbon. The Warm Homes, Greener Homes Strategy, which was published on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2010 by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), makes a commitment to reduce emissions from UK homes by 29% by 2020. The Strategy incorporates a range of specific measures including:

- ensuring that energy companies target work towards lower income groups
- providing a new 'Warm Home' standard for social housing
- introducing legislation to allow new 'pay as you save' green loans to be tied to the property in order to avoid the up front costs of energy efficiency upgrades.

Further information on the Warm Homes, Greener Homes Strategy is available on the DECC website at [www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk)

## **Regional structures**

There are currently a number of significant changes in regional governance. This includes the dissolution of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, which is being replaced by alternative structures. Forming part of this is a new West Midlands Leaders Board (WMLB) which will be responsible, along with Advantage West Midlands (AWM), for developing, delivering, monitoring and reviewing a Single Integrated Regional Strategy (SIRS) for the West Midlands. The SIRS will replace the Regional Economic Strategy; the Regional Housing Strategy, and the Regional Transport and Regional Spatial Strategies.

The Leaders Board has developed a number of Priority Actions which are:

- Economic/ Business
- Transport
- Housing and Regeneration
- Planning and Environment
- Skills
- Citizens and Communities

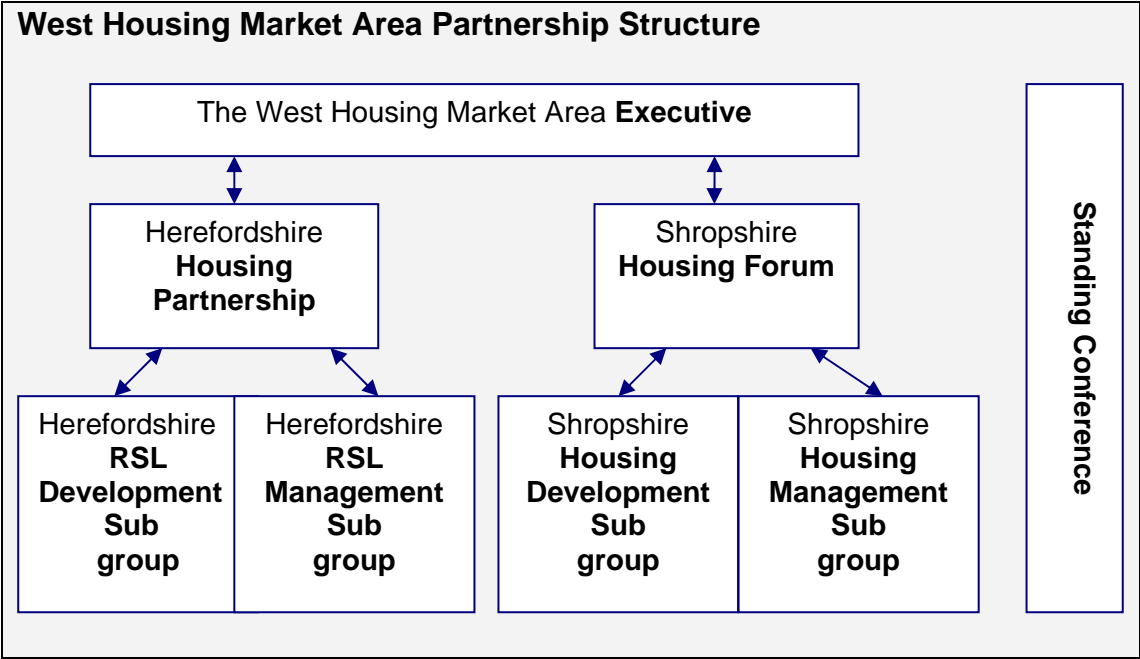
In order to drive forward these Priority Actions, the Joint Strategy and Investment Board (JSIB) has been established from 1st April 2010. The Board is the means by which the WMLB and AWM will exercise their functions and take forward the Strategy for the West Midlands.

The Strategy for the West Midlands will be a key document in tackling the full range of social and environmental challenges in the region so it is essential that Shropshire Council and our partners are fully engaged with the process of developing the document in order to ensure that specific issues experienced within Shropshire are fully recognised.

Currently, it is understood that the Government Office for the West Midlands will remain in its current format and function to co-ordinate the delivery of Government policy in the region. However, this function may be subject to change following the 2010 General Election.

### **Sub-Regional working**

The development of partnership working at a sub-regional level is critical to driving forward improvements in housing services and ensuring that the best use is made of available resources. In order to ensure this, the West Housing Market Area Partnership (WHMAP) was formed in April 2009. WHMAP brings together key stakeholders from a range of organisations that contribute to and influence delivery of housing and sustainable communities in Shropshire and Herefordshire. Partnership arrangements have been finalised and now take the form shown on the following page.



The West Housing Market Area Executive is the principal vehicle for high level coordination at a sub regional level, involving elected members, assistant directors of Shropshire and Herefordshire Councils, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), West Midlands Regional Assembly (to be replaced by a new regional organisation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010), Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM).

The Executive meets quarterly and agrees matters such as the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy, the signing off of funding allocations and monitoring progress against joint delivery. A number of forums feed into the Executive and provide strategic liaison between RSLs and Council colleagues.

The Standing Conference provides a format for data exchange and debate between a range of partners. It takes the format of a conference orientated event which meets twice a year and includes membership from a wide range of organisations. The Conference feeds in to decision making at all levels.

The Partnership will ensure that effective communication is in place with Stakeholders. This includes through the dedicated West Housing Market Area Partnership website, which is being developed at [www.westhousingpartnership.co.uk](http://www.westhousingpartnership.co.uk) and through newsletters to stakeholders.

## **Local Drivers**

### **Comprehensive Area Assessment**

In December 2009, the Audit Commission published the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) for Shropshire which recognises the excellent services provided by Shropshire Council and our partners in relation to housing and housing related support services. Overall the Audit Commission awarded Shropshire Council a rating of 3 out of 4, which equates to “an organisation which exceeds minimum requirements. Performs well”. The CAA recognises the range of good work which is being done by the Council and its partners, some of which is highlighted later in this document, and states that “Shropshire Council has been one of the strongest performing councils of its type”. Specifically relating to housing, the CAA states that “The Council is taking positive steps to improve the provision of housing in the county. It has established an up to date picture of housing need, is improving the help provided to homeless people and has brought together the two areas of rented Council owned homes to ensure that these are managed in the best way possible for the tenants” and that “As well as listening to local people, the public agencies in Shropshire have developed a good understanding of key issues such as crime, education, jobs (and) housing”.

The Assessment is particularly pleasing as an Audit Commission inspection of Landlord Services in Bridgnorth in December 2008 judged the service to be “zero star with uncertain prospects for improvement”. Likewise, a peer review of Landlord Services in Oswestry identified a number of areas for improvement. Following these inspections, the Council has been striving to make radical improvements in its Landlord Services. The service will be re-inspected later this year and it is hoped that the dramatic improvements in a range of areas will be recognised.

The key priorities which the Council and its partners must address are well understood. Since the production of the Housing Strategy in April 2009, the new Shropshire Council has produced its first Corporate Plan and Community Strategy. It is identified within these documents that housing plays a fundamental part in the quality of life of Shropshire’s residents and the vital contribution housing providers play in working with partners on a range of issues including tackling worklessness, anti-social behaviour, financial exclusion and health.

### **Shropshire Community Strategy**

Shropshire’s new Community Strategy (2010-2020) is the overarching document for the Shropshire Partnership. The Strategy takes into account the views of local people which have shaped the 3 broad priorities within the Strategy to be:

- 1) Enterprise and growth, with strong market towns and rebalanced rural settlements

- 2) Responding to climate change, and enhancing our natural and built environment
- 3) Healthy, safe and confident people and communities

The Community Strategy recognises the fundamental role which housing plays in place shaping and building sustainable communities and the impact which housing services play relating to a broad range of issues from tackling worklessness and anti-social behaviour to ensuring that levels of fuel poverty are minimised. Specifically, within the Community Strategy are commitments directly relating to housing, including ensuring that:

- Housing meets the needs of local people through a range of suitable housing options, particularly affordable housing developments
- Services meet the needs of local people and access is easier
- Older people are active and healthy, have the opportunity to work if they wish, and those with long term conditions are supported to live independently
- Shropshire has a lower carbon footprint, inspired and implemented through community leadership

### **Shropshire Council's Transitional Corporate Plan for 2010 - 2013**

Shropshire Council's Transitional Corporate Plan for 2010 – 2013 has been designed to mirror the 3 priorities of the Community Strategy as '*Enterprise and Growth*', '*Protecting and enhancing our natural and built environment*' and '*Healthy, safe and confident people and communities*' and sets out a broad framework as to future transformation plans. As with the Community Strategy, the Transitional Corporate Plan 2010 - 2013 recognises that housing has an important role to play in shaping sustainable communities and in delivering across a number of the Council's priorities.

### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan**

The HRA Business Plan sets the key priorities in the delivery of the Council's Landlord Services function and helps us to prepare our services for the future. The current plan covers a shorter period than normal - 2012/13. This is because significant reforms of Council housing regulation and finance have been proposed and, as yet, not enough significant detail is available to plan effectively beyond that period. The HRA Business Plan is available at [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk), though a summary of the key issues is contained within the Landlord Services section of this review.

## **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**

It is a requirement that PCTs and local authorities produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of the health and wellbeing of their local community. The latest Shropshire JSNA was produced earlier this year. The findings of the JSNA are critical in determining the approach that housing and the PCT should take to work together on tackling health and housing related issues, therefore will form a key element of the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy.

**Currently, a number of additional key policy areas at a local level are in development and will contribute to the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy in 2011. This includes:**

### **Local Housing Market Assessment**

The Local Housing Market Assessment, 2010 (LHMA) updates the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was published in 2008. It is a living evidence base that will be updated at least once a year and will form the basis of housing needs evidence to inform the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy. The draft Local Housing Market Assessment is available at [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

### **Local Development Framework (LDF) CORE Strategy**

The Core Strategy will be a key document within Shropshire's Local Development Framework (LDF), setting out the pattern of development across Shropshire until 2026. This means that it will, for example, identify which broad areas are suitable for housing and other strategic development needs. The Core Strategy will be submitted to the Secretary of State in July 2010 for independent examination with a view to adoption in March 2011.

### **Homelessness Strategy**

A new homelessness strategy is currently being developed and will be finalised by end of 2010. The document will provide an analysis of current homelessness data and include an action plan for future priorities in preventing homelessness and helping homeless people.

