



# Stratford-on-Avon District

## Housing Strategy 2009 –2014

### Review 2012

incorporating the Homelessness Strategy &  
Private Sector Housing Strategy

---

There are no changes to this Strategy document or the Executive Summary as a result of Review 2012. However, the Action Plan, Evidence Log, Consultation Log and Equality Impact Assessment have been updated. It should be noted that the Local Area Agreement is now defunct.

---

If you find the text in this document difficult to read,  
it may be possible to supply it in a format better  
suited to your needs.

A full draft of this Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014 was published for public consultation in September 2009. The text and Action Plan were changed following consideration of all the responses received.

**This Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Strategy 2009-2014 was endorsed by Stratford District Partnership Core Group on 8 December 2009 and was adopted by The Cabinet of Stratford-on-Avon District Council on 8 February 2010.**

See the Council's website: [www.stratford.gov.uk](http://www.stratford.gov.uk) (Housing Strategy under A- Z) for copies of the following Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Strategy 2009 - 2014 documents:

- This Strategy
- Executive Summary
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Evidence Log
- Consultation Log

If you have any queries about this Strategy, or want more information, please telephone 01789 260842 or email: [renata.mosz@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:renata.mosz@stratford-dc.gov.uk)

## Foreword

Councillor Stephen Gray  
Portfolio Holder for Revenues and Housing

As the strategic housing authority, Stratford-on-Avon District Council is determined to address housing needs, support vulnerable people and widen choice. In an environment where the economic climate has made it impossible to meet targets for new affordable housing and increased demand could have overwhelmed support services, our performance has been strong. In this situation, it has been important to plan how to deal with the circumstances and not simply just to react to them. For this reason I believe that now is the right time to be publishing an up to date Housing Strategy for 2009 to 2014.

The Strategy sets out housing and housing related support issues that matter to local people. It guides the housing activities of the District Council and how we work with the partners that we rely on to help support our local communities.

We continue to seek improvements to our services and the quality of housing in the District. The Council's work on Local Choice housing has been widely praised and we continue to see small affordable housing schemes being built in the rural part of our District. Our commitment to reducing the number of empty homes is beginning to bear fruit. We are working hard to reduce the time it takes to process grants for essential property adaptations. The introduction of the Home Choice Plus initiative makes seeking a home a more open and transparent experience. Our Rent Express scheme helps people afford private rented accommodation and has been revised to provide better value for money.

Extensive consultation on the Strategy has taken place with residents, partners and service users and we have also considered the customer satisfaction feedback that we have received. Over 640 residents have made their views known via the Council's Citizens Panel alone and many others gave their opinions at different consultation events. A consultation event for partners to consider the Draft Strategy was held in September 2009 and the draft has been widely circulated for comment.

The Council's Housing Advisory Panel and our partnership groups will monitor delivery of the Strategy. As the economic environment and local

situations change we will need to continue to keep the Strategy under review. We are determined to make the most of any new opportunities, to react to changing circumstances and to minimise risks to housing delivery.

More than ever it is important for us to work together in a co-ordinated way in order to maximise those resources that we do have and I hope that this Housing Strategy will help us to achieve that. Can I thank all those who have given their time to contribute to this document and I look forward to working with you in the future.

# Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014

## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Introduction</b>	1
Vision, aims and themes (diagram)	2
Key housing challenges	4
The reasons for writing a new Housing Strategy	5
Sub-regional and partnership working on shared housing issues	6
How the Housing Strategy links with other strategies	7
<b>Aim 1: To increase the supply and choice of good quality affordable housing for local people.</b>	12
Theme A: Enabling more and better affordable housing	13
<b>Aim 2: To improve existing housing and help people live as independently as possible.</b>	20
Theme B: Better homes	21
Theme C: Housing options for older people	26
<b>Aim 3: To prevent homelessness and the harm caused by it.</b>	30
Theme D: Tackling homelessness	31
Theme E: Young people	34
<b>Aim 4: To strengthen the support to local communities.</b>	38
Theme F: Local Development Framework	39
Theme G: Gypsies and Travellers	39
Theme H: Reducing disadvantage	41
Theme J: Continuing to meet residents' needs	42
<b>Action Plan</b>	See separate document

## Introduction

Stratford-on-Avon District is an attractive place to live. Residents, many of whom have chosen to move into the District, generally enjoy a high quality of life. But there are also some significant housing problems.

