



our ambition -
achieving excellence

Stratford-on-Avon District

Housing Strategy

2006 – 2011

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Foreword

Councillor Gillian Roache
Portfolio Holder for Revenues and Housing



Housing is a basic need for us all. But successfully meeting that need is about much more than just building more homes – it is essential that we create sustainable communities.

We start with many advantages. Our District is an attractive place for people to live and work in. But we face major challenges too. Spiralling house prices over the past few years mean that many people find themselves unable to even get a foot on the housing ladder. To help people to live independently there is a need to improve conditions of existing poor quality housing stock, and to provide adaptations and support. Homelessness is another cause of concern.

Therefore housing is a key corporate priority for the District Council and its partners. This is reflected in the aims and objectives of the Community Plan and the Council's own Corporate Strategy. This housing Strategy is a tool for the delivery of those corporate priorities. It sets out what we need to do over the next five years and how we plan to do it to meet the needs of diverse communities throughout the District.

Obviously, the District Council cannot and does not work in isolation. We therefore aim to support all our partners in the delivery of a wide range of services and facilities that, collectively, support and sustain our many local communities.

Of particular importance are our many rural communities – where four-fifths of the District's residents live but where the shortage of affordable homes is particularly acute. We aim to develop the capacity of those communities to assess and meet their own local needs. The Council's pioneering Local Choice initiative is an example of the policy tools we provide to help them devise their own tailor-made solutions to local issues.

I invite you all to share in the Council's vision and work with us to create sustainable communities. Working together, we can make a difference.

Gillian Roache

Executive Summary

The **vision** for this Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Strategy 2005-2011 is

To create sustainable communities by improving the housing and support options of all people in Stratford-on-Avon District who are experiencing housing difficulties, or who are at risk of experiencing housing difficulties.

Delivery of this strategy will help the Council to attain its own ambition of achieving excellence by meeting the needs of local communities and individuals.

The strategy was put together by

- Undertaking extensive consultation to identify local housing issues to inform this strategy.
- Considering what the Government expects housing authorities to do.
- Looking at known housing and support needs.
- Building on existing regional, county and local level strategies, and in particular the Council's
 - Community Plan to 2015
 - Corporate Strategy 2005-2008
 - Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008
 - Private Sector Housing Strategy 2005-2010
 - Meeting Housing Needs in Stratford-on-Avon District, supplementary planning guidance that seeks to improve the sustainability of all new housing and increase the supply of affordable housing.
- Examining what the Council's Housing Advisory Panel wants the Council to do. The Panel is a joint member and officer working group with delegated decision making powers, and reports directly to the Council's Executive.
- Reviewing resources and ways of tackling particular issues. For example the Council has already committed £5.1m of its own monies to meet its corporate strategy objective of providing 250 new affordable homes between 2005-2008.

All the above fed into an **options appraisal meeting** to determine what the aims of this strategy should be and what the Council and its partners should focus on.

The strategy has the following aims and objectives:

Aim 1: To increase the supply of affordable housing both in Stratford town and surrounding rural areas to meet local needs

Objectives: Enabling a minimum of one hundred and ninety affordable homes in Stratford-upon-Avon and a minimum of sixty affordable homes in rural areas between 2005 and 2008.

Aim 2: To enable people to live independently in good quality homes

Objectives: Improving the housing conditions of vulnerable people in private sector housing and enabling an extra fifty people to live independently each year.

Aim 3: To reduce homelessness

Objectives: Increasing by 10% annually the number of households where homelessness is prevented; ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for all households, except in an emergency, by April 2007; and improving the choice of housing options.

There are a number of actions to support each objective. An **equality impact assessment** has been done on the strategy to ensure that the proposed actions meet legal requirements and Council equality policies.

The Council's **Housing Advisory Panel** is responsible for implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the strategy. As part of the Council's performance management framework the Panel will at the end of each quarter receive a full housing strategy progress report. The Panel will then identify any necessary corrective action and address any resource issues. The outcomes in the strategy will be monitored annually, and the strategy will be reviewed annually as from summer 2007 to take into account the results of the joint housing assessment with Warwick District Council, policy changes and feedback from service users.

The strategy was endorsed by the Stratford District Partnership Housing Key Group, which is responsible for delivering the housing aspects of the Community Plan, on 26 January 2006 **and agreed by full Council** on 12 June 2006.

1. Introduction

High quality housing is vital to economic, social and environmental well-being. It is associated with improved health, better education and employment prospects, reduced crime and greater social cohesion. Although the Council transferred its entire housing stock to South Warwickshire Housing Association in 1996, it retains responsibility for assessing and meeting housing needs throughout the District. This housing strategy is a five year plan that sets out the housing issues that people in the District want the Council to focus on and how the Council will address these issues and provide excellent services. The vision for this strategy is:

To create sustainable communities by improving the housing and support options of all people in Stratford-on-Avon District who are experiencing housing difficulties, or who are at risk of experiencing housing difficulties.

The strategy has 3 aims:

- **Aim 1:** To increase the supply of affordable housing both in Stratford town and rural areas to meet local needs
- **Aim 2:** To enable people to live independently in good quality homes
- **Aim 3:** To reduce homelessness

This strategy summarises the Government's housing policy agenda, details how this strategy builds on existing regional, countywide and local strategies and plans and identifies housing and support needs. It then explains how the Council determined what its priorities should be, and finally sets out what the Council is doing and needs to do, including the provision of resources, to meet the above aims.

Delivery of this strategy is very dependent on the Council working successfully in partnership with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community groups at regional, sub regional, countywide and local level. It is also dependent on the Council continuing to listen to the views of service users and local residents in order to ensure that what it does continues to meet peoples' expectations. This strategy may be a material planning consideration in decisions on individual planning applications.

A project team with responsibility for corporate working, planning, housing and information technology drew the strategy together during autumn 2005. The Council's Housing Advisory Panel, a joint member and officer housing group with delegated powers to make decisions, has overseen the work of the project team, and is also responsible for implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the strategy. The Stratford District Partnership Housing Key Group, which is responsible for delivering the housing aspects of the Community Plan (see section 2.3.1), endorsed the strategy on 26 January 2006. Full Council agreed the strategy on 12 June 2006.

2. How this strategy reflects Government policy and links with other strategies and plans

Summary of key points

- Giving everyone the choice of a decent home that is affordable is the Government's key housing policy objective.
- A number of regional, countywide and local strategies underpin the development of this strategy.
- Housing priorities identified by residents and other stakeholders in the Council's Community Plan and Corporate Strategy have been incorporated into this housing strategy.
- In particular, this housing strategy builds on the Council's Homelessness Strategy, Private Sector Housing Strategy and Meeting Housing Needs supplementary planning guidance.

2.1 Links to Government policy

The Government's key housing policy objective is the opportunity and choice of a decent home for everyone at a price they can afford. The Government's Sustainable Communities Plan: building for the future (2003) aims to deliver thriving and inclusive communities in which people wish to live by ensuring development meets the economic, social and environmental needs of current and future generations.

The Barker Review (2004) highlighted increasing affordability problems nationwide and recommended increasing the supply of market housing to depress house prices and building more affordable homes. The Government has since built on the recommendations of Sustainable Communities Plan and the Barker Review by publishing in 2005 three further documents: Homes for All – A Five Year Plan, Extending Home Ownership and the Government's Response to Kate Barker's Review of Housing Supply. These three documents set out how the Government's housing policy agenda will improve housing supply and demand and lead to sustainable mixed communities in both rural and urban areas. Policies of relevance to this strategy are:

- Improving the strategic role of local authorities in understanding and responding to local and sub regional markets. This is being underpinned by major reforms of the planning system designed to boost the supply of new homes.
- Increasing home ownership. At least 80,000 first time buyers will be assisted into home ownership by 2010, and an additional 300,000 social housing tenants allowed to buy a stake in their home.

- Ensuring that all social tenants have a decent home by 2010 and increasing the number of vulnerable households in the private sector who live in homes that are in a decent condition. A decent home is defined as one that is warm, weatherproof and has reasonably modern facilities. Vulnerable households are defined as those in receipt of at least one of the principal means-tested or disability-related benefits.
- Improving the quality of private rented accommodation. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 gave local housing authorities the power to provide assistance for housing repairs, improvements and adaptations. The Housing Act 2004 will improve standards of safety and quality in the private sector by permitting mandatory licensing of larger Houses in Multiple Occupation and setting a new fitness standard.

Local authorities have also been given the power to bring empty homes back into use. In addition, tenants' deposits will be safeguarded from the activities of unscrupulous landlords.

- Reducing homelessness and giving council and housing association tenants more choice about where they live. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to review homelessness in their area and to publish a strategy to tackle homelessness every 5 years. The Act also changed the way homeless people are dealt with and how affordable homes can be let. All authorities are required to introduce choice-based lettings by 2010 i.e. advertising affordable homes and letting people apply for them so as to give tenants more choice over where they live.
- Providing housing related support to help people, many of them older or disabled people, to live independently in their homes. This is largely being done via the Government's Supporting People programme and the provision of disabled facilities and other grants.
- Taking into account the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and others, but not allowing unauthorised development.
- Improving energy efficiency in both the public and private sector. A fuel poor household is one that spends at least 10% of its income to heat the home to an adequate 'standard' of warmth.

2.2 Regional, sub regional and countywide links

Stratford-on-Avon District Council is one of 38 authorities, which together make up the West Midlands region. The Government has required authorities in the West Midlands to draw up a number of regional strategies. The regional and countywide strategies that most impact on the development of this strategy are listed below.

2.2.1 West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy 2004

This is the development plan for the region outlining where, when and what type of development can occur. It aims to deliver urban and rural renaissance by regenerating urban areas to stop outward migration from these areas to rural areas such as this District, and to meet local rural housing needs. This strategy is due to be partially reviewed and is important because it will determine how many new homes are required in each council area.

2.2.2 The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005: delivering a housing vision for the West Midlands in the 21st century: pathways of choice

This strategy is supportive of the vision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, June 2004. Considerable research and a Regional Homelessness Strategy and Regional Supporting People Strategy underpin the Regional Housing Strategy. The Strategy aims "to redress the failure of the housing markets to provide many people with housing they want which has resulted in little or, in some cases, no substantial range of choice whether in price or type." Several key challenges which all contribute to the creation of what is known as a balanced housing market are identified:

- Creating mixed, balanced and inclusive communities
- Urban and rural renaissance
- Right homes in right places to facilitate economic development
- Low demand and the restructuring of housing markets
- Affordability issues
- Poor house condition issues
- Community cohesion and black and minority ethnic housing needs
- Helping vulnerable people to live independently
- Improving the environment

The West Midlands Regional Allocation Strategy 2006 – 2008 determines how resources are allocated.

The Regional Housing Strategy identifies four sub regional housing markets one of which is the South Housing Market Area which includes Stratford-on-Avon District as well as Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Warwick, Worcester, Wychavon and Wyre Forest. The South Housing Market Area is characterised by high rates of owner occupation, in-migration from the Birmingham conurbation and as having acute housing affordability problems, especially in Stratford-on-Avon District and Warwick District.

The Council has been, and will continue to be, proactive in the development of all the regional strategies in order to ensure that the needs of this District are not overlooked. For example the Council is an active member of the Affordable Housing Task Group and is represented on the Rural Housing Network, which is concerned with making the case for affordable housing in rural areas.