### **Work relating to older people**

As identified in the Housing Strategy, Shropshire is an area with a high and rapidly increasing older population, significantly due to in-migration from the urban areas of the West Midlands. Between 2009 the proportion of people over the age of 65 living in Shropshire will increase from around 20% to 30% and will represent one of the highest proportions of older people in the country. In response to this demographic change, we are developing a range of measures to meet the housing needs and aspirations of older people both now and in the future.

Examples of this include successfully obtaining Private Finance Initiative credits to develop 400 units of affordable Extra Care housing and specialist dementia accommodation. The confirmation of funding is subject to approval of an Outline Business Case (OBC) which will be submitted to the Secretary of State by May 2010. We are also undertaking a Supporting People review of services for older people and we are also working with a range of key partners to strengthen our evidence base relating to the housing and support needs of older people during 2010.

### **Private Sector Renewal Strategy**

A consolidated Private Sector Renewal Strategy will incorporate chapters on Empty Homes, Affordable Warmth, Houses in Multiple Occupation, Financial Assistance, Enforcement and Immigration. A consultation draft document will be available from late 2010.

### **Regeneration prospectus**

This Regeneration Prospectus, 2010, identifies the investment opportunities and capital projects through which the Council aims to work with its partners to achieve regeneration. It sits within the framework of policies and priorities set out in the Shropshire Community Strategy (2010-2020), the Council's Corporate Plan and the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy.

The Regeneration Prospectus enables partners to identify where their capital investment can have the greatest impact and contribute to regional as well as local regeneration. It will form a key element in informing the Housing Strategy with regards to major capital priorities for Shropshire and will form a key component of the new 'Single Conversation' arrangements with the Homes and Communities Agency.

### **Local Economic Assessments**

From April 2010, all county councils and unitary authorities will be required by law to undertake a Local Economic Assessment (LEA) of the economic conditions of their area. In the past, Shropshire Council has produced an annual economic profile of the county which has been used to inform local strategies and more recently the Shropshire Business Board Business Plan. However, the LEA will need to show a much greater understanding of Shropshire's economy, taking into account not only the main issues that the local economy is facing, but also the functioning economic geographic areas of the county. In terms of housing issues, the assessment will need to address whether there is sufficient housing of the right size and affordability to support sustainable economic growth and economic inclusion.

As well as a statutory obligation, the LEA will be a key document which should inform all other county strategies and policies. Shropshire's draft Local Economic Assessment is due to go out to consultation in June 2010.

## **Housing Strategy progress**

The last 12 months have been a hugely challenging and exciting time for Shropshire Council and our partners in undertaking the actions set out in the Housing Strategy. Whilst a full update of the review of the Housing Strategy action plan is available on the Shropshire Council website at [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk), the following pages identify the changes to existing actions, show new actions and illustrate some of the key achievements over the last year by Shropshire Council and its partners on each of the policy areas.

The information gathered about the progress of the Housing Strategy will be used to inform the development of the new Sub-Regional Housing Strategy. Specifically, we will be presenting the Review to a range of resident groups and other stakeholders in order to provide an update on what we have achieved over the last year and to identify the key challenges and issues for the future. This will form a basis upon which to consult on views as to what the key housing priorities in Shropshire should be for the next 5-6 years.

## **Policy area 1. Housing Provision and Affordability**

### **Overview of the policy area**

The policy area focuses on the provision of new affordable housing and the use of existing resources such as empty dwellings in order to meet identified housing need in Shropshire.

The Housing Strategy makes a strong commitment to provide additional affordable housing through such measures as:

- Reviewing existing planning policies and developing and implementing new policies in the new Shropshire Local Development Framework to maximise the provision of affordable housing through the planning system
- Setting a 'stretch' target through the Local Area Agreement (LPSA 8) for the delivery of affordable housing through planning permissions for 726 homes from 2006 –11
- Exploring every opportunity to provide affordable housing or for the supply of sites for affordable housing, using resources including land owned by the Council or other public agencies
- Making maximum use of empty properties through an Empty Property strategy
- Strengthening our partnerships with both Registered Social Landlords and the private sector to help us maximise new affordable housing, and to ensure that all affordable home-ownership schemes are kept affordable for future local households.

### **Key achievements**

Significant progress has been achieved over the past 12 months and this has included:

- The development of 159 new affordable homes between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009
- The recruitment of a rural enabling officer which will enable additional focus to be placed on the development of affordable housing in rural areas to meet local need. Three exception sites have been completed and 4 rural exception sites are on site that will deliver 42 homes
- Provision of funding to support schemes to bring a further 15 empty properties back into use, of which 8 will be affordable.
- The development of the Rocks Green affordable housing scheme in Ludlow which won the Inside Housing/ Chartered Institute of Housing 'Most Sustainable Larger Housing Project of the Year' award in 2009

- The production of Interim Planning Guidance which sets out Shropshire's approach to a number of planning policy issues pending the adoption of the Local Development Framework
- Obtaining Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits to develop 400 units of Extra Care Housing for older people and additional accommodation for people with dementia. Work is currently ongoing to submit an Outline Business Case (OBC) in May, 2010, in order to confirm funding.

### **Key challenges and priorities for the next 12 months**

The availability of Homes and Community Agency (HCA) funding for the development on new affordable housing over the next 12 months will be extremely limited. The priority will be to ensure a strong pipeline of ready to develop sites as funding becomes available. There is also considerable uncertainty over the future levels of funding for affordable housing in the medium to long term. It is therefore crucial to develop innovative methods of affordable housing delivery.

Key priorities include:

- Driving forward a range of initiatives in order to increase the supply of affordable homes. In addition to funding received from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Shropshire Council seeks to increase the number of affordable homes through taking forward a range of innovative projects, including:
  - Supporting development on single plot exception sites, which means that in certain circumstances, exceptions can be made to normal planning policies in order to enable local people to build their own affordable home. A number of conditions apply, including that the future value of the dwelling is controlled so that it remains affordable to other local people in the future
  - Using 'off site contributions' to increase the supply of affordable housing. Affordable housing through the planning system is becoming increasingly important in overall affordable provision. Former District and Borough Council policies required residential development to comprise a mix of open market and affordable dwellings. Where it was not possible to provide on site affordable housing, an off site financial contribution is required. As a consequence of off site contributions a 'pot' of money, currently around £5 million, exists for the provision of affordable housing along with funding for other community initiatives such as play equipment and open space. This pot is being continually added to as permitted developments reach the 'trigger point' at which time the Council can request payment of funds. The 'pot' on money is usually available for spend in a specified geographical area which is usually in the vicinity of the original development.
  - Progressing the Oswestry Pilot Programme (see case study)

- Working towards the development of more environmentally friendly dwellings. This includes working with a range of partners to progress Shropshire's first Code for Sustainable Homes level 6 development, which reflects the highest standard of environmental sustainability.
- Continuing to progress the development of the Extra Care Private Finance Initiative scheme
- The re-development of the Flax Mill site in Shrewsbury will potentially provide new homes and other facilities in a key regeneration area (see case study)
- Developing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) relating to the type and affordability of housing in Shropshire. The SPD will provide guidance on how CORE strategy policy CS11 (Type and Affordability of Housing) will be implemented
- Currently, there are nearly 2,000 long term empty homes within the housing stock. As an approach to reducing this number, the Council has revised its discretionary Council Tax discount policy for 2010/11. From April 2010, any property which is empty and unfurnished will only attract Council Tax discount for the first 6 months it is unoccupied. A proportion of the additional income generated by this change will be utilised to employ two additional staff to supplement the activities of the Private Sector Housing Team to encourage the reoccupation of empty properties. A further £200,000 per annum will be provided to supplement existing funding for Empty Properties to Homes Grants
- An Empty Homes Strategy is currently in the process of being drafted and will build on best practice to bring greater numbers of properties back into use. An effective Empty Homes Strategy and Policy can bring social, economic and environmental benefits, reducing the number of neglected empty homes to help create attractive neighbourhoods for all our residents. The first draft of the Strategy is anticipated in late 2010.

## Case studies

### **Case Study: Rocks Green Affordable Housing Development, Ludlow**

**Organisation: South Shropshire Housing Association**



Shropshire Council and our partners are committed to the development of new affordable housing which is environmentally sustainable. An example of this is the Rocks Green development near Ludlow, which was developed by South Shropshire Housing Association.

The scheme was named Most Sustainable Larger Housing Project of the Year in the Sustainable Housing Awards 2009 which is a national award run by the Chartered Institute of Housing.

The development comprises 91 extremely energy efficient properties which receive their heating and hot water from an environmentally friendly biomass boiler, which burns wood chips from locally-sourced timber. The development also incorporates a 'Homezone', which is a traffic management system widely used in Europe which provides a safe environment for pedestrians and slows cars down to a walking pace, using a variety of construction materials.

For more information please contact Paul Sutton, South Shropshire Housing Association at [paul.sutton@sshropsha.co.uk](mailto:paul.sutton@sshropsha.co.uk)

## **Case Study: Featherbed Lane, Shrewsbury**

**Organisation: Shropshire Council**



Using Local Authority land and capital resources, a scheme was designed and developed to build six 2 bedroom apartments for local needs affordable rent. The homes are leased to a local Registered Housing Provider (Housing Association) to manage. Whilst these are very difficult times to develop any housing, the Council takes advantage of utilising the principal component (land) and retaining the freehold of the property.

## **Case Study: Oswestry Pilot programme**

### **Organisation: Shropshire Council**

Shropshire Council are piloting a project to increase the volume and speed of delivery of rural affordable housing, by creating a database of rural exception sites, suitable for development. Initially the programme is targeting the rural parishes of Oswestry.

Over 100 potential exception sites in 30 parishes have been identified and appraised from which 45 sites are considered suitable for either group or single plot exception schemes for up to 215 homes. The Implementation team then identify, and negotiate the support of, the relevant landowner.

Following an agreement in principle with the landowner, the Council takes the site forward, by working with the landowner, Parish Council, Housing Association and the Homes and Communities Agency to secure funding and develop the site for local affordable housing. Currently four sites have been identified with the potential to be the first rural exception developments to be built in the Oswestry area.

This new pro-active approach is a fundamental boost to provision, assisting the Homes and Communities Agency, Housing Associations, developers and local communities who are facing the challenges of securing delivery of affordable housing, and the particular difficulties in rural areas. The lack of provision for rural housing and its impact on sustaining rural communities is the top regional priority on the housing agenda.