Housing Strategy 2009-2014 sets out how the Council and its partners will work together to ensure that more people in the District get the housing and housing related support that they need and choose. It covers all tenures including owner occupation, private rented accommodation and affordable housing.

This Strategy sets out a clear agenda and actions to tackle the important housing issues facing the District. It therefore addresses disadvantage. A formal **Equality Impact Assessment** was undertaken before the Strategy was drafted. It shows that the impact of the Strategy on low income households and each equality 'strand' (that is race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability) will be either neutral or positive. Partners helped the Council to identify some potential impacts, and the Assessment was reviewed by the District Housing Forum in September 2009. Actions will be kept under review in order to identify and correct any likely negative effects on any sector of the community.

This Strategy does not set the overall targets for the number of new homes to be built in the District over the coming years, or where those homes should be located. This is one of the main purposes of the Local Development Framework (the Core Strategy and associated policies).

Housing Strategy 2009 - 2014 covers all the important aspects of private sector housing, and as a result, the Council no longer has a separate private sector housing strategy. It is the Council's intention that the Homelessness Strategy will also be incorporated into the next review of this Strategy. Until then, this Housing Strategy sets out the principal issues and areas of action for preventing and responding to homelessness.

Members and partners told us to make the Housing Strategy more user-friendly and so it only summarises the main issues. A separate **Evidence Log** and a separate **Consultation Log**, together with the Equality Impact Assessment, underpin and support this Strategy document and provide more detail.

This Strategy's action plan sets out 'high level' strategic actions. Implementation and operational actions are included in service plans or strategies and policies that sit below this Strategy such as the *Empty Homes Strategy*.

**The vision, four aims and nine themes of Housing Strategy 2009-2014 are detailed in the diagram on the next page.**

## Stratford District Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy

Children and Young People   ♦   Stronger Communities   ♦   Healthier Communities and Older People  
 Safer Communities   ♦   Economy and Employment   ♦   Climate Change and Environment

### Housing Strategy 2009 - 2014

**Vision:** A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

#### Aim 1

To increase the supply and choice of good quality affordable housing for local people.

Enabling more and better affordable housing

#### Aim 2

To improve existing housing and help people to live as independently as possible.

Better homes

Housing for older people

#### Aim 3

To prevent homelessness and reduce the harm caused by it.

Tackling homelessness

Young people

#### Aim 4

To strengthen the support to local communities.

Local Development Framework

Gypsies and Travellers

Reducing disadvantage

Continuing to meet residents' needs

This page has been left intentionally blank



Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

### **Key housing challenges in the District**

- Ensuring that everyone has equal access to services is important. The District is large (979 square km) with a dispersed settlement pattern: almost four-fifths of the population live in rural areas. Some people face reduced accessibility to services due to the limited public transport available in some parts of the District.
- The population of the District is projected to grow by 25% between 2007 and 2031 from 117,800 to 145,600. This increase is far higher than projected regional and national (England) population growth rates of 13.9% and 19% respectively.
- Currently 23.5% of residents are over pensionable age; this compares to 20.3% for Warwickshire and 18.9% across England. This is the age group that is projected to grow fastest by 2031, with particularly big increases in the number of people aged over 84.
- As most people want to live independently and stay in their own homes for as long as possible, it is essential that steps are taken to ensure existing housing is up to the job.
- Despite falls in average local house prices in the period to mid 2009, and a drop in the number of sales, the local housing market remains generally stable and buoyant. 'Market' housing in the District is the least affordable to buy in Warwickshire. This particularly affects households looking to buy their first home, and obliges more people to seek private rented or affordable housing.
- Privately rented accommodation is generally of good quality. It can, however, be expensive. This restricts who can afford to rent a home of the appropriate size.
- There is a shortage of affordable housing (i.e. regulated housing available to those who cannot afford full market prices). The latest assessment of District-wide housing needs points to an annual shortfall of 532 affordable homes.
- One of the main reasons for young people leaving the District is the lack of affordable accommodation.
- There is inadequate provision of housing and support for people who are vulnerable or at risk of homelessness.
- There is a need to improve substantially the energy efficiency of much of the existing housing in the District. Reducing waste will allow more people to afford to heat their homes properly, and will contribute to a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## The reasons for writing a new Housing Strategy