In the immediate future the focus of much of this work is likely to be at the South Housing Market Area level, which is currently identifying and planning what should be done to attract resources to the area and how to share good practice. A representative of the Council is the vice chair of the South Housing Market Area Partnership, which is responsible for co-ordinating this work.

2.2.3 Warwickshire Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010

This strategy has been developed by a countywide partnership and sets out how vulnerable people in Warwickshire will be given housing related support to enable them to live independently in the community. Housing related support can help prevent problems that may lead to hospitalisation, institutional care, custody or homelessness. It can also help people leaving institutional environments to live independently. The strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive and independent supported housing needs assessment. The Council took the strategic housing lead for coordinating this assessment on behalf of the housing authorities in Warwickshire.

The Warwickshire Accommodation Strategy Group, which includes the Council, oversees the development and implementation of the strategy. A Commissioning Body, which also includes the Council, decides which services are no longer required and can be decommissioned and which new services can be set up to meet identified needs. However, continuing uncertainty about long-term Government policy and funding of the Supporting People programme makes it difficult to plan ahead.

2.2.4 Warwickshire Strategic Partnership Plan 2005-2008

This plan has been put together by a partnership involving health, all local authorities in Warwickshire including the County, local chamber of commerce, Councils for Voluntary Service, other voluntary organisations, Learning and Skills Council, and further and higher education communities. The plan addresses the concerns and issues of communities in Warwickshire. Achieving "good quality housing available at an affordable price" is one of the main aims of the strategy.

2.2.5 Warwickshire Structure Plan (WASP)

This is the development plan for Warwickshire but its influence is largely superseded by the Regional Spatial Strategy.

2.2.6 Countywide client specific strategies

These strategies include a Learning Disabilities Housing Strategy, Warwickshire Domestic Violence Strategy, Older People Strategy etc.

2.3 Corporate links

The Council's ambition is achieving excellence. The Authority has achieved Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

All the Council strategies and plans detailed below have been subject to extensive public consultation. There is ongoing consultation with local residents, businesses, community and voluntary organisations, service users and other interested groups of people to confirm the Council is still

addressing the issues that matter to people. The importance placed on public consultation by the Council is reflected in its corporate strategy, which states, "we will continue to give residents a major voice and role in what we do". The Council also publishes an annual Consultation Strategy.

2.3.1 Stratford District Community Plan to 2015

The Community Plan describes the local community's ambitions for the District up to 2015, how to achieve them and how progress will be measured. The plan has been the subject of extensive public consultation, and was put together by the Stratford District Partnership, which includes public, voluntary and public sector organisations, who are committed to working together to improve the quality of life in the District. The long-term vision for the District is

'To maintain and enhance the heritage and green environment while building healthy, safe, informed and active communities enjoying local services and employment opportunities.'

Key housing priorities identified in the plan by local residents include:

- Sufficient affordable housing for all people.
- Short stay emergency accommodation for anyone who is homeless.
- Provision of accommodation for people ready to move on from either supported or temporary accommodation.
- Supporting older people and vulnerable people to live in their own homes by providing support measures such as care and repair, adaptations, or housing related support.
- Enabling older people to access alternative accommodation that meets their needs when they are no longer able to live at home.
- Encouraging the construction of more homes with the needs of older people and people with disabilities designed in.
- New housing is to be more energy and resource efficient.
- Easy access to high quality advice and information.

2.3.2 Corporate Strategy 2005 – 2008, Council Improvement Plan and Best Value Performance Plan

The Corporate Strategy sets out the parts of the Community Plan that the Council will deliver. The strategy has three aims:

- The development of safer and healthier communities
- The development of sustainable communities
- The creation of inclusive communities

The Strategy also commits the Council to improving its services each year, delivering the Council Improvement Plan prepared following the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council in 2004 and making efficiency savings of at least 2.5 % every year and using these savings to meet the targets in the corporate strategy. Each aim has broad objectives and specific targets. Housing-related targets in the corporate strategy are to:

- Provide 250 new affordable homes across the District by April 2008
- Have no homeless families in B&B accommodation by April 2007
- Help an additional 250 residents obtain means tested benefits by April 2008
- Improve the energy efficiency of homes in the District by 28% by April 2008 compared to 1996 baseline

The Council Improvement Plan was drawn up to address weaknesses identified by the Audit Commission in 2004. The Best Value Performance Plan 2005/2006 sets out the Council's performance including its performance against a number of nationally determined Best Value Performance Indicators.

See Appendix 1 for more information about how the Council manages performance.

2.3.3 Local Plan Review 1996 – 2011

This is the Council's local development plan setting out policies and proposals to guide development in this District up to 2011. The Council is scheduled to adopt this Plan in July 2006.

2.3.4 Parish and town plans

These are prepared by local communities and articulate their needs and aspirations. Once adopted by the District Council these plans are used as supplementary planning guidance.

2.3.5 Meeting Housing Needs in Stratford-on-Avon District supplementary planning guidance

The Local Plan is supported by supplementary planning guidance including 'Meeting Housing Needs in Stratford-on-Avon District' which was adopted in June 2006.

Meeting Housing Needs aims to improve the quality of all new housing in the District and to increase the supply of affordable housing. The guidance is cited as good practice in forthcoming Government guidance. In preparing the guidance approximately 250 individuals and organisations were consulted including landowners, developers, parish councils, District councillors, and Government and public bodies.

This guidance was prepared with the help of the Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Partnership which has responsibility for the development of affordable housing, and which includes representatives from the Council, partner housing associations and other agencies.

2.3.6 Private Sector Housing Strategy 2005-2010

This strategy was adopted in 2005 and will be reviewed after one year, and then every two years. The strategy acknowledges the importance of improving the quality of housing across all tenures, and details the forms of assistance available to vulnerable people and others.

2.3.7 South Warwickshire's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2004

This is a joint Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District strategy that has as its overall objective the elimination of fuel poverty in South Warwickshire. The highest concentration of fuel poverty is in the private rented sector where around 40% of all households are affected. The effects of cold and damp homes are illustrated by increased death rates during the winter months.

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 requires local authorities to develop, implement and to report annually to Government how they will within a 15 year period reduce carbon dioxide emissions by at least 30% and eradicate fuel poverty and provide affordable warmth for all residents. The Warwickshire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre was set up by Stratford-on-Avon District Council, and supports Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Coventry Councils to achieve their Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 objectives.

The strategy features in the Corporate Strategy and is closely linked with the private sector housing strategy as the latter is dependent on ensuring housing stock meets minimum heating and insulation requirements to provide affordable warmth and meet Government quality thresholds for private sector housing i.e. the decent homes standard and the new fitness standard.

2.3.8 Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 2008

The strategy reviews the types and causes of homelessness in the District, and sets out how homelessness issues will be tackled. The Government has assessed the strategy as good and as having "a strong development process, building on previous consultation activities and Strategies. The document is clearly written and contains good arrangements for reporting elsewhere and for maintaining strong county-wide links."

The strategy was also cited as good practice by the Government in its "Local authorities' homelessness strategies: evaluation and good practice" guidance in December 2004. The Authority is highlighted as an example of good practice in three areas: reviewing homelessness and using the information to focus on developing targeted objectives of the homelessness strategy to make real improvements in services; service user involvement; and wider links and partnerships.

The strategy was put together by the District Housing Forum, which is also responsible for the delivery of the strategy, amongst other things. This active and very well supported Forum includes the District Council; housing associations; Supporting People staff; social services; health; probation; support providers; Citizens Advice Bureau; local churches; Connexions; student counsellors at the local college; Barnardos; community education; Young Housing Project Leamington; Council for Voluntary Services; Drug Advisory Service; Age Concern.

The Forum has a number of sub groups including a lettings review group looking at how and to whom housing association properties are let and a housing related support providers group that identifies gaps in services.

2.3.9 Housing Strategy 2002 - 2007, and Review 2003 - 2004

This is the Council's existing housing strategy but it is out of date. All of the actions in this strategy have either been delivered or rolled forward and incorporated into 'Meeting Housing Needs' supplementary planning guidance, the Private Sector Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy.

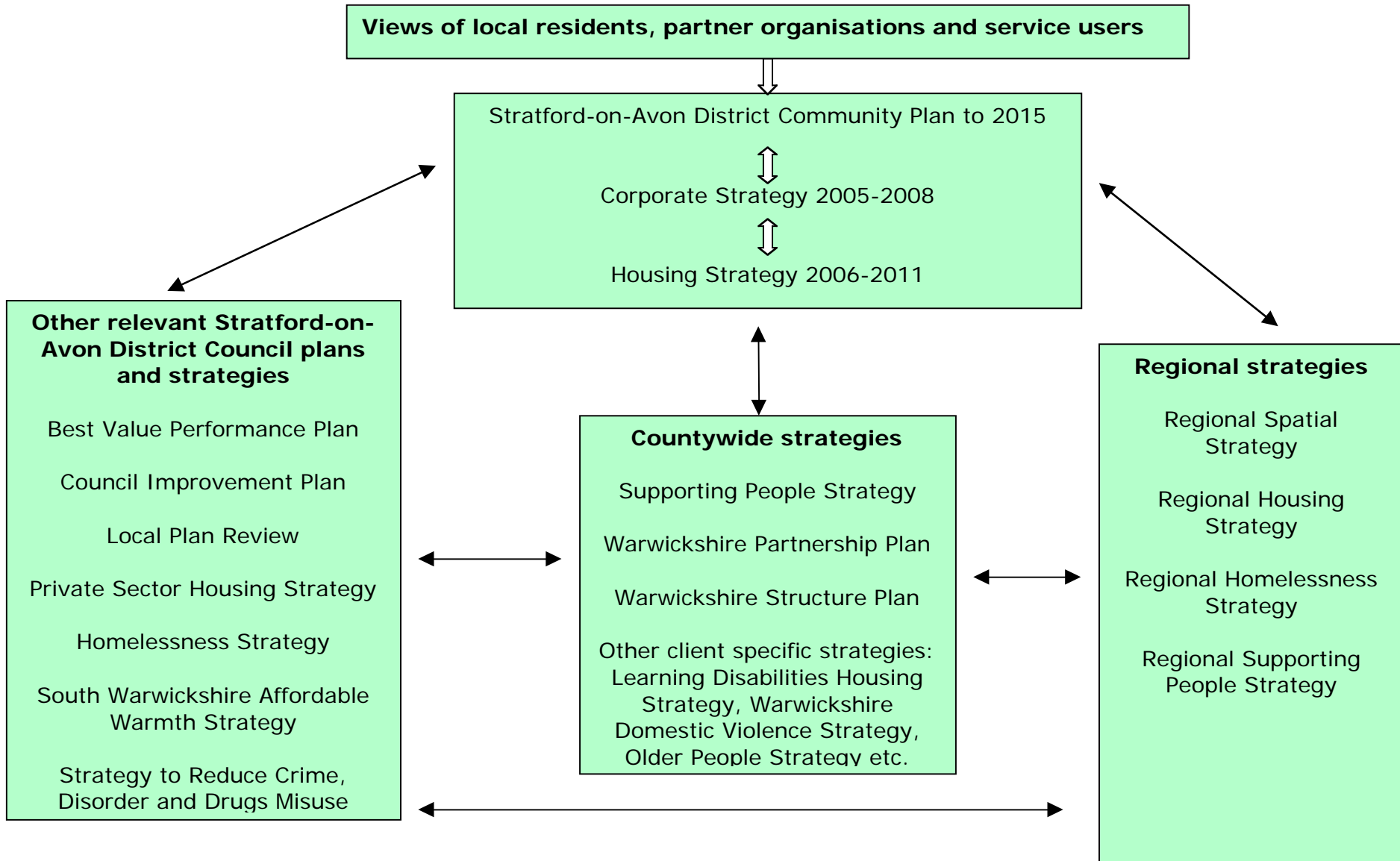
2.3.10 Strategy to reduce crime, disorder and drugs misuse in South Warwickshire 2005 - 2008

This is a joint Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick DC strategy. Local housing associations are involved in both the development and delivery of this strategy. Ensuring the District remains amongst the 25% of districts with the lowest crime levels in the country is a corporate target and involves improving community cohesion, addressing issues that contribute to crime and to the fear of crime, and reducing anti social behaviour. As legally required, arrangements are in place to accommodate high-risk offenders in order to ensure safer communities. The main target is to cut the total number of recorded crimes by 15% from the 2003/04 total by April 2008. This is also a corporate strategy target.