As part of this initiative, Shropshire Council is working closely with Shropshire Housing Group, Oswestry based Elements Europe Ltd and the local community to bring forward up to 16 units of system built housing at the Park Hall site in Oswestry. The new dwellings will provide ultra sustainable, affordable, energy efficient and easy to maintain accommodation at affordable prices and rents

## **Case Study: Site Viability Study**

### **Organisation: Shropshire Council**

During the current economic difficulties, developers have found that the financial viability of their sites has fundamentally changed, due to the falling values of what they were planning to build and sell against what they have previously paid for the land.

The Government's response to this national issue, was to make funding available through the Homes and Communities Agency "Kickstart" programme, a scheme to assist developers to bring forward currently unviable, stalled housing schemes.

Following the first funding round, one site in Shropshire received funding and a further 2 sites have gone forward for consideration in a second funding round.

Not all developers can take advantage of this opportunity, nor would there be sufficient funding to satisfy all, consequently Shropshire Council is facing an upsurge of applications from developers to re-assess the financial viability of their sites and then consider varying the planning obligation that impacts most on viability, the provision of affordable homes.

Shropshire Council is well aware of these financial pressures and has commissioned site viability studies to help inform and develop the emerging Core Strategy policies and to assist the Housing Enabling and Implementation team to re-appraise several large stalled sites throughout Shropshire. Officers have attended seminars and training which the Valuation Services Agency (District Valuers) is currently offering Local Authorities to help understand the complexities of these requests and we are investing in specialist site appraisal software used by LA's, Registered Social Landlords and developers to calculate site viability. Furthermore, Shropshire Council employed a specialist consultant to appraise a number of larger stalled strategic housing sites in order to provide a view on negotiating with developers to bring schemes forward.

Some sites have been able to progress by changing the tenure of the affordable homes because extra funding was made available by the HCA to convert un-mortgageable shared ownership or discounted low cost homes to social rented. Funding also existed to purchase unsold market housing off sites. However these funding opportunities are now exhausted, and with the viability of all sites fundamentally affected, requests to provide lower levels or no affordable housing are routine.

Councils have to consider carefully the strategic merits of each application and balance the tensions between a reduction in much needed affordable homes against the wider economic benefits that work on site brings to a locality.

## Case Study: Flax Mill Regeneration, Shrewsbury

**Organisation: Shropshire Council and a range of partner agencies**



The Ditherington Flax Mill site in Shrewsbury is home to an internationally important group of listed buildings, acquired by English Heritage in 2005 with financial assistance from Advantage West Midlands. The buildings are considered to be one of most significant monuments of the industrial revolution. The now disused Shrewsbury and Newport Canal also runs through the site and has potential for development which will significantly enhance the environment. Together with adjacent sites it represents a major catalyst in the regeneration of Shrewsbury's 'Northern Corridor'.

The Flax Mill was built in 1796, as the first completely iron framed structure in the world, providing inspiration to the engineers and architects who designed iron and steel framed buildings all over the world for the next two centuries.

The re-development of the site, which will start in 2011, will utilise brownfield land and re-develop the historically important derelict buildings to provide new employment and educational space and potentially new homes as well as stimulating urban renaissance in the wider area. Specifically, the development will act as a catalyst for business and job growth and social regeneration within an area of urban deprivation, with a targeted approach to support local people into these local opportunities and support the long-term future of this internationally important building.

## Summary of actions

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Bring forward new Statutory Planning Policies on Affordable Housing	Local Development Framework Core Strategy policies adopted by March 2011	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The Core Strategy (policy CS11) is on track and due to be adopted in March 2011</p> <p>This will be supplemented by the Supplementary Planning Document for the type and affordability of housing, which will also be produced by March 2011</p>	
Bring forward Shropshire-wide Interim Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2009	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>Interim Planning Guidance has been produced and Shropshire Council's Enabling and development sites are coming forward</p>	
Increase the supply of affordable homes by bringing empty properties back into use through publicity and grant-aid	Annual target will be determined through the Empty Property Strategy	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The Empty Property Strategy is currently under consultation and the Council can offer grants of up to £20,000 to lease properties. Initial discussions with RSLs indicate interest in taking this forward.</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
<p>Increase the supply of affordable homes bringing empty space above shops back into use, through publicity and joint-working on existing and potential future grant schemes</p>	<p>Numbers to be determined per annum</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>An Empty Property Strategy is in the course of production and will establish targets in this regard. The strategy is expected to be available as a consultation document by Summer 2010 and adopted by autumn 2010. The strategy will incorporate proposals regarding the use of vacant homes as well as activity in respect of underutilised commercial space including space above shops</p> <p>All properties are considered within the overarching empty homes target.</p> <p>Options for funding are being reviewed under specific Living Over the Shop (LOTS) schemes.</p> <p>Work is ongoing with Planning colleagues relating to change of use policies.</p> <p>The Housing Assistance Policy provides for a range of assistance to encourage the re-use of empty property. This is ongoing and during 2009/10 it is anticipated that 20 units of accommodation will have been brought back into use by this route, the majority of which will be let at affordable rents for a 5 year period.</p> <p>In addition, the Private Sector Housing Renewal Team are actively involved in encouraging the reoccupation of a further 25 properties, with the intention that this activity rises over time.</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Identify and promote “development-ready” rural exception sites in locations with evidence of need	First phase – 18 months from production of Housing Strategy (October 2010) to deliver 10 development ready sites	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>This is now underway and 4 sites have been brought to planning permission stage</p> <p>A total of 130 sites have been reviewed and there are currently 25 possible sites to take forward</p>	
Analyse Shropshire Council land holdings for the potential of developing affordable housing	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Success measured by number of sites brought forward</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>This is an on-going process and is considered when land becomes available. A meeting is held fortnightly between the Housing Enabling and Implementation Team and Property Services to review sites</p>	
Provide for a range of house types, sizes and tenures in order to balance the housing market within Shropshire	<p>Development Plan Documents to be adopted by March 2012</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Further elaboration of Core Strategy Policy CS11 will occur through a supplementary planning document on the type and affordability of housing</p>	
<p>Develop staff expertise in the delivery of affordable housing by additional training covering:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Negotiation skills</li> <li>2. Understanding the development process and finance for private sector and social housing</li> <li>3. Viability Assessments</li> </ol>	<p>Annual training targets to be established for relevant Shropshire Council team members</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Training in 2) and 3) has taken place. Currently assessing suitable courses for inexperienced staff in 1)</p>	
Improve and maintain rural affordable housing needs information	<p>As the need requires</p> <p>Success measured by: the robustness of the information base to support exception sites and policy review</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>This is ongoing and related to when parish needs surveys are undertaken and parish meetings held. The Local Housing Market Assessments also feed in to knowledge.</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
<p>Use statutory powers to deliver affordable housing, including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compulsory Purchase Orders where necessary to bring forward suitable development sites</li> </ul> <p>ii) Action under the Housing Act 2004 where necessary in relation to empty and category 1 Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS) properties</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Success measured by:</p> <p>Number of sites brought forward for development through Compulsory Purchase Orders</p> <p>Number of empty properties brought forward as affordable housing</p> <p>Number of poor quality private rented units improved</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>i) Two sites are currently being considered</p> <p>ii) This fulfils statutory duties. The Council provides a responsive service to people who bring unsatisfactory properties to the Council's attention</p>	
<p>Investigate bringing forward affordable housing, including Purchase and Repair Schemes including Rural Rehabilitation schemes</p>	<p>Viability Study report date September 2009</p> <p>Success measured by:</p> <p>The level of supply of a range of affordable homes throughout the Shropshire area</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>Shropshire Council are currently looking at 5-15 units through the HCA to buy properties at bottom end prices and often in low value areas.</p> <p>Funding for purchase of Existing Satisfactory Dwellings (ESDs) has stopped.</p>	
<p>Use a rural housing enabling approach to the delivery of rural exception sites</p>	<p>As required</p> <p>Success measured by:</p> <p>The assembly of rural exception sites to meet identified local need</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>An officer was recruited on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009 to undertake this work</p>	



<b>Action</b>	<b>Original target</b>	<b>Comments</b>	
<p>Continue partnership work with planning officers, financial institutions, property professionals and other key housing market stakeholders</p>	<p>Annual review</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>There have been 2 meetings with lenders and Independent Financial Advisors and we are continuing work with Bath Building Society to develop mortgage package on single plot exception sites</p> <p>An Annual Housing Market Review Panel has been established linked to the Strategic Housing Land Availability</p>	

			Assessment. This includes a developer's panel, providing input into the review of affordable housing policies.	
Operate Registered Social Landlord liaison groups	Quarterly development meetings		<b>Target amended</b>  Further to discussions with RSLs, the number of meetings per year has reduced to 2. This will be regularly reviewed	
Work in partnership with local Registered Social Landlords and developers to establish an affordable housing programme	On-going with annual review. Successes measured by: The provision of an up to date forward programme of a portfolio of schemes and initiatives		<b>Ongoing</b>  Key targets are measured  LPSA – 100 completed NI555 – 270  230 sites 2,400  affordable homes	
Collaborate with sub-regional colleagues on improving the	On-going with annual review		<b>Ongoing</b>  There have been recent numerous examples of sub-	



<p>understanding of housing markets, on commissioning research and sharing best practice</p>		<p>regional working including the development of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment</li><li>• Strategic Housing Market Assessment</li></ul> <p>Through the establishment of the West Housing Market Area Partnership, we will be further developing sub-regional working which will include the production of the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy in 2011</p>	
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## **Policy area 2. Decent Homes in the Private Sector**

### **Overview of the policy area**

The priority focuses on the Government's "decent homes" target to reduce the proportion of vulnerable households living in non-decent housing. The Housing Strategy recognises that there are currently around 6,400 such households within Shropshire Council's area and makes a commitment to focus financial assistance on the Government backed "Kick start" programme, "Keep Shropshire Warm" energy efficiency measures, a suite of incentive grants and ultimately enforcement. Additionally, the Strategy makes a commitment to work closely with private landlords to tackle the worst housing conditions and to reduce the number of long-term empty homes.

### **Key achievements**

Key achievements include:

- Over 6,000 households have benefitted from the Keep Shropshire Warm initiative since Autumn 2007. Local Area Agreement funding has been secured during 2009/10 to increase capacity and provide a more consistent and timely service in relation to energy advice and insulation measures
- Shropshire Council became members of the West Midlands Kick Start Partnership. The Partnership assists home owners on low incomes with advice; surveys; access to approved contractors and low-cost financial assistance or equity release in order to undertake works such as repairing and/ or replacing leaking roofs; old kitchens and bathrooms in order to bring homes up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard. This service was made available from April 2009 and first loan offers were made in late Autumn 2009
- Home Improvement Agency services have been re-tendered for a period of 5 years from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010, enabling certainty in the provision of the service
- The Private Sector Housing Team has been established as the single point of contact for the Disabled Facilities Grant approval process and there is now a common approach to approvals wherever possible
- Streamlined quarterly Home Improvement Agency Steering group meetings are now in place
- New and improved working arrangements have been set up with a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) Housing Association partners to improve performance.