The Council's Housing Strategy 2006-2011 was adopted in June 2006, and has been updated annually. Housing Strategy 2009 - 2014 builds on and reviews the previous Strategy to ensure that our approach continues to meet the needs and expectations of as many local residents as possible. There are four main reasons why the Council and its partners decided to undertake a major review of the Housing Strategy at this time:

- 1) To check what housing issues are important to residents, partners and service users:

The results of the consultation programme, and the key points raised in the Place Survey 2008, are set out in the comprehensive **Consultation Log**. In addition, the views of vulnerable people informed the recent needs analyses underpinning the Supporting People 5 Year Strategy, and are taken into account in the strategic reviews of Supporting People services.

- 2) Changes to the research and evidence base underpinning this Strategy:

The **Evidence Log** lists and describes all the evidence that has been taken into account when drafting this Strategy. Significant recent updates include:

- Single People Experiencing Housing Difficulties Monitoring 2009
- Survey of Advertised Private Rents in Stratford-on-Avon District 2009
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Market Review 2009
- Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2008 + update 2009
- Development Viability Assessment Model 2009

- 3) To achieve value for money:

Having an up to date housing strategy enables the Council and its partners to continue to focus resources on what really matters to people and to achieve better value for money. The Council continues to align resources with locally agreed priorities and is committed to providing services that are 'best in class' given the resources available.

Being clear about the strategic housing priorities in the District makes it easier for us to continue to attract external investment, as we can make a stronger case for an available funding. This is

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

important because whilst the actions in this Strategy are timely and realistic in the current economic climate, delivery of some actions depends heavily on the ability of the Council and other local housing organisations to secure Government and other funding.

Closer partnership working contributes to achieving value for money. This Strategy therefore describes in more detail some programmes that partners are leading on.

- 4) To take account of a number of other recent strategies that impact on housing:

The most significant of these strategies are discussed later in this section. Other relevant strategies and plans are detailed in the Evidence Log.

### **Sub-regional and partnership working on shared housing issues**

The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005 identified sub-regional housing market areas that have housing markets with similar characteristics. It was expected that, in each area, the local authorities would work within a partnership for the purpose of conducting strategic housing market assessments and formulating housing policies.

Stratford-on-Avon District joined Warwick District Council and the six Worcestershire housing authorities in the South Housing Market Area. This partnership working has produced:

- A strategic housing market assessment (and annual monitoring updates) for the whole housing market area. This research provides a useful comparison for a more detailed study of the local housing markets operating in Stratford-on-Avon District that is a key part of the evidence base for both this Housing Strategy and the District's Core Strategy.<sup>1</sup>
- The creation and implementation of a common affordable housing allocation scheme – Home Choice Plus.<sup>2</sup>

Stratford-on-Avon District Council withdrew from South Housing Market Area Partnership in Autumn 2009 (although it remains committed to the separate Home Choice Plus partnership and to periodical review of the operation of the allocation scheme).

Our sub-regional partnership working on housing issues is now focused on two, overlapping combinations of local authority areas:

---

<sup>1</sup> The detailed study covering just Stratford-on-Avon District is: *Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Market Review 2009 Final Report* Outside Consultants August 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Home Choice Plus is described in more detail on page 31 of this Strategy under Theme D: Tackling Homelessness.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

- Warwickshire – joint working with Warwickshire County Council, the other Warwickshire housing authorities and other organisations working in the County to deliver:
  - The shared vision of the Warwickshire Sustainable Community Strategy through the Local Area Agreement
  - More co-ordinated provision of services such as those that enable independence or better housing for older people.
- Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire (CSW) – joint working across planning, housing and economic development disciplines with the other local authorities in the area and other key public agencies. This collaboration has produced the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sub-Regional Housing Growth Strategy, the primary purpose of which is to provide a steer for current and medium term investment decisions by the Homes and Communities Agency.