The links between the housing strategy and other strategies and plans are illustrated below.

See Appendix 2 for a full list of strategies and plans and how to get hold of them.

How the housing strategy is linked to other strategies



3. District profile and assessment of needs

Summary of key points

- The District is predominately rural and has an increasingly elderly population.
- There are no areas of low demand for housing but about 5% of the housing stock is unfit.
- Market price housing, whether purchase or privately rented, is very expensive.
- There is an urgent need for more affordable housing. The new draft housing assessment states that an additional 954 affordable homes are required annually.
- The new housing assessment will help determine the number, type, location and tenure of new homes required in this District.
- Identified housing and support needs include those for older people, young people, all people who are homeless, people who are ex-offenders, people with mental ill health, people with learning disabilities.

Stratford-on-Avon District is predominately rural and there are about 250 towns and villages. 80% of the population lives outside the main town of Stratford-upon-Avon. The District covers 979 square kilometres. Access to services and the delivery of services are issues in this large rural area.

3.1 Population and ethnicity

Source: National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk

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The resident population of Stratford-on-Avon District as estimated in mid 2004 was 116,700 of which 49% were male and 51% female. The population of the District increased by 10.7% between 1981 and 2001. A significant factor is the age of local residents with an average age of 42, compared with an average age of 39 across England and Wales. Almost 47% of the population are over 45, with only 18% under 16 years old. The proportion of the elderly aged 85+ has increased by over half over the period 1991 -2001 and this trend is expected to continue.

Percentage Change in Population Age Structure 1991-2001	
All	5.6%
0-4	5.8%
5-14	8.9%
15-29	-22.8%
30-44	8.2%
45-59	21.8%
60-74	8.2%
75-84	8.2%
85+	51.9%

Percentage of population by ethnic group 2001	Stratford-on-Avon District	England
White	98.7%	90.9
Mixed	0.5	1.3
Asian or Asian British	0.4	4.6
Black or Black British	0.1	2.3
Chinese or other ethnic group	0.3	0.9

98.7% of the population of Stratford-on-Avon District is white. Figures for England are shown for comparison purposes. There is no one significant BME group.

3.2 Tenure

According to the 2001 census 76% of households are living in owner-occupied accommodation, whilst 12.6% live in housing association properties, 7.8% rent privately, and the remaining 3.6% are in other accommodation including living with friends or family rent free.

3.3 Existing dwellings

In April 2005 there were 51,654 dwellings in the District. The stock in this District is very varied with more detached and semi-detached properties and far fewer flats and maisonettes than the national average.

Dwelling type	% of dwelling stock
Detached	43.5%
Semi- Detached	28.2%
End Terrace	8.1%
Mid Terrace	9.6%
Mid Terrace + passage	2.6%
Flat	7.5%
Maisonette	0.4%

A comprehensive independent district wide house condition survey and energy efficiency survey was completed during 2003, and has since been updated with additional research. Key points about the stock are:

- There are no areas of low demand for housing.

- 4.9% of the housing stock is unfit and more than £14m in means tested grants is needed to make these properties fit. 13.6% of the private rented sector is unfit which is higher than the national average of 10.2%. Householders aged over 60 and who are on low incomes occupy 31% of unfit housing.
- The number of vacant dwellings is estimated at 2.8% (1,264). Approximately 16.6% of the vacant dwellings are unfit.
- There are no unfit housing association properties and all properties are expected to easily meet the decent homes standard by 2010.
- The Council is expected to comfortably meet the Government target of having 65% of vulnerable households in the private sector living in decent homes by April 2006.
- 78% of households over the age of 60 need immediate repair works, mostly costing up to £2,000, carrying out to their homes.
- 11.2% of households contain at least one disabled person. The 2003 survey forecasts a Disabled Facilities Grant requirement of £22m.
- There are 120 known houses in multiple occupation in the District, all of which have been inspected. Approximately 10% have minor defects and only 1 or 2 cases are expected to require formal action.
- Fuel poverty particularly affects elderly and low-income households occupying the worst housing, particularly in the private rented sector.

3.4 Employment and average household income

Source: Stratford-on-Avon District Economic Regeneration Performance Report 2005, Annual Business Inquiry, Warwickshire County Council, PayCheck household income data for Warwickshire 2004 CACI Ltd.

Percentage of jobs in each employment sector in the District	
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	29%
Banking, finance & insurance	23%
Public admin, education and health	16%
Manufacturing	11%
Agriculture	5%
Construction	5%
Transport and communications	5%
Other services	6%.

The above average number of employees in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector highlights the strength of the tourist industry. There are also above average employment levels in the agricultural and financial sectors. Tourism and agriculture are traditionally lowly paid industries.

The working age employment rate in Stratford-on-Avon is 85.1%, which compares to 75% nationally. In March 2005 the unemployment rate was 1% (as measured by the number of unemployed people claiming job seekers' allowance).

The average household income in Stratford-on-Avon District before tax and other deductions, and including income from all sources e.g. benefit payments, is £34,600 per annum. This is higher than both the national average of £29,000 and the second highest in the West Midlands after Warwick District (£35,200).

However, the high average income in this District is misleading as 55% of households in Stratford-on-Avon District earn less than the county average of £32,000, 10% of households earn less than £10,000 and 4 % of households earn less than £5,000.

3.5 The local housing market

The affordability of accommodation and the difficulty first time buyers and others are experiencing entering the local housing market is the major housing issue in this District. Market priced housing, whether rental or purchase, is expensive although prices vary between Stratford-upon-Avon and elsewhere in the District. Most of the small private rented sector is geared towards the top end of the market and tourism.

3.5.1 Cost of buying a property on the open market

Base Data from Land Registry

Average property prices in Stratford-on-Avon District have risen by 84% over the past 5 years. The average price of a property in Stratford-on-Avon District in 2005 was £257,957. The cheapest properties are flats and maisonettes costing on average £141,378 but there are relatively few such properties - 8% of the housing stock in this District.

Property type	Average price 2005	Number of sales 2005
Detached	£365,585	724
Semi - Detached	£217,152	587
Terrace	£184,044	410
Flat/Maisonette	£141,378	203
All	£257,957	1,924

3.5.2 Cost of private rented accommodation

A snapshot survey of privately rented properties advertised in local newspapers in Stratford-on-Avon District was undertaken over 2 weeks in June 2005. Any properties obviously at the luxury end of the market were excluded from the survey. The results of the survey are shown below.

Stratford-upon-Avon Town: 76 properties in total	Room in shared property	1 bed including bedsits	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Number of properties	4	19	29	18	6
Average rent per calendar month	£363	£564	£626	£860	£992

Stratford-on-Avon District excluding town of Stratford-upon-Avon: 62 properties in total	Room in shared property	1 bed including bedsits	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Number of properties	6	10	24	18	4
Average rent per calendar month	£350	£498	£571	£796	£913

All the average private sector rents exceed the indicative rents for housing benefit - that is the rents are greater than the amount of housing benefit that can generally be paid.

3.5.3 Cost of housing association rented homes

Source CORE 2004-2005 and Council's own affordable housing data 2005-2006

The average rent of the 492 existing and new properties in the District that were let during 2004 – 2005 was £292 per calendar month. From a snapshot survey of average rents for new affordable housing in 2005-2006, it can be seen that housing association rented affordable homes are approximately half the price of private sector rents.

Average rent per calendar month for new affordable housing in 2005 – 2006*	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
	£326	£364	£418

* The development of new 1 bed homes is discouraged.

3.5.4 Cost of housing association shared ownership homes

(now also known as "New Build Homebuy")

Shared ownership is where a person pays rent to a housing association for part of a property and then has a mortgage on the rest of the property. Housing associations will not develop shared ownership properties unless combined mortgage and rental costs for buyers are 70% or less of equivalent 100% mortgages. Typical average shared ownership costs for 2005 - 2006 per calendar month for households purchasing 50% of a property and paying rent on the remaining 50% share of a property are set out below:

	Total cost per calendar month i.e. mortgage and rent for 2 bed properties	Total cost per calendar month i.e. mortgage and rent for 3 bed properties
Stratford-upon-Avon town	£712	£909
Rest of Stratford-on-Avon District	£645	£742

It can be seen that the total costs of shared ownership in this District are only slightly higher than the cost of renting privately. Other subsidised housing options include Open Market Homebuy, which enables households to choose and, with the help of grants, purchase properties on the open market.

3.6 Likely supply of new build housing 2005 to 2011 (6 years)

In order to meet the housing needs of the District's population development plan policies make provision for the development of new housing. The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy specifies annual rates of housing growth needing to be provided for in development plans. Although the Regional Spatial Strategy does not specify the amount of affordable housing to be sought in each county, the Warwickshire Structure Plan includes an indicative figure of 3,700 affordable dwellings to be built in this District in the period 1996-2011. However, delivery and sustainability constraints indicate that it is not feasible to meet the full extent of affordable housing need.

In line with the Regional Spatial Strategy and Government guidance, the Stratford-on-Avon District Local Plan Review (as Proposed to be Modified) makes provision for 2,200 new homes in the period 2005 to 2011. Based on the policies in this plan, the Council estimates that approximately 500 of these homes will be affordable, excluding any supply from greenfield sites. It is evident that current land supply will more than adequately address the likely needs for open market housing in the District.

3.7 The need for affordable housing

Research shows that there is a continuing shortfall of affordable housing in the District with first time buyers and others experiencing real difficulty entering the local housing market. Local people are being priced out of their own communities and replaced by better off commuters and people retiring to the countryside. In rural areas of the District, in particular, this has led to increased risk of closure of local schools, shops and other local facilities. The affordability problems in the District are highlighted in:

- The district wide housing needs survey, which was carried out in 1999 and updated in 2002, estimated that 4,079 new affordable homes were required in the District over the period 1999 to 2006. In reality, approximately 840 new affordable homes were provided in this period.
- A new joint 2005/2006 housing (needs and demands) assessment with Warwick District Council, which is nearing completion. A joint assessment was undertaken because both districts have similar housing markets. Data from the assessment is disaggregated to district level, and will enable the Council to determine the number, type, location and tenure of new homes required in this District up to 2011. It will also assist the Council to decide who are key workers locally and to identify types of housing suitable for older people.