## **Key challenges and priorities for the next 12 months**

- The development of an Empty Homes Strategy (by July 2010)
- The development of a Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO) policy which will be incorporated into the Private Sector Renewal Strategy in late 2010
- There has been continued support for programmes to improve insulation and increase energy efficiency through Keep Shropshire Warm. In total £105,000 has been secured through LAA reward funding for this programme. Additionally, Shropshire Council are one of three Authorities nationally to be involved in a major study of fuel poverty with 2,500 Shropshire households being engaged.
- Work will continue to address the housing and related needs of vulnerable households
- The Private Sector Housing team will continue to provide a responsive service to people who bring unsatisfactory housing conditions (empty and Category 1 Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to the team under Housing Act 2004 powers.

**Case Study: Home Improvement Agency – ‘Staying Put’  
Organisation: Shropshire Council and Anchor**



Shropshire Council's partner Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Anchor Staying Put, was created in 2000, primarily to provide a core service to support those wishing to complete adaptations through a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The Agency has in recent years provided a more traditional agency repair service including a handyperson.

The Agency was launched following the award of Government funding and was in addition, from the outset, supported financially on an annual basis by the County Council, the Primary Care Trust and each of the five previous Districts and Borough Councils. This annual support from Government and partners has been supplemented by a similar but significantly fluctuating sum provided on an annual basis through agency fees levied in connection with each and every DFG award.

Work in preparation for the creation of Shropshire Council identified that and changes to the HIA contract would need to address a number of factors, including the requirement for:

- More secure and consistent levels of HIA remuneration over an extended contract period to support further growth of the service;
- An improved level of HIA response and more rapid completion times for DFG applicants;
- The incorporation of the Council's Kick Start loan and equity release service and an expanded Handy person service.

In order to address these issues a revised specification for the three elements of the HIA service were produced. The specification for DFG delivery provides for no further individual fee awards, with funding for this purpose being replaced by an increase in the core contract sum.

The procurement and tendering process was completed during Autumn 2009 and resulted in a new contract being awarded to Anchor Trust who demonstrated that their previous experience in delivery of HIA services in Shropshire provided a firm basis to provide the new specification.

As HIA fees will no longer be awarded in relation to individual DFGs for new cases after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010, the HIA will be receiving a more consistent level of funding and be able to develop a business plan incorporating a greater level of certainty. A greater number of customers are likely to use the Agency as fees will no longer adversely affect access to maximum levels of the DFG and not restrict the amount of grant funding available to actually carry out work. This represents a major step forward in securing HIA services for the future

For more information please contact Anchor Staying Put Shropshire on 01743 354978

## Action plan summary

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Development of a Private Sector Renewal (PSR) Strategy	By May 2010	<p><b>Action amended</b></p> <p>It is proposed to produce a consolidated PSR strategy which will incorporate chapters on Empty Homes, Affordable Warmth, Houses in Multiple Occupation, Financial Assistance, Enforcement and Immigration – This has been delayed and a consultation draft is expected to be available by late 2010</p>	<p>31<sup>st</sup> December 2010 for consultation draft</p>
Develop an Empty Property Strategy	July 2010	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>An Empty Property Strategy is in the course of production. The strategy is expected to be available as a consultation document by spring 2010 and adopted by autumn 2010. The strategy will incorporate proposals regarding the use of vacant homes as well as activity in respect of underutilised commercial space including space above shops</p>	.

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Review Disabled Facilities Grant	March 2010	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>As part of this, a number of significant changes have been made to improve service delivery, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-tendering Home Improvement Agency services for a period of 5 years from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010</li> <li>• Providing a single contract with Anchor Trust as provider</li> <li>• Establishing the Private Sector Housing team as a single point of contact for DFG approval process</li> <li>• Establishing a common approach to the DFG process where possible</li> <li>• Making consistent levels of funding made available</li> <li>• Introducing a single local indicator to determine all DFGs within 10 working days of receipt of all necessary documentation.</li> <li>• Providing a common countywide approach to Occupational Therapy liaison meetings has been adopted and is replicated on a North, Central and South basis.</li> <li>• Ensuring a streamlined quarterly Home Improvement Agency Steering Group meeting involving five partners and Anchor.</li> <li>• Setting up new working arrangements set up with Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) Housing Association partners</li> <li>• Establishing a single countywide Adaptations Stakeholders Meeting</li> </ul>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Provision of a loans, equity release and advice service	April 2009	<p><b>Completed/ Ongoing</b></p> <p>The initiative was operational from 2009 and there will be further expansion of the scheme in 2010. The key outcomes of this are:</p> <p>Shropshire Council became members of the West Midlands Kick Start Partnership. The Partnership assists home owners on low incomes with advice; surveys; access to approved contractors and low-cost financial assistance or equity release in order to undertake works such as repairing and/ or replacing leaking roofs; old kitchens and bathrooms in order to bring homes up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard. This service was made available from April 2009 and first loan offers were made in late Autumn 2009.</p> <p>There will be further expansion of the service during 2010.</p>	
Ensure long term future of Home Improvement Agency services in Shropshire	August 2010	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency services reviewed with partners</li> <li>• Agency services re-specified incorporating an improved Adaptations Service, Kick Start loan and equity release services and an expanded Handyperson Service</li> <li>• Home Improvement Agency services re-tendered for a period of 5 years from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010</li> <li>• Single contract with Anchor Trust as provider.</li> </ul>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Develop a Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Policy	Target date not originally set	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>A target completion date was not originally set within the Housing Strategy.</p>	The HMO policy will be included within the overarching Private Sector Renewal Strategy at the end of 2010
Continuing support for promoting programmes to improve insulation and increase energy efficiency through Keep Shropshire Warm	On-going	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Over 6,000 households have benefitted from the Keep Shropshire Warm initiative since Autumn 2007. Local Area Agreement funding has been secured during 2009/10 to increase capacity and provide a more consistent and timely service in relation to energy advice and insulation measures.</p>	

## **Policy area 3. Decent Homes in the Social Sector**

### **Overview of the policy area**

The focus of this priority is to achieve the Government's "Decent Homes" target for social housing. The Decent Homes Programme, which was introduced in 2000 and is now overseen by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), aimed to improve the condition of homes for social housing tenants and to reach the 'decency' standard by 2010.

### **Key challenges and priorities for the next 12 months**

The standard covers social housing managed by both the Council and by other social landlords. At the time of the production of the Housing Strategy, the Council owned 4,300 homes in Oswestry and Bridgnorth and there were a further 13,000 homes owned by 21 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) throughout Shropshire.

Whilst the Housing Strategy recognised the difficulties in achieving the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, the extent of the level of non-decency was not fully evaluated at that time. A survey of Council managed homes in Shropshire by Savills, which was completed in April 2009, revealed that 29.2% of the stock did not meet the Government's Decent Homes standard. This figure presented a far higher level of non-decency than previously estimated and presents real challenges for the Council's landlord function. It is estimated that the total cost of repairs and maintenance, and improvements needed to achieve and maintain the Decent Homes Standard will be £182m (at today's price) over a 30-year period from 2009/10, with a higher average spend required in the initial 5-years to address the current backlog.

The findings of the Stock Condition Survey have prompted a re-evaluation of the planned programme of works. The programme for 2009/10 was redrafted to focus on provision of heating and structural works; a 'Warm and Weathertight' programme in order to address the priorities identified in the Affordable Warmth Framework and this refocus was agreed with tenants.

The focus on the Warm and Weathertight programme will significantly reduce energy bills for our tenants and therefore help to reduce fuel poverty. The most significant consequence of fuel poverty is the effect that this has on people's health and well-being. In the UK Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001, the Government defines households as being fuel poor if,

*'The household needs to spend more than 10% of its income on all fuel use and to heat the home to an adequate standard of warmth'*

Fuel poverty disproportionately affects specific groups of people, most notably older people, lone parents, disabled people and those who are long-term sick.

One of the root causes of fuel poverty is the existence of dwellings with poor energy efficiency. Landlord Services measures a dwelling's energy efficiency by using the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating. A SAP (2001) rating is generated from an energy audit of an individual dwelling and is a numerical indication on a scale of 0 (very inefficient) to 120 (very efficient) of the energy efficiency of that dwelling. It reflects, amongst other things, the heating and insulation standards, but not household income. A key focus of the Council's approach will be to prioritise dwellings with a SAP rating below 50.

The funding available through the Housing Revenue Account Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) and existing revenue budgets is insufficient to fund all the work required to meet the minimum standard and additional capital expenditure is required. The Council has demonstrated support to the service by allocating £4.2 million of capital finance over and above the finance available through the MRA and other revenue budgets. We have developed a framework that will help us to improve our focus on value for money. This, together with receiving receipts from sales of some Council housing assets means that although there is a projected shortfall in Decent Homes spending of £1 million, it is likely that this standard can be achieved. However, it will not be possible to achieve this by the end of 2010 and the target for 2010/11 is 20%. Also, the Council is likely to be unable to afford to go beyond the Decent Homes Standard, which is an aspiration of the Council and the Council's tenants.

This means that whilst there are proposals to change the financing arrangements in the future, it is necessary to also consider alternative arrangements for the future of the Council's housing stock in order to try to achieve these aspirations.

With regard to RSL dwellings, the level of non-decency reported at 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2009<sup>1</sup> in Shropshire was 672 units.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulatory and Statistical Return 2009

## Case Study: Aids and Adaptations

### Organisation: Shropshire Council

Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 Landlord Services have been working closely with colleagues in the Occupational Therapy Teams to improve the service that is delivered to our tenants. We have improved the way that we communicate with regular monthly update meetings between the teams. We regularly met with our tenants to update them as how we are changing the delivery of our service to ask for their views through the Shropshire United Residents' Executive (SURE) and through supported schemes.

We have an Aids and Adaptations policy that has been approved by SURE and has been through the Equality Impact and Needs Assessment process. This sets us agreed timescales to deliver adaptations. We will continue to report our performance both corporately and to SURE.