As the CSW authorities were not ready to formulate a comprehensive joint housing strategy, the Council chose to prepare a new housing strategy covering just Stratford-on-Avon District. The priorities identified in this Housing Strategy can inform any future sub-regional housing strategy.

The Council is committed to develop further its joint working on housing issues to ensure better and more co-ordinated services and provision are made available to the District's residents. The Council will therefore look to partner – formally or informally as appropriate – with other organisations across the public, voluntary and community, and housing sectors whenever this would be helpful.

## **How the Housing Strategy links with other strategies**

### **Warwickshire Sustainable Community Strategy**

*People, Places & Prosperity* - a Sustainable Community Strategy for Warwickshire 2009-2026 details the long term vision for the County. The Strategy has nine outcomes, one of which is "Our housing is appropriate and affordable".

The Warwickshire Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 (LAA) is the key mechanism for partnership working to deliver the Warwickshire Sustainable Community Strategy. The LAA is an agreement between central government, all the Warwickshire local authorities and other local publicly funded organisations. It will be reviewed every 3 years. It currently has six key 'blocks' but these are under review:

- Children and young people
- Safer communities
- Stronger communities
- Healthier communities and older people
- Economic development and enterprise
- Climate change and the environment

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

and three cross-cutting themes: Equalities and cohesion; Culture, sport and active recreation; and Rurality.

Delivery of the LAA is measured via agreed indicators: those of most relevance to this Housing Strategy include:

LAA theme: Stronger communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) (NI 155)</li> </ul>
LAA theme: Healthier communities and older people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently (NI 139) (local indicator)</li> <li>• Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living (NI 141)</li> </ul>
LAA theme: Climate change and the environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackling fuel poverty - number of people receiving income-based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating (NI 187) (local indicator)</li> </ul>

### **Warwickshire Health Inequality Strategy 2009 - 2026**

The Strategy seeks to reduce health inequalities and improve life expectancy in Warwickshire. The Strategy suggests 'ways' in which the County and local organisations by working together on programmes can address health inequality across Warwickshire. One of the 'ways' focuses on reducing poverty by maximising income through benefits advice, debt management and financial management programmes; reducing homelessness and fuel poverty. Indicators include NI 155 – Number of affordable homes and NI 187 – Tackling fuel poverty.

### **Quality of Life for an Ageing Population Strategy 2008 - 2012**

The Strategy sets out how Warwickshire County Council and its partners will respond to the opportunities and challenges of an ageing population. Residents identified six strategic priorities:

- Supporting people in their home
- Safety at home and in the community
- Valuing older people
- Equality, access and dignity
- Preventative support services in the community
- Improving access to information and advice

The ten year strategy is supported by annual implementation plans, and includes housing and housing related issues.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

### **Warwickshire Supporting People 5 Year Strategy 2008-2013**

The Warwickshire Supporting People programme co-ordinates the provision of housing related support services (both 'accommodation based' and 'floating support') to vulnerable people to allow them to achieve or maintain independence. The Strategy identifies three priority groupings of people where new resources will be invested in the future as savings are made across the programme:

- Homeless people, and people fleeing domestic abuse
- Offenders, people with mental health problems, and people with substance misuse problems
- Young people at risk, young people leaving care, and teenage parents

These priority groups align closely with those identified by the District Council and Stratford District Housing Forum as the two groups of vulnerable people in this District "with the most urgent unmet accommodation and support needs":

- Young people aged 16-25 years
- Single homeless people of all ages

### **Stratford-on-Avon District Sustainable Community Strategy**

Stratford District Partnership's *Improving the Quality of Life for everyone – a 2026 Vision for Stratford District* is the Sustainable Community Strategy for the District. It sets out a long-term vision for the area and provides the context for the Housing Strategy. *Improving the Quality of Life* identifies a number of key challenges relevant to the Housing Strategy and includes 10 'housing' goals (as well as many more that are more loosely related to housing):

#### ***Children and Young People***

- Improving vulnerable young people's wellbeing and independence through enhancing their accommodation and support options.