- The new draft assessment shows that in Stratford-on-Avon District an additional 954 affordable homes are required annually to meet identified housing needs. This equates to an additional 4,770 affordable homes over the next 5 years. The assessment also highlights that 91% of single earner households in the District and 83% of dual earner households in the District cannot afford to purchase an average entry level (least expensive) property in the District of £167,335.
- Research undertaken in 2004 for the Regional Housing Strategy showed that 83% of new households in Stratford-on-Avon District could not afford to enter the 'for sale' housing market. Average house prices (excluding detached houses) in the District mean that these new households require mortgages of up to 9.4 times their average income.
- Low household incomes, coupled with high house prices in this District, mean that shared ownership is too expensive for many households. The Regional Housing Strategy picks up on this point and suggests that most of the affordable housing in this District and Warwick District should be for rent.
- The Stratford-on-Avon District Economic Regeneration Performance Report 2005 (Warwickshire County Council) states that houses in Stratford-on-Avon District are significantly less affordable to local workers than elsewhere in Warwickshire. The average house in Stratford-on-Avon costs almost 10 times the median annual earnings for someone working full time in the District.
- A recent report by Hay Group 'Home Truths: Pay and Property in the UK' (September 2005) states that Stratford-upon-Avon town is the hardest place to buy a home outside the south-east and that house prices in the town are 12 times the average salary.
- There are in excess of 3,000 households on the Council's Housing Waiting List. On average approximately 400 of these households will be offered accommodation in any one year. More than 100 households in the District are accepted as homeless and in need of permanent housing each year.

3.8.1 Other housing and support needs

Source: Warwickshire BME Housing Needs Study, Supporting People Strategy, Research undertaken by District Housing Forum, including work done by the lettings review group

It should be noted that the Supporting People strategy is a work in progress and will be informed by ongoing needs analysis.

3.8.2 Black and Minority Ethnic housing needs including refugees, asylum seekers, Gypsies and Travellers

The housing and housing-related support needs of the black and minority ethnic population of Stratford-on-Avon District are detailed in the 2005 Warwickshire Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Needs Study. The five Warwickshire district and borough councils and the County Supporting People team jointly commissioned this independent report.

The study looks at the needs of visible minority ethnic communities, minority ethnic communities who may not be visibly different but who may have different housing and information needs compared with the majority white community, e.g. people who have recently arrived from mainland Europe, and at Gypsies and Travellers who are seeking to live in settled housing. Key results for this District were:

- 93% were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the area they were living in and 83% were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their homes. No respondents were fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. No specific refugee or asylum seekers issues were identified and no households reported suffering racial harassment or abuse.
- Leaflets are the preferred method of receiving information. Only 2 households said they preferred to communicate with organisations in a language other than English. The report recommends that the Council should adopt a 'happy to translate' logo on letters and leaflets, with arrangements to translate documents on request.
- Other recommendations included expanding the supply of affordable housing, improving information to those waiting for affordable housing (nobody required more than 3 bedrooms) and increasing awareness of housing services and the confidence of residents to report racial harassment and improving organisations' responses. The report also recommended that housing organisations should add a Gypsy/Traveller category to their housing ethnic monitoring systems. The Council has done this since the report was published.

There is one authorised site for Gypsies and Travellers in this District. The Council is currently investigating the suitability of this site including determining whether there are enough pitches.

3.8.3 Older people

The provision of extra care housing to enable older people to live independently in their own homes by providing flexible support and long term care is a priority in the Warwickshire Supporting People strategy. The joint housing assessment with Warwick District Council will assist the Council to identify the broader housing, care and support aspirations and needs of the large elderly population in this District. This information will feed into and be addressed in this housing strategy when it is reviewed and into development plans, the Supporting People strategy etc.

3.8.4 Single people and families who are homeless including teenage parents, young people at risk or leaving care, and people who sleep rough

A floating support service for up to 82 individuals at any one time who are homeless, at risk of losing the home they own or rent, or in need of resettlement support has been developed in the last couple of years. The service also supports some people with mental ill health and any teenage parents. On average the authority deals with less than one homeless teenage parent each year. There are also an additional 8 supported housing bed spaces for young people at risk or leaving care.

There is, however, an identified need for additional supported accommodation for single homeless people aged 16 to 25 years to enable them to make the transition to independent living.

There is also an identified need for emergency access accommodation for anyone who is homeless, the provision of which is included in the Community Plan. Currently people who do not qualify for accommodation under homeless legislation are forced to seek emergency accommodation outside the District. Most of these people are single people, who either cannot afford accommodation in this District and or have support needs, including some people who sleep rough. Agencies monitor the number of people who sleep rough each month, which ranges from 7 to 12 people.

The District Housing Forum is currently researching the housing and support needs of single people to identify gaps in services and provide an up to date evidence base for the Supporting People programme. Single people under 60 account for 37% of the 3,000 households on the housing waiting list. The results obtained to date show that of the 138 different single people who experienced housing difficulties in May and November 2005, 71 people thought they were homeless and 25 people slept rough at different times during these months. Most of the people sleeping rough were aged 25 to 39 years and from this District.

The 138 single people experienced housing difficulties mainly because they had been asked to leave by family and friends and or were seeking independence. The majority were aged over 25 years, which illustrates the difficulty single people face in finding affordable accommodation.

3.8.5 People with mental ill health

There appears to be sufficient accommodation with support for people with mental ill health but there may be a need for higher levels of support for some people. This is about remodelling some existing services.

3.8.6 People with learning disabilities

A number of people with learning disabilities are living independently in supported housing schemes in the District. A new supported housing scheme opened in 2005. However, the lettings review group and social services have identified a need to check that, if appropriate, people with learning disabilities are being offered general needs accommodation with support. This is because most people with learning disabilities live with

their parents in good quality accommodation and therefore their priority for housing is often less than that of people living in worse housing.

3.8.7 People with physical or sensory disabilities

Floating support, mostly community alarms, is provided for 40 households. There is no identified unmet need. Care and repair services are, however, of great importance to this client group.

3.8.8 People with alcohol or drug problems

Each year approximately 5 housing association short term tenancies are provided for people who misuse drugs. Support workers work with these tenants to prepare them for independent living. At the end of a year individuals are offered permanent tenancies if they have kept their tenancy conditions. The scheme has been independently evaluated and is seen as very successful. People with known alcohol dependency are signposted to the Alcohol Advisory Service but alcohol dependency is largely a hidden problem. There is no specific housing related support.

3.8.9 Women at risk of, or escaping, domestic violence

A five-bed refuge in the District opened in 2005. There is also a well established rural outreach and resettlement support service which can assist up to 20 women at any one time, and a twenty-four hour Domestic Violence helpline. A joint Warwickshire Domestic Violence Support Service and housing protocol for referrals to all these services is in place.

3.8.10 Offenders or people at risk from offending.

There is some supported accommodation for ex-offenders (14 bed spaces) but some ex-offenders with high support needs are placed out of the District. The Supporting People strategy has identified a need for additional units of supported accommodation and/or access to floating support for offenders and people at risk of offending. This is important because it will prevent crime and disorder and support people who may otherwise lead more chaotic lives. There is a countywide accommodation referral scheme.

3.8.11 People with HIV/AIDS

The 2004 Supporting People survey of housing related support needs found no evidence of any unmet need in this District.

4. How the Council decided what its priorities should be

Summary of key points

- Priorities for this strategy were determined by looking at
 - the results of specific consultation to inform this strategy
 - what the Government wants the Council to do
 - what the Council is already committed to deliver
 - what the Council's Housing Advisory Panel wants the Council to do
 - the availability of resources and different ways of addressing identified issues
- Using the above information the Council decided to focus on 3 aims:
 1. To increase the supply of affordable housing both in Stratford town and rural areas to meet local needs
 2. To enable people to live independently in good quality homes
 3. To reduce homelessness

4.1 Consultation to inform this strategy before it was drafted

Specific consultation for this housing strategy was undertaken to find out what different people thought were the most important housing issues in this District. Before the strategy was drafted the Council consulted:

- All residents via the Council's quarterly newsletter.
- Older people via two focus group meetings of the Senior Citizens' Action Network (SCAN).
- Young people via a youth council focus group and work with 'gifted and able' school pupils.
- 37 partner organisations via the District Housing Forum and the Housing Partnership. Partners were asked not only to identify priorities but also actions to deliver these priorities.
- Service users via detailed customer satisfaction and feedback forms.
- Council staff, including frontline staff.

The results of the consultation are shown below with the most important issues listed first.

Most important issues	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More affordable housing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More affordable housing in rural areas • More housing and support for vulnerable people to enable them to live independently
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More adaptations for disabled people • More affordable housing for single people • Reducing rough sleeping • Preventing homelessness

Issues viewed as quite important, all roughly equal in priority	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to housing advice • More information about what housing is available • More information about availability of housing grants • Reducing time spent in temporary accommodation • Improving housing benefit service • Helping people get private sector tenancies • Better design and quality of all housing

Issues viewed as least important	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working jointly with other Councils to deliver services • Helping people in the District to be offered homes in neighbouring districts and people from other areas to be offered homes in this District • Warm homes • More open market housing

As expected different people and groups had different priorities although there was considerable consensus about what they thought was important. The most significant difference was that the older people groups thought that more accommodation for people who are vulnerable or who have special needs together with more adaptations for the disabled were their top two priorities ahead of the provision of affordable housing. Older people were also far more interested in the availability of grants to repair and maintain their homes. The views of younger people reflected the views of other residents and partners.

Housing service users are generally very satisfied with the quality, timeliness and appropriateness of the services they receive but want more information about service availability, waiting times and how things work.

4.2 Options appraisal meeting

An options appraisal meeting involving senior decision makers with responsibility for, amongst other things, the Community Plan, the Corporate Strategy, the Local Plan, the Private Sector Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, regional housing work and other cross boundary work was held to determine priorities for this housing strategy. The meeting:

- Took into account the results of specific consultation to inform this strategy.
- Considered what Government expects housing authorities to do.
- Looked at known housing and support needs.
- Examined what the Council was already committed to do in existing strategies and plans, and what the Council's Housing Advisory Panel, which is a joint member and officer working group with delegated powers to take decisions, wants the Council to do.
- Reviewed the availability of Council and other resources including the resources the Council has already allocated to meet identified housing and support needs.
- Assessed mechanisms for addressing identified issues.

The Government's housing policy agenda is summarised in section 2.1. Known housing and support needs are detailed in section 3.

What the Council is already committed to do is set out in section 2. Particular attention was paid to the Council's Community Plan, and the housing targets in the Corporate Strategy. It was acknowledged that this housing strategy would of necessity build on the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008, Private Sector Housing Strategy 2005-2010 and Meeting Housing Needs in Stratford-on-Avon District, supplementary planning guidance. All these strategies are underpinned by consultation, are up to date and set out what the Council and its partners have already agreed to deliver and the resources the Council has already made available to do this.

It was noted that there was considerable overlap between what the Council is already committed to do as regards housing in the above strategies and plans, what the Housing Advisory Panel wants the Council to do, what housing strategy consultees thought was important and known housing and support needs.

It was decided that the main issues the Council should focus on and address could be grouped under 3 broad priority headings or aims:

- To increase the supply of affordable housing both in Stratford town and rural areas to meet local needs
- To enable people to live independently in good quality homes
- To reduce homelessness

Increasing the supply of affordable housing was inevitably the top priority. Although the provision of affordable housing is a corporate priority the consultation for this strategy highlighted the importance of also providing more affordable housing in rural areas i.e. outside Stratford town. Enabling people to live independently in good quality housing covers improving conditions in the private sector housing stock and the provision of appropriate housing and or support for vulnerable and older people. Reducing homelessness is about preventing homelessness, ending the use of bed and breakfast and extending people's choice of housing options.