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 to date we have completed the following "major" adaptations within our stock:



Level Access Showers	140
Overbath Showers	9
Major ramps and improvements to access	17
Stairlifts	15

We are in the process of market testing the delivery of major adaptations (those over £1000) and continue to use our direct labour teams to delivery minor adaptations (those under £1000). We monitor our customer satisfaction and currently have a satisfied or very satisfied response from our customers of over 85%

## Action plan summary

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Incorporate energy efficiency measures into Decent Homes programme for Council housing	Not stated	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Energy Efficiency: An Affordable Warmth policy has been developed to address all homes below a SAP rating of 50. This forms a key element in the Decent Homes programme of ensuring that homes are Warm and Weathertight.</p>	
Develop a private sector renewal policy	2010	<p><b>Deleted as the action is a repetition</b></p> <p>This action is repeated in the section "Decent Homes in the Private Sector" so has been removed from this section</p>	<b>Deleted from this section</b>
Achieve Decent Homes in the social sector	2010	<p><b>Target not met</b></p> <p>The target date of 2010 will not be met.</p> <p>In order to gain a thorough understanding of the extent of non-decency, Landlord Services carried out a comprehensive (50%) survey of homes, through Savills, who are a nationally recognised leader in this area of work. The survey found that there was 29.2% non-decency of houses within the survey. To address this issue we are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the maximum repairs allowance to undertake Decent Homes work</li> <li>• Working with tenants to identify priority issues</li> <li>• Tendered planned maintenance work to increase value for money</li> <li>• Exploring other ways to increase the efficiency of the service to allow further funds to be made available for Decent Homes work</li> <li>• Seeking to earmark additional funding through sales of HRA assets to fund Decent Homes work</li> </ul> <p>It will also be necessary to consider longer term options for the Council's stock.</p>	Work continuing to assess opportunities to meet the Decent Homes Standard

## **Policy area 4. Vulnerable Households**

### **Overview of the policy area**

This priority focuses on meeting the diverse range of housing needs in our communities, with particular concern for vulnerable people and those who may be excluded from access to suitable housing. This includes people who are in need of tenancy support due to a variety of reasons.

### **Key achievements and priorities**

- The completion of comprehensive needs analysis of vulnerable people was completed and delivered in February 2009. The analysis has informed the development of the Commissioning Framework for Supporting People.
- The commencement of the Service reconfiguration for Supporting People
- The Supporting People VRON (Virtual Referrals and Outcomes Network) has been implemented which coordinates referrals and captures data on demographics and outcomes to assist with future needs analysis for Supporting People services.

The majority of housing related support for vulnerable people is commissioned through the Commissioning and Partnerships team through the Supporting People Programme. Overall, the service is well regarded by people who use the service, with the latest survey of users in 2009 showing that 99.5% were happy with the support service and 98% stating that their life would be worse if they did not receive the service.

The priorities for the Supporting People Programme in Shropshire are driven by the needs analysis delivered in early 2009 and informed by users of the service. The Service User Involvement Strategy details how our Service User Panel believes they should be involved at all levels of the Supporting People programme. As part of the strategy, Shropshire Council has a dedicated Service User Involvement Coordinator who helps all Service Users who want to access events and activities so that they can fully participate in the Supporting People programme.

We are however, facing very challenging times relating to the funding of support services. In April 2009, the Supporting People ring-fenced funding was removed with Councils now able to have flexibility in how they utilise this funding. It is therefore necessary to ensure that funding available to assist vulnerable people is utilised effectively.

One of the major challenges over the next few years will be the increase in older people living in Shropshire. Between now and 2030, the proportion of people over the age of 65 is expected to increase from 20% to 30%. Consequently, we know that the pressures on services for this client group will increase. It is therefore necessary to ensure that we have a thorough understanding of how to meet this challenge. In response to this, over the next 12 months we are undertaking extensive work to gain an improved understanding of the housing and support needs of older people. This includes commissioning a consultant to undertake a major study of the health, housing and support needs of people over the next 20 years and through the Supporting People Review of Older Peoples' Services which will define the future role for housing support services for older people, the links with other services (including adult social care) and the structure for services which will achieve the best outcomes for older people over the next 5-10 years.

Key achievements of the Service User Panel over the last year include:

- undertaking mystery shopping exercises to evaluate the quality of services
- peer and service reviews have been undertaken
- customers are now included on planning and strategy groups, giving them real influence on how services are delivered
- a wider group of people are now included in the Service User Panel, including people with aspergers and tourettes
- a new project for ex-offenders has been designed
- the group now attracts more people to meetings

The group's key priorities for the next 12 months include:

- the establishment of a group for young people
- lobbying for a domestic violence service for men in Shropshire
- challenging the future role of sheltered housing in Shropshire
- protecting Supporting People funds now that the funding ring fence has been removed nationally
- reducing the stigma for people with vulnerabilities including through publicity, displays and presentations
- improving access to services and increasing publicity

The Supporting People Service commissions providers to deliver practical help to a range of people – examples of this include:

### **Case Study: Women's Refuge**

This service provides short-term accommodation and support to women escaping domestic violence, with clients coming from anywhere in the country. It can accept a maximum of 10 women, with or without children.

Ms X and her 2 children arrived at the refuge in a police car. Her belongings comprised of 2 black bin bags, mostly containing basic items for her children. She had fled her home from her husband and the father of her children. She was bruised and frightened. The Refuge spent several hours with Ms X as she was upset and confused and ensured that she was settled and there was food for the children. This lady had been so verbally, physically, psychologically and financially abused that it had affected the way she spoke. She was nervous, anxious and traumatised. She had not had access to any money and had not been allowed to pay bills, do the shopping or make a phone call. When the Refuge applied for benefits for her in her own right she was surprised to find she could claim for a range of benefits that she had been previously unaware of. Within a few weeks she was budgeting, buying clothes for both the children and herself. Within weeks she was organising her finances, buying a few luxury items for the family and saving a few pounds each week in readiness for their future. Nine months after arriving at the refuge they were re-housed in another area.

## **Case Study: Upton Lane, Shrewsbury (supported accommodation for people with mental health issues)**

### **Organisation: Bromford Housing Group**

This service provides accommodation and support to people with Mental Health problems for up to 2 years, in Shrewsbury. It has 7 units of accommodation.

For X, the road to living independently has not been easy. After leaving the family home in early twenties, X moved to a high care environment, before securing a two year tenancy in one of our supported housing mental health schemes. "I finally had my own place with the support I needed. That's when I really started to live independently. X support worker has seen a massive change over the past two years; "X is a completely different person now. X has gone from needing lots of support to being inspired. X is so positive about the sense of community X believes the scheme offers that X approached Bromford with the idea to film a documentary about the lives and experiences of the residents. X has been busy filming and interviewing fellow residents; many more have approached X asking to take part. The sense of community speaks for itself and residents are enjoying putting forward ideas and sharing their experiences. "I wanted people to understand what living in a scheme like this can mean to people who, for whatever reason, might have been ill and need support. X believes that mental health schemes are often misunderstood and wants to use this DVD to celebrate the best of the support service.

## **Case Study: Ludlow Foyer**

### **Organisation: Shropshire Housing Association**

This service provides accommodation and support to young people in Ludlow for up to 2 years. The service has 15 units of support, and requires that service users engage in training or education during their stay.

X originally came to the Foyer when only 16. X was a perpetual petty criminal and drug user, with a fragmented family background and history of violence and anger management issues. He was evicted for non engagement and returned to the Foyer twice. After a further spell of staying with friends and drifting, he came back to the Foyer earlier this year aged 18 and this time has stuck to the training programmes, kept to his licence agreement, and, despite having been rejected once, has re-applied and is now studying multi-media at college and is planning to go to University in 2010.

## Summary of actions

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Commission and develop a comprehensive Supporting People Needs Assessment	April 2009 with on-going review	<b>Completed</b> The Needs Assessment was completed in February 2009 and is available on the Council's website. The Assessment has informed the development of a Commissioning Framework for Supporting People.	
Commission and develop an Accommodation Strategy for Older People	June 2009 with ongoing review	<b>Target date missed</b> An Accommodation Review was not completed by June 2009. However, Shropshire Council is currently working with partners to bolster evidence relating to the needs of older people and plans to undertake an Older Person's Housing Study in 2010.	Older Person's Housing Study to be produced by end of 2010
Analyse information flowing from other relevant services, strategies and policies to enhance the information base	July 2009 with ongoing review	<b>Completed</b> The needs assessment was delivered in February 2009 and incorporated information from current linked strategies and stakeholder consultation.  Service reconfiguration for Supporting People is under way and ongoing – specific sector reviews are informed by wider strategies.  The Supporting People VRON (Virtual Referrals and Outcomes Network) captures data to assist with future needs analysis for Supporting People services.	
Use the above to underpin future strategic decisions through production of updated Commissioning Statements in relation to housing and support services for vulnerable people	September 2009 with on-going review	<b>Completed</b> The Supporting People commissioning Framework 2009 – 2011 was adopted following completion of the needs assessment	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
<p>Implement the Supporting People Strategy 2005-10.</p> <p>Use updated information base to research and formulate new Supporting People Strategy from 2010</p>	2010	<p><b>Ongoing – completion date of new Support People Strategy extended</b></p> <p>Original target date for completion of the Supporting People Strategy amended from 2010 to 2011 with the 2005-10 strategy being extended for 1 year</p>	By end of 2011
<p>Implement the Homelessness Strategy 2008-09.</p> <p>Use updated evidence base to research and formulate new strategy from July 2009</p>	On going through 2009-11	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>New Homelessness Strategy due to be produced by end of 2010</p>	
<p>Implement the Housing Renewal, Grant Assistance, 'Kickstart' and Affordable Warmth policies. Use updated evidence base to inform the targeting of policies</p>	On-going through 2009-11	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>This is an on-going function. The service continues to implement the named policies</p>	
<p>Increase the capacity of existing housing related support services where the information base identifies clear gaps in current provision and where funding is available</p>	On-going through 2009-11	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Work is ongoing to seek opportunities for joint funding to increase the effectiveness and value for money of Supporting People services</p>	
<p>Commission new housing related support services where the information base identifies clear gaps in current provision and where funding is available</p>	On-going through 2009-11	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>This is an ongoing action. Service reconfiguration work is addressing any imbalance in current services</p>	
<p>Commission new supported housing where the information base identifies clear gaps in current provision and funding is available</p>	On-going through 2009-11	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>This is an ongoing action. Service reconfiguration work is addressing any imbalance in current services</p>	

## **Policy area 5. Gypsies and Travellers**

### **Overview of the policy area**

This priority focuses on meeting the housing and support needs of Gypsies and Travellers and in particular implementing the recommendations of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) with regard to the further provision of sites.