#### ***Stronger Communities***

- Giving everyone 'anytime anywhere' access to services and facilities through digital and other technologies.
- Helping communities identify sites for affordable housing.
- Extending the local choice scheme.
- Making more accommodation available by bringing more empty homes into use and encouraging older people who want to do so to move to smaller properties.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

### ***Healthier Communities and Older People***

- Improving, expanding and extending at-home services, and adapting more properties to meet the needs of older people and people with disabilities.
- Delivering more accessible homes.

### ***Climate Change and Environment***

- Supporting and setting standards for home energy efficiency and the supply and use of renewable energy.
- Promoting and supporting home working.
- Ensuring new development meets strict design quality standards.

## **The District Council's Corporate Strategy 2009-2012**

The Strategy sets out how the District Council will lead Stratford-on-Avon District forward, and improve the quality of life locally so that by 2012 it is one of the top ten places to live in the country. The Strategy has four aims:

- A district where everyone shares an improved quality of life
- A clean and green district
- A district where business and enterprise can flourish
- An excellent council that is well managed and respected by the community

One of the outcomes under the first aim is 'more housing is available at a price local people can afford'. The two priority actions under this outcome are:

- Bring empty properties back into use across the District and increase the number of affordable homes in rural areas.
- Increase the proportion of 2 and 3 bed room properties on new developments.

## **The Development Plan**

The statutory 'development plan' for the District currently comprises the *West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) 2004*, and the *Stratford-on-Avon District Local Plan Review 1996-2011*, adopted on 14 July 2006. These documents set out policies and proposals to guide development in the District.

Both of the above plans are currently under review. In particular, Phase Two of the RSS Revision will roll-forward the strategic housing provisions for the District to 2026. Phase Three will include critical rural services and provide a framework for Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

In addition, the District Council is producing its Local Development Framework (LDF). This portfolio of policy documents will replace the Local Plan Review. The key document within the LDF will be the Core Strategy. Collectively, the LDF documents will contain policies and proposals that:

- Set a vision for the District by 2026, and define core objectives relevant to housing.
- Give effect at a local level to the strategic housing provisions of the RSS.
- Determine the scale, location and nature of new housing provision.
- Provide a framework for managing change within the built environment, including existing housing stock.
- Identify more sites to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers.

Supplementary planning documents will provide detailed guidance on planning policies and implementation.

The Long Marston Estate has been identified by Government as a possible site for an eco-town known as **Middle Quinton**. If agreed, this might provide a new town of approximately 6,000 new homes (of which about 2,000 would be affordable homes). A clear strategic housing role for a new town in this location has not yet been defined. The owners of the site are also considering alternative development proposals for the site.



Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

**Aim 1:**  
**To increase the supply and choice of good quality affordable housing for local people.**

**Local Area Agreement outcomes:**

More affordable housing \* Empowered communities

**Stratford Sustainable Community Strategy objectives:**

- Helping communities identify sites for affordable housing
- Extending the local choice scheme
- Ensuring new development meets strict design quality standards

**CONTRIBUTION TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

Sufficient and appropriate affordable housing – intended for people who cannot afford to buy or rent a suitable home at ‘market’ prices – is a key ingredient for truly sustainable communities in both town and country. It allows for mixed income and all-age neighbourhoods and villages where young people, singles and families, and retired people can ensure local vitality. Good quality affordable housing promotes social cohesion; improves health; and contributes to an attractive environment.