It was then determined what the objectives should be for each aim and what resources and actions were required to deliver these objectives. Sections 5 to 7 of this strategy give more information about each of the three aims and detail service provision, what is being done, resources and what needs to be done. What needs to be done has fed into the action plan in section 8.

4.3 Consultation on the draft strategy

Whilst the strategy was being drafted the Council

- Held a consultation event involving 70 people from a wide range of partner organisations, including neighbouring authorities, and local community organisations in November 2005 to check that the aims and actions in the draft housing strategy were the right ones.
- Consulted residents, partner organisations, service users, council staff, councillors, and other interested parties. The draft housing strategy was widely distributed and advertised on the Council's website during the formal consultation period. 617 local people were directly consulted via Citizens' Panel questionnaires.

Feedback on the draft strategy was positive and demonstrated that the aims, objectives and actions set out in this strategy are what local people and partner organisations want the Council to address.

5. Aim 1: To increase the supply of affordable housing both in Stratford town and rural areas to meet local needs

Summary of key points

- 975 new affordable homes in the nine years 1997 to 2006; 458 of these homes in the last three years i.e. 2003 to 2006.
- Capital funding for affordable housing 2003-2008:
£7.4m direct Council funding
£9.2m Government grant funding
- £97,000 Council revenue funding for Rural Housing Enabler 2003-2008.
- Corporate Strategy target of 250 new affordable homes 2005-2008.

What we need to do:

- Determine amount, type and location of new homes required following completion of housing assessment
- Roll forward Meeting Housing Needs supplementary planning guidance into a Supplementary Planning Document
- Set a new corporate strategy target for affordable housing
- Decide whether to allocate sites exclusively for affordable housing
- Continue to negotiate affordable housing without subsidy
- Review existing Housing Partnership Agreement
- Set up a land banking facility
- Increase the amount of affordable housing in rural areas
- Bring empty private sector properties into use and let them at affordable rents

Objectives:

- Minimum of 190 affordable homes in Stratford town 2005 –2008.
- Minimum of 60 affordable homes in rural areas 2005-2008.

Outcome:

- A reduced gap between the number of households in need of affordable housing and the amount of affordable housing available by 250 households by March 2008.

5.1 Service provision

Enabling the provision of new affordable housing is the responsibility of the Council's Housing Policy & Development Team, which includes a qualified planning officer, together with other planning colleagues, housing association partners and a rural housing enabler. The role of the rural housing enabler, who is based in Warwickshire Rural Community Council, is to increase the number of homes in rural areas by assisting rural communities to assess their local housing needs and identify suitable development sites.

The Council currently works with five general needs housing association partners: Bromford Housing Group, Gloucestershire Housing Association, Jephson Homes Housing Association, South Warwickshire Housing Association and Warwickshire Rural Housing Association.

In addition, the Council's Environmental Protection Team and Housing Renewal Team are working together to re-use empty homes as affordable housing.

5.2 What we are doing

The Council has a good track record for enabling the provision of new affordable housing. Since transferring its housing stock to a housing association in late 1996, the Council has enabled:

- 975 new affordable homes in the nine years 1997 to 2006 following the transfer, an average of 108 homes a year.
- 458 of the 975 homes were provided in the last three years i.e. 2003 to 2006.

A Housing Partnership Agreement sets out the obligations of the Council and housing associations as regards standards for new development and management of housing stock.

The Council's Local Plan, part of the statutory development plan, sets out a robust policy framework to increase the supply of affordable housing. The Council's current policy is to require a proportion of affordable housing on all sites of 15 or more dwellings (0.5 hectares) in settlements of over 3,000 population and on all sites of 10 or more dwellings (0.4 hectares) in settlements of less than 3,000 population.

In rural areas i.e. outside Stratford-upon-Avon, the Local Plan allows for the provision of small-scale housing schemes in market towns and larger villages to meet needs identified by local communities. This is known as the 'Local Choice' initiative and the first two schemes under this initiative have just been completed. This authority is the first nationally to develop such schemes, which are a requirement of the new planning framework, and therefore the Council is working with Government to promote the initiative in the West Midlands. In smaller villages the Local Plan permits the development of affordable homes to meet local needs on so called exception sites, which would not otherwise be released for housing development.

Both local choice and exception schemes must be initiated by local communities and supported by the Parish Council or identified in an adopted Parish Plan. Parish Plans set out the development and other needs and aspirations of local communities. Any housing thus provided must be occupied in perpetuity by households with local connections to the town or village.

The Council's Meeting Housing Needs supplementary planning guidance aims to contribute to the creation of a balanced housing market by

boosting the provision of affordable housing, enhancing the sustainability of all new housing and increasing the supply of new homes to meet identified local needs, especially in rural areas. The main policy objectives include:

- Increasing the proportion of affordable housing normally sought from suitable development sites.
- Improving the funding and delivery of affordable housing through the capture and recycling of windfall increases in the value of development land ('betterment').
- Providing more detailed guidance on the type, size, mix, tenure and standards of new affordable housing, together with its proper integration with market housing within suitable housing sites.
- Updating the Council's policy on the acceptance (in exceptional circumstances) of off-site provision of affordable housing.
- Agreeing a definition of affordable housing.

To increase the affordable housing stock in this District even further the Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy proposes bringing empty properties back into use by giving landlords grants in return for landlords agreeing to let properties at affordable housing rents for five years. The Council completed a survey of landlords in Stratford-upon-Avon town in March 2006 to assess likely interest in this scheme. In 2004-2005 actions by the Council brought back 34 empty properties into use.

5.3 Resources

Until April 2003 the Government directly or indirectly funded nearly all new affordable homes. Since April 2003 Government funding has only been available for some affordable housing. Although the Council has successfully negotiated affordable housing without grant on 273 of the 450 new homes provided over the past three years, grant funding continues to be important on some sites; in particular for small-scale schemes in rural areas. Consequently, as affordable housing is a corporate priority the Council has chosen to invest considerable amounts of capital funding directly in affordable housing. At the same time the Council has continued to work at regional level to attract government grant funding to the District. Funding for affordable housing is set out below:

2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
£2.2m government grant funding	£3.2m government grant funding		£3.8m government grant funding	
£818,000 direct council funding	£1.5m direct council funding for 2004-2006 <i>and</i> £5.1m direct council funding for 2005-2008 (£6.6m direct council funding in total for 2004-2008)			

The direct Council funding between 2003/06 has been used to fund 42 new affordable homes and to provide an additional 20 temporary homes to reduce the Council's use of bed and breakfast for homeless households.

When the Council's corporate strategy identified the provision of 250 additional affordable homes as a corporate priority, the Council took a decision to invest another £5.1m in providing affordable housing. Discussions are continuing as to how this money should be spent but £600,000 has been earmarked for up to 6 additional temporary accommodation units to end the use of bed and breakfast. Some of the money is to be used for grants to enable landlords to bring empty homes back into use as well as to land-bank development sites to improve the certainty of delivering schemes.

To improve the amount of affordable housing in rural areas, the Council, in partnership with the now defunct Countryside Agency, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and some other agencies, has jointly funded the Rural Housing Enabler post for five years. The total cost of this post from October 2003 to October 2008 is £178,577 and the Council is funding 54% of this cost (£97,008). Funding for this post will be reviewed in 2008.

5.4 What we need to do

A detailed action plan is set out on page 41. All these actions centre on identifying what housing is needed and securing resources for affordable housing.

- Determine the amount, type and location of new homes required in this District following the completion of the joint housing assessment with Warwick District Council in 2006 and the outcome of a partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, i.e. the development plan for the West Midlands. This will include identifying the type of housing required by older people, and, in accordance with the recommendations of the Regional Housing Strategy, will assist the Council in deciding who the key workers are locally. Affordable housing thresholds will also be reviewed in the light of the assessments.
- Update the Council's supplementary planning guidance, 'Meeting Housing Needs in Stratford-on-Avon District', in light of the above information and roll it forward into a Supplementary Planning Document in accordance with the Government's new planning framework.
- Set a new corporate target for affordable housing by April 2008. The existing corporate strategy runs to 31 March 2008.
- Establish whether it is possible to allocate sites exclusively for affordable housing, as recommended in the Regional Housing Strategy.

- Continue to negotiate the development of affordable housing without public subsidy.
- Review the existing Housing Partnership Agreement to ensure that partners and the Council are meeting objectives.
- Increase the amount of affordable housing provided in rural areas, i.e. outside Stratford town. Therefore the Council and the Rural Housing Enabler will:

Encourage local housing need surveys and help communities identify suitable sites for affordable housing, some of which may be land banked by the Council.

Promote rural development plan policies i.e. 'local choice' and 'rural exception' schemes to boost the supply of affordable homes. The Council will help local communities to create plans and will then adopt completed plans.

- Improve the certainty of delivering affordable housing by setting up a land banking facility and then banking an average of one site per year. Money for purchasing sites will come from the £5.1m earmarked for affordable housing. The target for land banking sites will need to be reviewed by March 2008 to ensure it is in line with the Council's priorities as outlined in the new corporate strategy.
- Bring empty private-sector homes back into use in 2006-2007 as detailed above. A target of 2 properties has been set for 2006/2007 but this will be reviewed once the results of a survey to find out how many landlords are interested in doing this are known. Grants will be funded from the £5.1m the Council has earmarked for affordable housing.

6. Aim 2: To enable more people to live independently in better quality homes

Summary of key points

- House condition and energy efficiency survey completed 2003.
- The District's first Private Sector Housing Strategy adopted in 2005, and £470,000 committed annually for adaptations, repair and home improvement grants.
- The Council contributes to the cost of a handyman service and Home Safety Check Scheme.
- The District's first domestic violence refuge opened in 2005, as did a new learning disability scheme.

What we need to do:

- Review the Private Sector Housing Strategy by 2007
- Do a stock condition survey by 2008
- Set a new target for improving the homes of vulnerable people living in the private sector
- Reduce the waiting list for Disabled Facilities Grants
- Assess the feasibility of providing additional housing and /or support for young people, all homeless people, ex-offenders, people with learning disabilities, people with mental ill health and older people
- Develop a general older people housing policy
- Set a new target for number of people to be assisted by handyman service

Objectives:

- Improve the housing conditions of vulnerable people in the private sector.
- Enable an extra fifty people to live independently each year.

Outcomes:

- 10% fewer unfit properties in the District by 2011 (there are currently 685 unfit properties).
- An extra fifty people living independently each year.

6.1 Service provision

The Council's Environmental Protection team is responsible for identifying and dealing with unfit properties, properties in disrepair, empty homes and houses in multiple occupation. The Council's Housing Renewal Team then assists people to continue living independently by giving grants and advice to adapt or improve people's homes. The different grants are set out below but the Housing Renewal Team also do a small amount of private work for people who fail the means test and so fail to get grants.

Grants administered by the Housing Renewal Team helped 202 applicants to live independently in 2004/05. All clients are asked to complete a customer satisfaction form. In 2004 – 2005, 96% of clients rated the overall service of the Team as good or very good. Feedback from clients via the customer satisfaction forms is used to improve services, and is considered at all monthly performance meetings. For example, feedback about the quality of work done by contractors enables the Team to only work with contractors who do work to high standards.