The recommendations contained within the GTAA for site provision in Shropshire were considered as part of the development of the Interim Regional Spatial Strategy Policy Statement relating to the provision of new accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, which was produced in March 2010. The document has established clear targets for future provision in Shropshire as follows:

- 93 permanent pitches for Gypsies and Travellers by 2017, of which 63 should be provided by 2012. Of these, 12 have been provided to date.
- 20 transit pitches should be provided by 2017
- 9 show people plots should be provided within the area of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford by 2012

### **Key achievements**

- In order to improve co-ordination at a wide geographical level, a Sub-Regional Gypsy and Traveller Group has now been established. The group consists of representatives from Shropshire; Herefordshire; Telford and Wrekin and Powys Councils. The group meets 4 times per year and discusses a range of issues relating to Gypsies and Travellers. Recently, the group has been responsible for the commissioning of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, which has provided a thorough assessment of need for Gypsies and Travellers throughout the 4 Authority areas.
- There is a strong commitment to delivering high quality management of Gypsy and Traveller sites within Shropshire. This is reflected through the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) on the standard of management on Gypsy and Traveller sites rising from C to B level.
- During the period 2008 to 2010, an additional 12 pitches were provided.

## Case Study: Life in a Box project



Funding was obtained from staff at Mythstories Story-telling Museum in Wem to work with a group of Traveller children to produce four wooden boxes into which the children would place artefacts to support recordings of stories of the lives of different Travellers.

This project followed on from a previous one in which Travellers from Manor House Lane site, who were pupils at Thomas Adams School, built, painted and added artefacts to a vardo which is now a permanent display in the museum. The idea was to add the finished boxes to the display and to also be able to take the boxes out to events e.g. 'Rock Against Racism' in Shrewsbury in June

It was decided to invite some of the home educated children from Park Hall site to join the project to enable more people to get involved and learn about Travellers' crafts, skills and history. Parents of three children from Oswestry agreed to transport them to Wem and school staff and the Advisory Teacher for Travelling Children in Shropshire transported four Thomas Adams pupils.

The children visited the Archives in Shrewsbury as part of the project where they were shown round the archives by archive staff and were able to look at a wide range of Traveller archive materials. The Advisory Teacher and Assistant Gypsy Liaison Officer transported the children to this and were met there by staff from the story-telling museum. They were able to gather information and photographs to help with work on their boxes.

Work on the boxes took place at the Story-telling museum over 10 weeks. A Gypsy carpenter helped the children to build the boxes and various artefacts e.g. baskets and flowers to put into some of the boxes.

A Gypsy artist worked with them to paint traditional designs and horses on the boxes, teaching them the techniques to use and helping them to produce fantastic results. Story-tellers from the museum helped with the planning, preparation, telling and recording of stories, 4 of them in total, one for each box.

The librarian from the archives attended each session and helped the children to ask their grandparents and parents about their lives and Travellers' lives in the past. She also spoke with parents and grandparents and found relevant materials from the archives to put into the boxes. The Advisory Teacher and staff from Thomas Adams attended sessions to help in whatever ways they could and the Assistant Gypsy Liaison Officer attended several sessions and helped out.

When the boxes had been completed families from both sites were invited to the 'Grand Opening' of the display and so many people from Park Hall site wanted to attend that a bus from 'Transport to Art' was provided to transport them to the museum. The display was opened by the Co-ordinator of West Midlands Consortium Services for Travelling Children, School and Families and was a great success.

The four, beautifully decorated boxes, telling four very different stories, will now help visitors to the museum and to events such as 'Rock Against Racism' to have a greater understanding of Travellers and their history, lifestyle and culture

### **Key challenges and priorities for the next 12 months**

In order to meet these challenging targets stated previously, it is necessary to ensure that focus is given to maximising every opportunity to identify suitable sites and that resources are sought from funding partners such as the HCA. The HCA have made a clear statement that there is an expectation on Local Authorities and key partners to ensure that every effort is made to achieve these targets.

In response to this, Shropshire Council will be undertaking a range of measures to ensure that these challenges are met. This includes:

- A range of events are being planned for Councillors both within Shropshire and throughout the West Midlands region to improve the understanding of Gypsy and Traveller issues.
- Identifying 101 pitches (around 8 sites on the assumption of 12-13 pitches per site) and one showperson's site through the site allocations and Management of Development Planning Document.

## Action plan summary:

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Set up Sub-Regional Gypsy and Travellers Group	Sub-Regional group to be set up and meeting regularly	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>The Sub-Regional Gypsy and Traveller Group has been established and meets every 3 months. Representation includes Shropshire, Herefordshire, Telford and Wrekin and Powys Councils, the Police, the Homes and Communities Agency and West Midlands Regional Assembly (which is being replaced by alternative regional representation following 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010)</p>	
Respond to the interim regional statement that indicates a need for an additional 120 pitches in the period 2006 to 2011 in the West Housing Market Area.	April 2009	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Shropshire Council is preparing a Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDEV) Plan Document which will identify potential sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, therefore, this target is ongoing beyond April 2009</p>	
Set up specific cross border / cross agency Gypsy and Traveller action plan	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2009	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>A sub-regional group has been set up with Telford and Wrekin</p> <p>When looking at Gypsy and Traveller sites, the whole of the Shropshire area is considered by HCA including Telford and Wrekin.</p> <p>No specific action plan has been developed</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Identify and allocate sites in the Local Development Framework	2012	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>In total, 93 permanent pitches and 20 transit pitches will be delivered through the Local Development Framework (LDF) process</p> <p>To date, 12 pitches have been provided</p> <p>Through the LDF process, Shropshire Council has issued a 'call for sites' linked to the preparation of Allocation and Management of Development (SAMDEV) DPD</p>	
Develop a range of options to bring forward sites	2012	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The Estates Team is exploring options for improving the Council's provision including Council owned sites where there is capacity to do so. Planning applications are being made where appropriate.</p>	
Consult with stakeholders on design and delivery of sites.	On-going	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Shropshire Council's Communities and Housing Policy Team and Estates Team take good practice as well as stakeholder consultation into account in the planning application and site design process.</p>	
Work with Registered Social Landlords to put in bids to the Homes and Communities Agency	On-going	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Every reasonable opportunity will be considered to utilise HCA funding to provide additional pitches in order to meet the requirements outlined in the Regional Spatial Strategy</p>	
Adopt a single consistent definition of Gypsies and Travellers based on the 'Housing' definition	April 2009	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>A single definition is now used</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Existing and new policies to undergo an Equality Impact Assessment with specific regard to Gypsies and Travellers	On-going	<b>Ongoing</b> There is an ongoing programme of production of Equality Impact and Needs Assessments by Shropshire Council. Gypsy and Traveller issues will be considered as part of these.	
Develop new forms for a more in depth caravan count	April 2009	<b>Completed</b> The Shropshire Council Gypsy Liaison Team has developed a count form which includes number of people as well as simply pitches.	
Carry out Caravan Counts, monitor and report on results	On-going	<b>Ongoing</b> Caravan counts take place and are used to inform policy	
Review unauthorised encampments to assess their suitability for planning permission	June 2009	<b>Completed and now ongoing</b> Where possible, unauthorised sites have been encouraged to obtain planning consent, such as the Oakery site in Ludlow.	
Set up monitoring arrangements for reviewing evidence base	On-going	<b>Ongoing</b> The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment covering Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Herefordshire and Powys was undertaken in 2007. This has been used as a basis for pitch requirements	
Carry out review of sites managed by the Council and services provided and benchmark against other providers	December 2009	<b>Completed</b> A review of sites has been undertaken with the intention to submit evidence to move from a Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) level C rating to the higher level B rating – this includes successfully moving Shropshire Council's own services to level B	
Develop a specific site management action plan for sites across the sub-region	April 2010	<b>Completed and ongoing</b> The Communities and Local Government (CLG) Good Practice Guide is utilised to ensure that good practice is considered	

<b>Action</b>	<b>Original target</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>New target (where applicable)</b>
Attend Regional Gypsy and Traveller Reference Group	On-going	<b>Completed</b> Shropshire Council send representation to this group	
Provide resources to enable community representatives to attend regional meetings.	April 2009	<b>Completed</b> The Gypsy Liaison Team have put resources in place to enable community representatives to attend meetings	

## **Policy area 6. Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention**

### **Overview of the policy area**

The Strategy recognises that the most acute form of housing need is homelessness and that the homelessness prevention agenda is vital to helping tackle this issue. A key element of this is the promotion of advice and assistance to help maximise income and reduce housing related debts that threaten settled accommodation.

### **Key achievements**

Over the last 12 months, a number of major achievements have been achieved including:

- A increased focus on homelessness prevention which has resulted in a reduction of homelessness acceptances
- Establishment of a young persons' mediation service which helps to keep the young person in the home environment or keep them there while a planned move takes place
- Establishment of the repossession prevention fund has been set up through £76,000 of funding with Just Credit (credit union) for owner occupiers and Shropshire Housing Alliance for private rented and social housing
- Setting up a contract with Shropshire Housing Alliance for the Homelessness Prevention and Private Sector Accommodation Scheme including (from November 2009). As part of this Shropshire Council provided £60,000 for additional funds for rent in advance and deposits due to contract targets being met
- Re-configuring the membership of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group in order to ensure more appropriate attendees to drive forward the Strategy

### **Key challenges and priorities for the next 12 months**

Following a long period of economic growth, the UK is seemingly only recently starting to move away from a period of recession. A number of factors will contribute to making the next few years a very challenging time for all homelessness services. Whilst rises in unemployment and increased arrears are having an impact on homelessness and poverty, charitable organisations dealing with homeless people are reporting a decline in contributions, which may result in increased pressures on Council services. This, together with likely reductions in public spending means that resources must be used extremely effectively and targeted appropriately.

Shropshire Council is currently working with partners in order to develop a Homelessness Strategy, which will be published in the Summer of 2010. The Homelessness Strategy will focus on a number of key priorities which will include:

- A need to increase the range of housing options and prevention pathways available in all parts of the County
- A need to increase accommodation for single people or to make allowances for the under-occupation of stock
- A need to respond flexibly to the support and housing needs of older households
- A need to increase the provision of affordable housing
- A need to address the requirements of specific vulnerable groups who are likely to experience the broader problems associated with social exclusion, such as rough sleepers and Gypsies and Travellers
- A need to reduce the use of temporary accommodation for homeless families
- A need to facilitate 'move-on' from temporary accommodation and supported housing projects
- A need for Registered Providers to collectively formulate their own homelessness action plans which reflect the priorities contained within the Shropshire Homelessness Strategy

### **Case Study: Shropshire Consortium Homelessness Service**

This is a short-term floating support service to provide support to homeless people in the Shrewsbury area, and is a consortium of 4 services.

X had served in Iraq and after leaving the army had led a chaotic lifestyle resulting in imprisonment and drug use, after which he was homeless. He was then diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He had a child through a relationship which subsequently broke down. The child was involved in Child Protection procedures. He was on probation and was required to do community service. Following support from the service, he now has full responsibility for the child. He receives parental advice from SureStart and has been involved in voluntary work for environmental organisations. He has been supported to maintain his Statutory Orders, and has received support to ensure he has all the benefits he requires and with debts. He is currently being supported to maintain his tenancy and ensure payment of bills.

## Action plan summary:

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Secure the resources and maintain the partnerships necessary to implement current and future Shropshire Homelessness Strategy Action Plans – <i>Also refer to Actions for 'Vulnerable Households'</i>	Ongoing through 2009-2011	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG) has been reconfigured with new membership.</p> <p>HSIG are currently renewing the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan</p>	
Implement the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan through the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group – <i>Also refer to Actions for 'Vulnerable Households'</i>	Ongoing through 2009-2011	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The new homelessness strategy is currently being reviewed and renewed to run to 2011 in line with the Housing Strategy. It anticipated that the strategy will run for 1 year from Summer 2010 to Summer 2011</p>	
Use updated evidence base to research and formulate new Strategy from July 2009 – <i>Also refer to Actions for 'Vulnerable Households'</i>	July 2009	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Completion date for the Homelessness strategy is anticipated to be July 2010</p>	July 2010
Focus on early casework to try and save current accommodation before crisis point is reached	Ongoing through 2009-2011	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Acceptance figures for 2008/09 and 2009/10 show a reduction for the first two quarters as follows:</p> <p>April – June 2008: 80 July – Sept. 2008: 68 Total: 148</p> <p>April – June 2009: 52 July – Sept. 2009: 44 Total: 96</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Provide appropriate housing support and other specialist service interventions to enable people the opportunity to save their current accommodation	Ongoing through 2009-2011	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Mediation for 16-24 year olds in order to address issues in the home with parents/ guardians. This hopes to keep the young person in the home environment or keep them there while a planned move takes place</p> <p>A project has been initiated so that specific co-ordinators work exclusively with 16/17 year olds under threat of homelessness. £90,000 has been secured to extend this project for 12 months</p> <p>The Local Authority repossession prevention fund has been set up through £76,000 of funding with Just Credit (credit union) for owner occupiers and Shropshire Housing Alliance for private rented and social housing</p>	
Ensure that homeless people and those at most risk of homelessness are given sufficient priority on the Housing Register and are not unfairly excluded from the social sector	Ongoing through 2009-2011	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Shropshire Council introduced Choice Based Lettings a new Allocation Policy and scheme on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2009.</p> <p>Move-on from supported housing is currently at 10% (not including Severnside Housing Association).</p> <p>There are regular 'Exclusion and Suspension' meetings for management to discuss those excluded or suspended from the Homepoint register.</p>	
Facilitate 'move-on' from temporary homelessness and specialist Supported Housing schemes into mainstream housing	Ongoing through 2009-2011	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Allocation Policy and Scheme priority for statutory homelessness move on is at 10%, though not all key partners are as yet signed up to the scheme.</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Enable greater access to Private Rented Sector accommodation by increasing Council investment in the Rent Deposit / Rent in Advance Scheme	<p>Launch in April 2009 with a 2 year Service Level Agreement</p> <p>Service will be reviewed quarterly to 2011</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Contract with the Shropshire Housing Alliance for the Homelessness Prevention and Private Sector Accommodation Scheme</p> <p>From November 2009, Shropshire Council provided £60,000 for additional funds for rent in advance and deposits due to contract targets being met</p>	
Increase the delivery of affordable and supported housing for people living in Shropshire	Ongoing through 2009-2011	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>Work is ongoing (see also section 1) to increase the appropriate delivery of affordable and supported housing</p>	

## **Policy area 7. Landlord Services.**

### **Overview of the policy area**

This policy area focuses on providing high quality, cost effective housing services for the Council's owned stock of 4,300 homes in Bridgnorth and Oswestry. Specific actions include measures to ensure that Anti-Social Behaviour is tackled and that tenants are able to influence how services are delivered. A key focus for the service was to respond to the Audit Commission's inspection of Landlord Services in Bridgnorth in December 2008. The inspection assessed the service as "poor with uncertain prospects for improvement". The poor inspection means that the service will be subject to a follow up inspection in 2010. Furthermore, a peer review of Landlord Services in Oswestry in June 2008 also found weaknesses with this service.

An assessment of the service is in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan. Further information on specific priorities for Landlord Services is available in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan which is available at [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

### **Key achievements in the last 12 months**

Over the past 12 months, Shropshire Council has been working to significantly improve Landlord Services in both Bridgnorth and Oswestry and developed an action plan to address the key recommendations in the Audit Commission report. Other actions such as signing up to the Respect Standard and developing a Respect action plan have also been implemented as part of a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan for the service designed to ensure a transformational change for the service. To date, successes in addressing the recommendations of the Audit Commission include:

- Improvements in the way that adaptations for people with disabilities are carried out and monitored and this includes that now, all minor adaptations are carried out within the target time of 28 days. Over 40 major adaptations have been completed since April and the average waiting times for major works to be carried out following notification of the Occupational Health recommendation has been cut in half and is presently 9 months.
- Through a series of Service Review Groups made up of tenants and staff, we have agreed key elements of service delivery and set standards with customers. We have also worked with customers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service that will need to be addressed in future plans. We have agreed the vision for the Landlord Service of 'Great Homes, Strong Communities and Inspiring People' with staff and customers.

We consulted with staff on a Service away-day and with customers at a Housing Fayre and at other events specifically arranged to develop priorities around the vision. This will further help to inform the business planning process.

- Staff skills have been analysed and training programmes developed in order to ensure that tenants receive an effective service. Already a substantial number of staff have been through training in assessing management skills, equality and diversity awareness and safeguarding
- A STATUS survey identified key customer information for some customers. This has been followed up and complemented by surveying all non respondent customers to provide information to us. Information from the survey has been used to develop service delivery tailored to the needs of tenants
- A Lean Review of the repairs and maintenance service has been undertaken. This included looking at addressing the balance between planned and responsive work and aims to identify other service efficiencies
- An extensive suite of performance indicators has been developed and collected using the standards outlined in the corporate Data Quality Strategy. Key performance information has been identified and will be used in benchmarking and in providing information to customers. A Performance Management Framework has been developed and is being used to embed a performance culture within the service
- A new Adaptations policy and procedure has now been completed and embedded into the service
- We have identified the needs of 45% of our customers through customer profiling we working towards a target of 80%
- We have market tested key areas including gas and solid fuel heating annual servicing and maintenance, building materials for the responsive repairs teams, aids and adaptations works, central heating installations, external doors and works to improve energy efficiency
- The introduction of direct debits has been achieved in Bridgnorth and will introduce direct debits to Oswestry in late April 2010 when the two information technology systems will be merged
- The 20/20 review of the service has had to be rescheduled to ensure that we can further involve customers in the process. We have focused on the development of the mystery shopper concept and this will need to be embedded before asking customers if they wish to be involved.

In addition to addressing the recommendations of the Audit Commission, the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) also includes a number of other actions covering all areas of the Landlord Service.

It is anticipated that continued progress will be made, and a further SIP for 2010/11 is being developed that will lead to further service improvements.

- The development of the HRA Business Plan which has been approved by Council Cabinet
- Development of the new Resident Involvement Compact 'Opportunities and Choices' and the Resident Involvement Strategy
- Assessment of the service against the Commission Racial Equality Code of Practice in rented housing
- Development of comprehensive approaches to value for money, performance management and service improvement. This includes developing a further SIP for 2010/11
- Developing of benchmarking against other social landlords using Housemark, which will be used to prioritise services for Service Challenge in 2010/11
- We have achieved Quality Assessment Framework Level B in supported housing, therefore meeting the requirements of the Commissioning and Partnerships team
- We have implemented mystery shopping of our services.

### Case study

#### Case Study: Respect Standard for Social Housing



With the launch of the new Unitary Authority on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, Shropshire Council has taken its commitment to tackle anti-social behaviour one step further by signing up to the Government's 'Respect Standard for Housing'. By signing up to the Standard, Shropshire Council made a clear commitment to deliver good services, prevent anti-social behaviour and create a culture of respect within the communities in which it works. The Council has undertaken a self-assessment of the level, quality and scope of its services and took the findings of this into account in the establishment of an action plan to reduce anti-social behaviour.

The message 'Give respect – Get respect' is at the foundation of the Respect Standard and this is the message that the Council wants every one of its customers to understand. People care when respect is disregarded and too many people still experience anti-social behaviour and feel that little can be done to stop this. Shropshire Council wants this to change and that is why we have signed up to the Respect Standard for Housing in order to demonstrate our dedication to tackling anti-social behaviour in all the areas where tenants and residents are affected.