A handyman service in the District is delivered and managed by Age Concern, Warwickshire who run a Care & Repair service. This service supports independent living by providing minor property repairs for elderly and vulnerable clients in receipt of means-tested benefits. The service funds four hours of labour, and materials are charged at cost. In addition, there is a Home Safety Check Scheme that involves a workman visiting older or vulnerable people in their homes to do safety checks and carry out necessary improvements to prevent falls and hospital admissions.

The County's Supporting People team is responsible for overseeing and determining the provision of housing related services to people to enable them to live independently in the community.

6.2 What we are doing

The Council's first comprehensive district wide house condition and energy efficiency survey for a number of years was completed in 2003. This led to the development of the Council's first Private Sector Housing Strategy, which aims to:

- Target privately rented properties in poor/unfit condition to return them to a safe condition and reasonable repair.
- Provide assistance to those in need of help to maintain, adapt or repair their homes so that they can live independently and safely.
- Secure the re-use of long-term empty properties to increase the stock of affordable housing.
- Improve energy efficiency and minimise fuel poverty.
- Promote available services and forms of assistance.

The various types of assistance set out in the Private Sector Housing Strategy include:

- Discretionary Minor Works Assistance grants of up to £5,000. These means-tested grants are available for minor repairs and adaptations, energy efficiency measures (to top up government grants or for households who do not qualify for government grants), security, radon remedial works, and home safety (up to a maximum of £500).
- Discretionary Major Works Assistance grants of up to £25,000. These means-tested grants are for returning unfit properties to fitness, or for properties in serious disrepair. Eligible works include structural instability, serious disrepair, dampness, lighting and ventilation, food facilities, water supply, bathroom facilities, foul and surface drainage and heating.

- Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants for up to £25,000 for disabled persons who require essential adaptations to their property. All grant applications, except for those for anybody aged under 19 years, are subject to a test of financial resources and all applications must be supported by social services.
- Empty Dwelling Assistance grants as detailed in section 5.
- Assistance in the form of loans – the development of loan products for the District is to be explored with Care and Repair partners, Age Concern Warwickshire.

Government targets require that in each local authority area 65% of vulnerable households living in the private sector must be living in decent homes by April 2006, 70% of households by 2010, and 75% of households by 2020; see section 2.1. A survey to find out the number of vulnerable people living in private sector accommodation that does not meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard was completed in early 2006. The Council has easily met the 2006 target and is expected to comfortably meet the 2010 target as well.

The Housing Act 2004 introduces a new evidence-based hazard rating system known as the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The new rating system looks at the whole of a property including outbuildings and gardens and also considers the most vulnerable groups for any particular hazard. Under this new scheme a property that was formerly classed as unfit is now known as a category 1 hazard.

The Council has a list of approximately 640 properties that have the potential to fall into the category 1 hazard. The Council is writing to the owners of these properties and offering to inspect the properties and advise owners what work is required. Any enforcement action will be targeted at private rented accommodation.

Information sheets for landlords, private tenants and other people detailing the new hazard rating system and what it will mean for owners and landlords have been produced and distributed via the Landlords' Forum, local advertising and via the Council's website.

All houses in multiple occupation are inspected at least once every 2 years and those categorised as high priority are inspected each year. Some houses in multiple occupation, i.e. those over 3 storeys and with more than 5 households living in them, will shortly be subject to compulsory licensing. It is estimated that 5 houses in multiple occupation in this District will need to be licensed.

The District's first domestic violence refuge opened in 2005, as did a new learning disability scheme. See sections 3.8.9 and 3.8.6.

6.3 Resources

The private sector housing strategy makes the following financial resources available for grants:

Annual Council grants	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Discretionary minor works assistance grants			
• Minor repairs & adaptations, and energy efficiency	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
• Security and home safety	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
• Radon remedial works	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000
Major works assistance grants	£42,000	£42,000	£42,000
Disabled facilities grants*	£320,000	£320,000	£320,000
Total	£470,000	£470,000	£470,000

* The Council is to consider whether to increase the budget for disabled facilities grants for 2006/07 and 2007/08 to £376,700.

Discretionary and major works assistance grants are funded entirely by the Council. Disabled facilities grants are 60% funded by Government and 40% by the Council. The private sector housing strategy allows budgets to be moved across, for example in 2005/06 a decision was taken to move the budget for major works assistance to fund additional disabled facilities grants and reduce the waiting list for adaptations.

Under the terms of the agreement at the time the Council transferred all its stock to South Warwickshire Housing Association, the Council makes available an additional annual £80,000 for disabled facilities grant work for the Association's tenants. South Warwickshire Housing Association also use approximately £140,000 of their own money annually to fund additional disabled facilities grant work for their tenants.

The Housing Renewal Team generates income from some of the grants. The Council earns 3% on general disabled facilities grants, 10% on disabled facility grant work funded by South Warwickshire Housing Association and 5% on private work for people who fail the means test for grants.

The Council makes an annual revenue contribution for the cost of the handyman service. £30,000 was provided in £2004-5 and £45,000 plus inflation at 3% for 2005-2006 and in 2006-2007. The Council also pays for the provision and maintenance of a vehicle for the handyman service. The Council, in partnership with the health service, also funds the Home Safety Check Scheme. The Council has committed £18,000 for the three years 2005-2008.

The Supporting People budget funds housing-related support to enable people to live independently.

6.4 What we need to do

- Review the private sector housing strategy before April 2007, and then every 2 years. This early review was built in to the strategy to allow the Council to assess emerging government guidance about the new hazard rating system.

- Carry out a new housing stock condition survey before 2008.
- Set a new target for improving the homes of vulnerable people living in private-sector accommodation following the results of the 2006 survey.
- Arrange to compulsorily licence some houses in multiple occupation in accordance with government legislation.
- Reduce the current 18-month waiting list for disabled facilities grants to 6 months by April 2007 and at the same time review this target and if appropriate set a new target for the amount of time people have to wait for grants. This is being done in direct response to concerns raised by service users about how long they have to wait for grants. The Government is currently consulting on amending the regulations for these grants and this could impact significantly on what the Council does.
- Assess the feasibility of providing additional accommodation and /or support as detailed in section 2.8 for
 - young people
 - all homeless people including people who sleep rough by providing emergency access accommodation
 - people who are ex-offenders
 - people with learning difficulties
 - people with mental ill health

The biggest obstacle to any new accommodation based schemes with support is the continuing uncertainty about Supporting People revenue funding for support, and the necessity of tying this in with capital funding for actual accommodation. Finding suitable sites for schemes may also be problematic although the Council could land-bank any suitable sites.

- Assess the feasibility of providing extra care housing for older people. One option is likely to involve remodelling (or adding to) existing very sheltered housing schemes. Following completion of the housing assessment in 2006 develop a general older people housing policy.
- Set a target for the number of people to be assisted to live independently by Care & Repair's handyman service.

7. Aim 3: To reduce homelessness

Summary of key points

- The Council's Housing Advice Team is the main source of housing advice in the District. The Citizens Advice Bureau and other specialist agencies complement its work.
- Homelessness strategy, which aims to prevent homelessness and provide the best possible housing and support services, rated as good by Government.
- Big reduction in use of bed and breakfast from 35 homeless households 3 years ago to an average of 4 single people in 2005/06.
- Corporate strategy targets: Have no homeless families in B&B accommodation by April 2007 and Help an additional 250 residents obtain means tested Benefits by April 2008.

What we need to do:

- Create a new homelessness strategy by 2008
- Help people get private sector tenancies by increased use of discretionary housing benefits and promotion of Council's revised deposit and rent in advance scheme
- Improve housing benefit take up and processing of claims
- Provide more temporary accommodation to end the use of B&B
- Ensure single people get more housing association properties
- Provide better information for households on the housing waiting list via new newsletter and developing choice based lettings
- Build on existing housing advice outreach work to ensure that nobody is disadvantaged.

Objectives:

- To annually increase by 10% the number of households where homelessness is prevented.
- To end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for all households, except in an emergency, by April 2007.
- To improve the choice of housing options.

Outcomes:

- Ten percent more cases of homelessness will be prevented each year. Where people do have to be accommodated in temporary accommodation, this will no longer be in bed and breakfast accommodation from April 2007; except in an emergency.

7.1 Service provision

The Council's Housing Advice Team (HAT) is responsible for managing a common housing waiting list on behalf of all the housing associations that have stock in the District. They also focus on preventing homelessness,

deal with homeless applications, and give general housing advice to improve people's housing options. Following feedback from customers in rural areas about difficulties in accessing housing advice, the Team provides weekly outreach housing surgeries around the District and has also increased the number of home visits they do.

Although the Team is by far the largest source of housing advice in the District, its work is complemented by the work of the Citizens Advice Bureaux, which provide general housing advice and specialist money advice including debt counselling, repossessions and mortgage arrears. Both the Housing Advice Team and the local Citizens Advice Bureau have been awarded the Quality Mark by the Community Legal Service for their services. A number of other agencies offer specialist assistance to particular client groups. See the District Homelessness Strategy for more information.

The Housing Advice Team expects to satisfy all the Government's best value performance indicators. It also has a number of detailed service targets. These include processing all housing waiting list applications and registering them within 15 days, and a target of determining 70% of homeless applications within 35 days.

Clients are very satisfied with the services provided by the Housing Advice Team. Customer satisfaction forms are sent to all people who go on the housing waiting list, are homeless or who receive general housing advice. In 2004/05, 89% of clients thought that the housing advice service was good or very good. Feedback from customers is examined at all monthly performance meetings and shapes service priorities. A recent example is improved interview facilities in response to a survey of service users.

7.2 What we are doing

As detailed in section 2.3.8 the District Homelessness Strategy has been assessed as good by the Government, and provides the overarching framework for the work of the Housing Advice Team and partner agencies. The onus for delivery of the strategy rests with the multi-agency District Housing Forum. The strategy has two main aims:

- To prevent people becoming homeless
- To ensure that people who are homeless receive the best possible housing and support services.

The Council was one of the first authorities in the country to appoint a homelessness prevention officer with all members of the Housing Advice Team focusing heavily on homeless prevention.

There is a close working relationship between the Council and housing associations. Consequently, during 2004 - 2005 the Council was able to directly nominate people from its Housing Waiting List to 90% of the 395 housing association properties that became vacant and which were not let to existing tenants. 34% of all these properties were let to people who had been accepted as homeless and in need of permanent accommodation. These figures are little changed from previous years.

People on the Housing Waiting List are able to choose exactly where they want to live – right down to individual properties, and consequently very few people refuse offers of properties. Satisfaction with the homes people are allocated via the List was demonstrated by a survey in 2003 in which over 3,500 tenants stated they were satisfied with where they were living.

For a number of years, the Council has run a successful rent deposit and rent-in-advance scheme, known as the Rent Express Scheme, to help people to access private rented sector accommodation. The scheme assisted 23 households in 2004/2005.

There is an independent mediation scheme to help young people who are homeless to return to their family homes, if appropriate.

Members of the District Housing Forum, and in particular the Salvation Army in partnership with other local churches, set up a hot food project in Stratford in late 2004 for people who are sleeping rough and for other vulnerable people. A member of the Housing Advice Team attends one of the evening hot food sessions on a weekly basis. As a result 11 vulnerable people, including 6 people who were sleeping rough, who would otherwise not have contacted or engaged with housing services, have been housed during the past year. Resettlement support is being provided to help these people sustain their tenancies.