## Action plan summary:

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
<p>Agree improvement targets, following consultation with tenants, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rent collection</li> <li>- Void turn-around (maintenance element only)</li> <li>- Tenant satisfaction (National Indicator 160)</li> <li>-Responsive repairs</li> </ul> <p>(National Indicator 158 relating to Decent Homes is covered in policy area 2)</p>	<p>Targets to be agreed 31<sup>st</sup> March</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>Significant consultation has been undertaken with tenants to identify key priorities. Targets relating to these priorities are monitored and the Landlord Services Business Plan takes account of these priorities.</p> <p>Further details on this are contained within the Housing Strategy Review document.</p>	
<p>Encourage use of Resident Involvement Team website for conducting discussions and surveys, and giving feedback.</p> <p>Increase use of telephone and text messaging, reducing need to call meetings.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>There has been an increased use of broader techniques to engage with and contact young families including through text messaging</p> <p>Mobile phone photos are being used as part of a survey with young people on estates asking what they like most/least about their neighbourhood</p> <p>The website has been reviewed and new pages developed to be launched shortly</p> <p>Investigating ning.com and facebook. Rejected facebook due to security issues but looking at ning.com as communication method for resident associations/local community groups.</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Provide high quality sheltered housing schemes, floating support and community alarms as required	Ongoing	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The bi-annual National Indicator STATUS survey in November 2008 showed 95% satisfaction overall for the sheltered housing service</p> <p>New Shropshire Council performance indicators for sheltered housing and community alarms agreed with tenant representatives and monitored by SURE (Shropshire United Residents Executive) and at team meetings</p> <p>Mystery shopping included the sheltered service in December 2009</p>	
Achieve Level B Quality Assessment Framework for services in Oswestry	Quarter 2 2009	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>Oswestry has achieved level B</p>	
Achieve Level A Quality Assessment Framework for services in Bridgnorth	Quarter 3 2009	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The QAF for Bridgnorth is rated as level B with proposals to look to move to level A when possible</p>	
Develop RESPECT Action Plan	Quarter 2 2009	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>Shropshire Council signed up to the Respect Action Plan in 2009. This was publicised in the tenants' newsletter and an action plan was developed and has been implemented. This has helped to reduce the already low incidences of Anti Social Behaviour.</p>	

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Sign up to RESPECT Standard	Quarter 2 2010	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>As above, the Council has now signed up to the Respect Standard</p>	
Review the specification of security in dwellings through customer surveys and inviting feedback, and improve where appropriate	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Success will be measured through an increased number of properties with 'Secured by Design' features and with target hardening measures</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p>The Council is continuing to work with Police and residents to identify security issues on estates.</p>	

## **Policy area 8. Housing Options and Allocations**

### **Overview of the policy area**

The policy focuses on ensuring that people in need of affordable housing have access to appropriate advice and assistance which helps them to understand what housing options may (or may not) be available to them.

A key priority is the prevention of homelessness through the provision of targeted, timely advice and support. Within this priority is the implementation of the Shropshire Allocations Policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme in order to ensure fair and appropriate access to social lettings was considered essential.

There is a very high need for affordable housing in Shropshire. The demand is greater than the supply of housing available and there are many factors to be taken into account when deciding who should have priority for homes when they do become available. In line with statutory guidance shown in the document 'Fair and flexible: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England' (CLG, December 2009), the Allocations Policy aims to:

- Allow for the greatest degree of choice possible in the allocation of affordable housing and ensure that those in the greatest need of housing have the greatest opportunity to secure it
- Help to contribute to the development of sustainable communities and support the local economy
- Help us to meet other strategic aims, including enabling vulnerable people to live independently in the community (Supporting People) and to prevent homelessness
- Provide local lettings and sensitive lettings policies where these contribute to meeting wider strategic aims
- Achieve mobility for existing tenants
- Make best use of the housing resources available
- Contribute to overall mobility within the affordable housing sector
- Contribute to diversity within our communities and help towards tackling discrimination
- Enable us to meet our statutory duties including where duties are owed to homeless households under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002)
- Ensure simplicity and transparency, minimising subjectivity in the allocation of affordable housing

- Contribute towards meeting the strategic aims of partner agencies including housing associations, Health and Social Care and other key stakeholders

The CLG Guidance also recommends provision of accurate and transparent information concerning the operation of the Allocations Policy, to ensure communities understand how housing is being allocated. HomePoint is committed to responding to this recommendation and, for instance, provides weekly feedback regarding lets advertised through CBL.

### **Key achievements**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2009, Shropshire's new Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy and Scheme was established. Known as HomePoint, Shropshire's Choice Based Lettings scheme is a new housing allocation approach system which gives residents the opportunity to search for a home of their choice in Shropshire.

It is a Government priority that all Councils should extend choice to housing applicants. In establishing the new unitary Shropshire Council, the opportunity was taken to move to an Allocation Scheme founded on Choice Based Letting (CBL) in partnership with housing associations working locally. A single unified Shropshire Housing Register (Housing Waiting List) was also introduced with the aim that, in time, it will be possible to apply to all affordable housing providers in Shropshire, completing one housing application form to be considered for accommodation by all local affordable housing providers in the County. The Allocations Policy and Scheme apply directly to homes owned by the Council in the former Oswestry Borough and Bridgnorth District Council areas and those owned by partner housing associations.

To implement the new Shropshire Affordable Housing Allocation Policy and Scheme, Shropshire HomePoint has been set up to manage and deliver the Shropshire Housing Register and the Shropshire Choice Based Letting Scheme.

Choice based letting is being introduced across Shropshire in stages. The initial HomePoint partners and members of the Choice Based Letting scheme are:

- South Shropshire Housing Association
- Meres and Mosses Housing Association
- Shropshire Council (properties in Oswestry and Bridgnorth areas)

The initial aim was to work towards a full partnership with other Registered Providers in the County. There have been a number of developments since June 2009 which have influenced progress in this area. In the meantime, the Council has continued to make nominations to registered providers from the Shropshire Housing Register where the partnership arrangements remain to be finalised.

When introducing the new Policy and Scheme, the Council undertook to carry out a review of operations after 6 and then 12 months. This review is currently being undertaken in discussion with stakeholders and is focussed on the implementation and operation of the new Shropshire Affordable Housing Allocations Policy and Scheme.

The scheme means that residents no longer have to wait for an offer of accommodation that someone else thinks might be suitable for them. Instead, it is possible to actively search for a home of their choice. This can be done online by means of a dedicated website (<http://www.shropshirehomepoint.org.uk/>) or by looking at the HomePoint newsletter.

Applicants can also visit their local housing offices for details of available homes to rent.

Some of the benefits that Choice Based Lettings can bring include:

- The chance to decide which properties to apply for – rather than wait for the housing staff to send an offer.
- Better quality information – Choice Based lettings can help to make sure that customers know which properties are available and that more specific information such as the location, the type of heating, garden and nearest schools.
- The possibility to raise awareness of other housing options such as shared ownership
- Clear and transparent criteria to decide who is eligible for housing – this means having straightforward conditions to decide who is eligible to join the housing register as well as clear criteria to assess needs and award priority
- Support for vulnerable groups – help and support can be provided to protect the needs of vulnerable people, improve their housing opportunities to help ensure that people in most urgent need can be helped.

## Key challenge and priority for the next 12 months

At 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, the waiting list for social housing in Shropshire stood at 6,000 people<sup>2</sup> and between 1 April 2008 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, there were 1,262 general needs lettings<sup>3</sup>. This means that even if no-one else joined the waiting list and even if we did not take account of newly arising need, it would take around 5 years to clear the waiting list backlog. Due to the high level of housing demand in Shropshire, it is clear that it is therefore necessary to ensure that all appropriate housing options are maximised, including ensuring that appropriate use is made of private sector accommodation. It is also necessary to ensure that the best use is made of existing stock, such as through offering incentives to people who are under-occupying social housing to downsize and made dwellings available for families who may be in overcrowded accommodation.

### Action Plan summary:

Action	Original target	Comments	New target (where applicable)
Introduce a countywide common housing register and countywide choice based lettings scheme in partnership with Large Scale Voluntary Transfer organisations in the County	September 2009	The Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy and Scheme was introduced on 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2009	

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<sup>2</sup> Housing Strategy Statistical Appendices 2008/9

<sup>3</sup> CORE Lettings data

## Glossary

Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	<p>Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) replaces the traditional way of allocating housing under which housing officers seek to match applicants who have priority on the waiting list to available vacancies.</p> <p>CBL allows applicants for social housing (and existing tenants seeking a move) to apply for available vacancies which are advertised widely (e.g. in the local newspaper or on a website).</p> <p>Applicants can see the full range of available properties and can bid (i.e. apply) for any home to which they are matched (e.g. a single person would not be eligible for a three-bedroom house). The successful bidder is the one with the highest priority under the scheme. Authorities provide feedback that helps applicants to assess their chances of success in subsequent applications.</p>
Code for Sustainable Homes	<p>The Code for Sustainable Homes is a national standard established to improve the sustainable design of homes. The Code was published by the Department for Communities in 2006 with code level 6 being the highest standard of sustainability.</p>
Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)	<p>A Disabled Facilities Grant is a local council grant to help towards the cost of adapting your home to enable you to continue to live there. A grant is paid when the council considers that changes are necessary to meet needs, and that the work is reasonable and practical.</p>
Domiciliary care	<p>Personal and practical care provided to support an individual living in his or her own home, either alone or with a relative or other carer. Can include home care services (e.g. meals on wheels) as well as day care (e.g. going to a day centre or club).</p>
Extra Care	<p>Also referred to as Very Sheltered Housing, covers a range of types of supported housing which provide a 'caring environment' for older people. It is often specially designed self-contained housing and may have a range of communal facilities sometimes available to older people in the local community as well as the scheme. There are dedicated care teams and personal care is provided either by the housing provider or on a contract with another agency or social services in order to provide 'a home for life'.</p>
Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)	<p>The Homes and Communities Agency is the national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England. The Agency provides funding for affordable housing and to bring land back into productive use.</p>

Housing Benefit	Housing Benefit helps people pay their rent. It is also known as a rent rebate or rent allowance. In nearly all cases, local councils run the scheme for their tenants. But in a few cases, other organisations run the scheme for their tenants and in some areas the local councils have contracted out part of the administration to private firms.
Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)	Move of local authority social housing to a housing association or similar provider.
Local Development Framework (LDF)	The portfolio of Local Development Documents, which together set the vision for future development and provide a set of policies to guide development. The LDF includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development Plan Documents;</li> <li>- Supplementary Planning Documents;</li> <li>- Statement of Community Involvement;</li> <li>- Local Development Scheme;</li> <li>- Annual Monitoring Report</li> </ul>
Shropshire Partnership	The Shropshire Partnership is a strategic partnership involving the Council, regional, public and local agencies, the voluntary and community sector, business, young people and equality and diversity communities. Partners work together to meet local needs and improve the quality of life in Shropshire. The Shropshire Partnership is also sometimes referred to as the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).
Single Conversation	The term 'Single Conversation' is a new approach by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to agree the main priorities in local areas relating to housing, infrastructure, regeneration and community activities as a means of focusing the priorities for funding.
Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDEV) document	This is the planning policy document that identifies specific and defined areas of land for particular or mixed use developments. The document also includes detailed planning policies to guide and manage development.
Telecare	Telecare services are sometimes called social or community alarm, lifeline or careline services. Special equipment linked to people's telephone systems enables them to get help quickly, at the touch of a button, even if they are unable to speak.
Tenant Services Authority (TSA)	The Tenant Services Authority is the new regulator for affordable housing. And was launched on 1 December 2008, having taken over the regulatory powers of the Housing Corporation.