Over the past two years, the Council has substantially reduced the use of bed and breakfast for households who are homeless. As this form of temporary accommodation is not ideal, this has benefited both the homeless households and the Council, which has made big cost savings, as set out in section 7.3. The Council and its partners have achieved this by preventing homelessness, providing 20 additional units of housing association temporary accommodation (see section 5.3) and renting properties for homeless people directly from private landlords.

The Council has also assessed the feasibility of setting up a private sector leasing scheme to provide accommodation for people who are homeless but has decided not to proceed with the scheme because of high private-sector rents.

The Government's target of having no families in bed and breakfast for more than 6 weeks by April 2004 was met by the Council. In the subsequent year 2005/06 only one family with children has been placed in bed and breakfast by the end of October (the time of writing), and then only for two nights.

A housing benefit welfare officer has been appointed in the last year to fast-track housing benefit claims for people who are homeless as well as people who are on housing benefit and are using the Council's Rent Express Scheme.

People who are homeless in the District rarely become homeless again because they are offered support whilst homeless and resettlement support once they have a permanent home. See section 3.8.4.

7.3 Resources

In order to enable the Housing Advice Team to focus more clearly on homelessness prevention rather than just dealing with people who are homeless, the Council has increased the staffing of the Team from 7 to 8 people in the past year. At the same time the Council has, as detailed in section 5.3, invested in increasing the number of units of temporary homes to 37. Consequently the average number of homeless households in bed and breakfast at any one time has decreased from about 35 households three years ago to an average of 4 single people in 2005/06 to date.

At the same time the appointment of a housing benefit welfare advisor and procedural changes with the Housing Advice Team has meant that the proportion of benefit the Council can claim back for temporary homes has increased. As a result of all these measures the net expenditure on bed and breakfast has been reduced significantly thus helping the Council to keep Council Tax down. See Appendix 1 for more information.

	Net expenditure on bed and breakfast for homeless households	Benefit uptake
2003/04	£354,571	26%
2004/05	£229,968	31%
2005/06	£62,205	41%

The Council receives £29,000 annually from the Government, which it has been spending on funding the homeless prevention officer post and a variety of homelessness prevention schemes, such as the mediation service.

7.4 What we need to do

- Create a new homelessness strategy by 2008.
- Assist some households who struggle to take up private sector tenancies because the amount of benefit that can be paid is often less than the rent charged. The Council has the discretion to use some money from Government to make up the difference between the benefit payable and the rent charged.
- Increase the take-up of benefits in this large rural District to avoid financial hardship, which can cause housing difficulties. Therefore the Council has set a corporate strategy target of helping an additional 250 residents obtain means-tested benefits between 2005 and 2008.
- Process benefit claims more quickly so that service users can rent properties more easily.
- Provide additional temporary homes to end the use of bed and breakfast for all households, except in an emergency.

- Promote the Council's revised Rent Express Scheme to help more households access the private rented sector. The willingness of private sector landlords to use the scheme has been falling in 2005/06.

Following feedback from private sector tenants and landlords the scheme has been reviewed and updated recently to make it more attractive to landlords. One of the changes to the scheme is that landlords will be encouraged to offer tenancies for a minimum period of one year rather than just the 6 months at present. This will also make the scheme more attractive to potential tenants including people who may be at risk of becoming homeless. Increased uptake of the scheme will therefore reduce the number of people requiring accommodation under homelessness legislation.

- Ensure single people and couples without children get a fair share of housing association properties that become vacant. Single people under 60 years old are the largest household group on the Housing Waiting List, making up 37% of the list. However, they only get 17% of all properties that become vacant. This occurs because existing housing association homes are more suitable for older people and for families than for single people and couples under 60 years old.

To address this issue, an under-occupation policy was introduced in mid 2005. To date, an additional 18 single people have been assisted by allowing them for the first time to be housed into 2-bed properties. There is, however, a need to ensure this policy is being implemented effectively and consistently by all associations.

- Give service users more information about the availability of affordable housing and their chances of getting housed. This action has arisen as a direct result of feedback from service users who also want to know more about possible alternative housing options. This will be done via newsletters to everyone on the housing waiting list. The introduction of choice based lettings, which involves advertising and allowing people to apply for available affordable housing properties, will also provide greater transparency about how to get affordable housing.

The move to choice based lettings is already underway but as it is a major project it will of necessity include a number of different stages such as promoting shared ownership, reassuring members that homes are let to local people and ensuring vacant adapted affordable homes are let to households with disabilities etc.

- Build on existing housing advice outreach work to ensure that people who do not usually engage with statutory services are not disadvantaged. This includes people who sleep rough, vulnerable and older people.

8 Housing Strategy Action Plan

Summary of key points

- The housing strategy is a work in progress and will therefore be reviewed annually as from summer 2007.
- The Council's Housing Advisory Panel is responsible for implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the strategy. Each quarter the Panel will receive a full progress report. Outcomes will be monitored on an annual basis.

This strategy is a work in progress. It will therefore be reviewed annually each summer as from 2007 in order to take into account the results of the joint housing assessment with Warwick District Council, changes in legislation and good practice and the development of regional and sub-regional joint working. Actions in the strategy will continue to be informed and shaped by ongoing consultation carried out by the Council to determine the views of residents. The 2007 review, and subsequent reviews, will also demonstrate how feedback from service users is continuing to be used to develop and improve service delivery.

An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the strategy to ensure that it meets legal requirements and the Council's equality policies.

Implementation of the strategy, monitoring of the action plan, evaluation and review of the strategy is the responsibility of the Council's Housing Advisory Panel. The Panel is a joint member and officer working group that has delegated decision making powers, and which reports directly to the Council's Executive. As part of the Council's performance management framework the Panel will at the end of each quarter receive a full housing strategy progress report. The Panel will then identify any necessary corrective action and address resource issues. The outcomes in the strategy will be monitored annually.

For more information about how the Council manages performance see Appendix 1.

Housing Strategy Action Plan, April 2006 – March 2011

Aim 1 : **To increase the supply of affordable housing, both in Stratford Town and rural areas, to meet local needs**

Outcome: A reduced gap between the number of households in need of affordable housing and the amount of affordable housing available by 250 households by March 2008

Objective	Actions	Target	Who is responsible?	Resources
<p>To enable a minimum of one hundred and ninety affordable homes in Stratford town between 2005 and 2008.</p>	<p>1.1 In light of emerging government planning policy, local and regional development plans, and the joint Stratford-on-Avon & Warwick District Councils housing assessment (scheduled for completion in 2006):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the amount, type and location of homes required in the District over the life of the strategy, then: • determine who the key workers are locally, • update current housing Supplementary Planning Guidance and adopt housing Supplementary Planning Documents as mechanisms to improve the quality and sustainability of housing. 	<p>Start April 2006 Complete by April 2007</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing, with Head of Planning and Building Control</p>	<p>Housing and Planning Policy Teams</p>
	<p>1.2 Set new targets for affordable housing in line with the results of the housing assessment when the Corporate Strategy is reviewed.</p> <p>Consult residents and decide on allocating sites exclusively for affordable housing.</p>	<p>Start April 2006 Complete by April 2008</p>		

Objective	Actions	Target	Who is responsible?	Resources
<p>To enable a minimum of one hundred and ninety affordable homes in Stratford town between 2005 and 2008.</p>	<p>1.3 Enable the development of 170 of the 250 affordable homes through negotiations that result in their development without public subsidy.</p>	<p>Started April 2005 Complete by April 2008</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing, with Head of Planning and Building Control</p>	<p>Housing and Planning Policy Teams</p>
	<p>1.4 Review the Housing Partnership Agreement to focus partnership activity on delivery of the housing strategy and meeting the Council's broader strategic objectives.</p>	<p>Start January 2007 Complete by April 2008</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing</p>	<p>Housing Policy Team</p>
	<p>1.5 Bring empty private sector properties back into use, in order to create additional affordable housing.</p> <p>1.6 Review location and target of number of empty properties to be brought back into use, following assessment of opportunities arising from Housing Act 2004.</p>	<p>2 homes provided between 2006 and 2007</p> <p>Start April 2006 Complete 2007</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing, with Head of Environment and Head of Member Services</p>	<p>Housing Renewal Team with Environmental Protection Team using enforcement and compulsory purchase powers.</p> <p>SDC capital funding for period 2005/08 to be used to provide grant incentive</p>

Objective	Actions	Target	Who is responsible?	Resources
<p>To enable a minimum of sixty affordable homes in rural areas between 2005 and 2008.</p>	<p>1.7 To identify housing needs in individual local communities</p>	<p>6 local housing needs surveys to be completed each year</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing</p>	<p>Rural Housing Enabler</p>
	<p>1.8 Instigate out site canvassing exercises to secure land in rural areas for affordable housing.</p>	<p>Five exercises instigated each year</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing</p>	<p>Local communities with the support of the Rural Housing Enabler</p>
	<p>1.9 Promote development plan policies aimed at boosting supply of affordable housing in rural areas, i.e. promote 'local choice' and 'rural exception' schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance for local communities to encourage production of parish/ town plans, especially including actions to address local housing needs. • Adoption of parish or town plans where compatible with development plan policies. • Review targets in line with the Corporate Strategy review. 	<p>Twenty communities advised annually</p> <p>18 plans over three years</p> <p>Start January 2007. Complete by April 2008</p>	<p>Head of Planning and Building Control</p>	<p>Planning Policy Team & Rural Housing Enabler</p>
	<p>1.10 Use the land banking facility to secure land for affordable housing. Consider use of Compulsory Purchase powers if appropriate.</p>	<p>1 site per year, on average, over life of strategy.</p>	<p>Head of Resources with Head of Planning and Building Control</p>	<p>SDC capital funding for period 2005/08</p>
	<p>1.11 Review this target following confirmation of Council funding for 2008 to 2011.</p>	<p>Start April 2007. Complete by March 2008</p>		

Aim 2

To enable more people to live independently in better quality homes

- **Outcome(s)** Ten percent fewer unfit properties in the District by 2011 (there are currently 685 unfit properties).
An extra fifty people living independently each year.

Objective	Actions	Target	Who is responsible?	Resources
Improve the housing conditions of vulnerable people in private-sector housing.	2.1 Review the private-sector housing strategy	Start April 2006 Complete by April 2007	Head of Revenues and Housing with Head of Environment	Housing Team with Environmental Protection Team
	2.2 Complete a new housing stock condition survey.	Start January 2007 Complete by Dec 2008	Head of Environment with Head of Revenues and Housing	Environmental Protection Team
	2.3 Quantify the homes of vulnerable households to be improved to decent homes standard.	Research completed April 2006	Head of Revenues and Housing with Head of Environment	Environmental Protection Team with Housing Renewal Team
	2.4 Set a target for improvement.	By April 2007		
	2.5 Introduce a licensing scheme to cover houses in multiple occupation that fall into the compulsory licensing category.	Already started Complete by June 2006	Head of Environment with Head of Revenues and Housing	Environmental Protection Team

Objective	Actions	Target	Who is responsible?	Resources
<p>Enable an extra fifty people to live independently each year.</p>	<p>2.6 Reduce the waiting time for obtaining a Disabled Facilities Grant.</p>	<p>Waiting time of 6 months by April 2007</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing</p>	<p>Housing Renewal Team</p>
	<p>2.7 Review the target for the waiting period for a Disabled Facilities Grant.</p>	<p>Start by April 2006 Complete by March 2007</p>		<p>Disabled Facilities Grant</p>
	<p>2.8 Enable vulnerable people to live independently over the longer term by providing support and/or accommodation to sustain independent living. Assess feasibility of providing additional accommodation and/or support for the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young people • single homeless (including emergency access) • ex-offenders • people with learning difficulties • people with mental ill health <p>2.9 Assess feasibility of enabling extra care housing for older people and develop an older people general housing policy and feed into new planning framework.</p>	<p>Start by April 2006 Complete by June 2007</p> <p>Start October 2006 Complete by April 2008</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing</p>	<p>Housing Team with housing association partners.</p> <p>Warwickshire Supporting People Team</p> <p>Warwickshire County Council Social Services</p> <p>Planning Policy Team</p>
	<p>2.10 Following the review of the Care & Repair service, set a target for the number of people helped to live independently through the work of the handyperson.</p>	<p>Ongoing. Complete by July 2006</p>		<p>Head of Revenues and Housing with Environmental Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Care & Repair, Warks.</p>

Aim 3 To reduce homelessness

Outcome: Ten percent more cases of homelessness will be prevented each year. Where people do have to be accommodated in temporary accommodation, this will no longer be in bed and breakfast accommodation from April 2007, except in an emergency.

Objective	Actions	Target	Who is responsible?	Resources
<p>To annually increase by 10% the number of households where homelessness is prevented.</p>	<p>3.1 To create a new homelessness strategy</p>	<p>Start April 2007 Complete by April 2008</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing</p>	<p>Housing Policy Team District Housing Forum</p>
	<p>3.2 To use discretionary housing payments to support private sector tenancies.</p>	<p>Spend 100% of budget every year</p>		<p>Benefits Team and Welfare Officer</p>
	<p>3.3 Help an additional 250 residents obtain means-tested benefits</p>	<p>Started April 2005 Complete by April 2008</p>		<p>Benefits Team</p>
	<p>3.4 Reduce the time it takes to process housing benefit claims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achieve an average of 28 days for new claims • achieve an average 8 days for claim changes 	<p>Start April 2006 Complete by April 2007</p>		

Objective	Actions	Target	Who is responsible?	Resources
<p>To end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for all households (except in an emergency) by April 2007.</p>	<p>3.5 Add up to 6 properties to the stock of temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Already started Complete by April 2007</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing</p>	<p>£600,000 of allocated £5.1m SDC capital funding for period 2005/08 to be used</p>
	<p>3.6 Increase the uptake of the Council's Rent Express Scheme</p>	<p>40 successful applications a year.</p>		<p>Housing Advice Team with Housing Benefits Team</p>
	<p>3.7 Ensure single people under 60 years old get a fairer proportion of housing association properties. All local housing associations to let 2-bed properties to single people.</p>	<p>10% increase by April 2008 in number of single people under 60 years getting 2-bed properties over 2005/06 baseline.</p>		<p>Housing Policy Team with Housing Advice Team Housing Association Partners</p>

Objective	Actions	Target	Who is responsible?	Resources
<p>To improve the choice of housing options.</p>	<p>3.8 To improve awareness of different housing options</p> <p>Four affordable housing press releases each year to promote shared ownership and other affordable housing options as from April 2006.</p> <p>Twice yearly newsletter to everyone on the housing waiting list as from June 2007.</p>	<p>Annual 10% increase in number of people on the Housing Waiting List who are better informed of their housing options over June 2007 baseline</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing with Head of Member Services</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team with Public Relations Team</p> <p>£3,000 per annum for newsletter</p>
	<p>3.9 Ensure that people that are harder to reach are not excluded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To engage with people sleeping rough each year • To add people who have been sleeping rough onto the housing waiting list • To attend two community events for older and vulnerable people each year 	<p>10 new clients each year</p> <p>10 new applications each year</p> <p>Engage with at least 150 older and vulnerable people each year</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing</p>	<p>Homeless Prevention Officer</p> <p>Housing Renewal Team</p>
	<p>3.10 Introduce a choice-based lettings scheme.</p>	<p>Start April 2006</p> <p>Scope by Jan 2007</p> <p>Introduce by 2010</p>	<p>Head of Revenues and Housing with Head of Change and Performance</p>	<p>Housing Team with ICT development team and local housing associations.</p>

Appendix 1

How the Council manages performance

In October 2004 the Council underwent a Comprehensive Performance Assessment by the Audit Commission and was rated as 'weak' on a scale of excellent, good, fair, weak or poor. Weaknesses were found in the strategic leadership and management of the Council. To address these issues a Council Improvement Plan was drawn up. In December 2005 the Audit Commission published a follow up report stating that the Council is progressing well, focussing on key areas, has clearer priorities and a better strategic focus.

The Council's Best Value Performance Plan 2005/2006 sets out how the Council will deliver the targets set out within both the Council Improvement Plan and its Corporate Strategy (see section 2.3.2.).

Consultation and feedback from residents and other stakeholders including service users is an integral and ongoing part of this process and shapes what the Council does. For example to ensure the corporate strategy continues to address the issues that matter most to people in the District, the Council annually measures the quality of life and undertakes public consultation. Customer satisfaction forms are used for all frontline services and results are analysed and acted on each month.

The Council's Performance Management Framework links the Council's Community Plan, Corporate Strategy, Service Plans and Team/ Individual Plans. Improvement planning is done via internal and external assessments such as Comprehensive Performance Assessment and best value reviews which feed into the performance management framework.

Service Plans identify the tasks the Council undertakes to deliver its Corporate Strategy and Council Improvement Plan. These tasks feed into individual work plans for each Council employee via appraisals. Service plans report progress against individual projects and performance against priority indicators. The plans are monitored and managed through a two-tier approach:

- The Council's Executive and Management Team focus primarily on the strategic issues of the Corporate Strategy and Council Improvement Plan. Performance is reported quarterly.
- Heads of Service focus on the strategic issues they are directly responsible for and operational issues. Services monitor their own performance monthly, taking corrective action where necessary. Service managers meet with relevant member portfolio holders each month to consider performance against targets and customer satisfaction feedback, with exceptions reporting to the Council's Management Team on a quarterly basis.

What happened in 2004 – 2005

In 2004 - 2005 the Council selected 20 key priority indicators for improvement, including 5 housing indicators that are set out below.

Key housing priority indicators	Target	Result
Unfit private sector dwellings made fit/demolished through direct action by the Council	0.5%	0.31% - target not met. Figure represents an increase over last year of 8 properties. Indicator withdrawn for 2005/06 but activity increasing as per Private Sector Housing Strategy.
Number of social housing units built	100	201 - met target
Average length of stay in Bed and Breakfast of households, which include dependant children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need	5 weeks	1.9 weeks – met target In 2003/04 these households spent an average of 7.7 weeks in B&B. This is a performance improvement of 5.8 weeks since last year.
Average time for processing new benefit claims	40 days	40 days - met target
Average time for processing change of circumstances for benefit recipients	20 days	17 days - met target

The following additional housing achievements for 2004 /2005 are also highlighted in the Council's Best Value Performance Plan 2005/06:

- Developing the District's first refuge for women escaping domestic violence. The refuge opened in April 2005.
- The Council agreeing to invest an additional £5.1m over the next three years in affordable housing.
- Achieving a net saving of £124,500 in spending on bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people in 2004/05 compared with 2003/04.

What is happening 2005 - 2008

The Council is committed to delivering the targets set out within the Corporate Strategy 2005 –2008 and Council Improvement Plan. Housing objectives and actions are set out below:

Council's Corporate Strategy 2005-2008		
Housing related objectives	Specific targets for 2005/2006	Long term targets to 2008
To provide a range of housing and accommodation to meet different local needs	Provide 100 new affordable homes by March 2006	Provide 250 new affordable housing units across the District by March 2008
	Reduce average time in Bed and Breakfast for homeless families to 1 week by March 2006	Have no homeless families in Bed and breakfast accommodation by April 2007
To combat deprivation	Help 50 residents obtain means tested benefits by March 2006	An additional 250 residents to obtain means tested benefits by April 2008

Council Improvement Plan 2005-2008				
Specific housing weaknesses	Key actions	Specific targets for 2005/06	Long term targets to 2008	Outcome
Weaknesses were identified in the Council's strategic approach to housing services	Review and develop the strategic direction for housing services	Commence consultation with partner organisations by May 2005 (<i>completed</i>) Adopt new housing strategy by April 2006	Identified specific housing needs being met by March 2008	Positive external assessment of service
	Undertake a homelessness service review & implement recommendations	Undertake review by August 2005 (<i>completed</i>)	Reduced levels of homelessness by April 2006 with reduction in budget spend. End use of Bed and Breakfast by April 2007	Improve the quality of life for a vulnerable sector of the community

Key national housing related Best Value Performance Indicators for 2005/2006

- BV 183a Length of stay in temporary accommodation (bed and breakfast)
- BV 183b Length of stay in temporary accommodation (hostel)
- BV 202 Number of rough sleepers
- BV 203 Change in number of families in temporary accommodation
- BV 213 Repeat homelessness
- BV 214 Housing Advice Service – preventing homelessness
- BV 78a Speed of processing new housing benefit / council tax benefit claims
- BV 78b Speed of processing changes in circumstances for housing benefit and council tax benefit
- BV 225 Actions against domestic violence
- BV 64 Number of vacant private sector dwellings returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority

Appendix 2

List of other strategies and plans and how to get hold of them

Stratford-on-Avon District Council Best Value Performance Plan

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/policies.cfm>

Stratford-on-Avon District Council Corporate Strategy 2005 - 2008

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/policies.cfm>

Stratford-on-Avon District Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 2008

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/policies.cfm>

Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Strategy 2002- 2007, and Review 2003- 2004

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/policies.cfm>

Stratford-on-Avon District Council Local Plan 1996 – 2011

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning/planning-609.cfm>

Meeting Housing Needs in Stratford-on-Avon District 2006, Supplementary Planning Guidance

Contact Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2005-2010

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/files/seealsodocs/2803/Private%20Sector%20Housing.pdf>

South Warwickshire's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2004

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/policies.cfm>

Strategy to reduce crime, disorder and drugs misuse in South Warwickshire 2005 - 2008

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/files/seealsodocs/2696/Crime%20and%20Disorder%20Reduction%20Strategy%202005%2D2008.pdf>

Stratford District Community Plan to 2015

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/policies.cfm>

Warwickshire Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010

<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/web/corporate/pages.nsf/9e8f852722d30395802569bc00470cd4/9a5cf41e9d16705780256bf7003820dc?OpenDocument>

Warwickshire Strategic Partnership Plan 2005- 2008

Contact Warwickshire County Council.

Warwickshire Structure Plan (WASP)

Contact Warwickshire County Council.

West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy

<http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/W%20M%20Regional%20Homelessness%20Strategy.htm>

West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005: delivering a housing vision for the West Midlands in the 21st century: pathways of choice

<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=63>

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy 2004

<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=49>

West Midlands Regional Supporting People Strategy

Contact West Midlands Regional Assembly

For all Warwickshire strategies contact

Warwickshire County Council

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Shire Hall

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Tel: 01926 410410

<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/home>

For all West Midlands strategies contact:

West Midlands Regional Assembly

Regional Partnership Centre

3rd Floor, Albert House

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For all other strategies contact:

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