Existing and new affordable housing should meet local needs. Active participation in the planning of new affordable housing and the updating of existing housing is an important and durable step towards empowering communities. This is of particular relevance in rural areas where each community has its own needs, opportunities and ideas. Empowered communities are stronger and more resilient to adverse change.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## **Theme A: Enabling more and better affordable housing**

### **Defining affordable housing**

Affordable housing is subsidised social rented or intermediate housing for people who cannot afford and/or find suitable market housing. Intermediate affordable housing is housing at prices and rents above those of social rent but below market prices or rents. All affordable homes must be retained in perpetuity for future households or any subsidy recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. A fuller definition of affordable housing is included in the Council's *Meeting Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document*.

### **Our track record**

The Council and its partner housing associations have a good track record in delivering new affordable homes. In the ten years up to 31 March 2009, a total of 1,096 additional affordable homes were provided in the District. 244 homes of these were provided between 2006 and 2009.

Some of these affordable homes were specifically designed for people who were vulnerable because of their circumstances e.g. a scheme for people with learning disabilities and a refuge for victims of domestic abuse. The most recent special needs development is an extra-care scheme for older people - the first in Warwickshire.

The delivery of affordable homes in the District continues to be cited as good practice. For example in 2007, the Audit Commission's Strategic Housing Services inspection report highlighted the development of affordable housing generally and the way the Council was meeting rural housing needs as 'positive practice'. In the same year the Council acted as an affordable housing mentor to two other local authorities. The Council hosted in 2008 a fact finding visit from Matthew Taylor MP, and the Council's rural affordable housing policies were included in his *Living Working Countryside* report. Rural affordable housing in this District was also recognised in the Improvement and Development Agency's 2008 publication *New Housing Provision and the Strategic Housing Role*.

### **Affordable housing as a strategic priority**

The urgent need to provide additional affordable housing in the District is recognised as a priority in regional, sub-regional, County-wide and local strategies and plans. The Warwickshire Local Area Agreement and the Council's Corporate Strategy both include a target of 472 additional affordable homes in this District between 2008 and 2012. This target will have to be reviewed for the following reasons:

- The Council's moratorium on the development of open market housing has been in force for longer than originally anticipated. The moratorium was imposed in 2006 and is having a major adverse impact on the delivery of affordable homes because many

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

affordable homes are delivered as part of large scale open market housing schemes.

- The Development Plan for the District is currently being reviewed. This means that there is uncertainty about the number, location and nature of new housing of all kinds.
- The effect of current market conditions on both the future delivery of new housing and the type and tenure of housing people can afford.

### **Assessing housing needs**

The *Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Market Review 2009* updates the Council's 2006 Assessment and estimates that there is a need for an additional 532 affordable homes in the District each year. Parish housing needs surveys are undertaken to identify local housing needs. Other sources of information such as the District Housing Forum's monitoring of single people experiencing housing difficulties survey are used to identify the housing and support needs of vulnerable people.

The Council has resolved that the housing needs of key workers should continue to be addressed through the Council's existing affordable housing policies.

### **Identifying land**

The draft Core Strategy sets out what land is available for residential development - see Theme F: Local Development Framework. Land in public ownership across Warwickshire has been mapped. The exercise confirmed that the scope for utilizing publicly owned land within the District for affordable housing currently appears very limited.

### **Meeting Rural Housing Needs**

Around four out of five residents live in the rural portion of the District (defined in planning terms as anywhere other than Stratford-upon-Avon town). Consequently, increasing the number of affordable homes in rural areas is a priority action in the Council's Corporate Strategy 2009-2012. There is a special planning policy framework to help rural communities identify and meet their housing needs:

- The development of 'Local Choice' housing schemes within the market towns and larger villages. Local Choice empowers communities to identify and address their local housing needs. In 2007, the Council adopted *the Local Choice – Meeting the Needs of Rural Communities Supplementary Planning Document*. The initiative has attracted a great deal of attention nationally as an example of innovative and effective practice.
- 100% affordable 'exception' schemes in smaller villages.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

To increase the amount of affordable housing in rural areas, the Council has since 2003 helped fund an independent full-time Rural Housing Enabler for the District. The Council is covering all the costs of the post from 2008-2013. The Rural Housing Enabler works with local communities to help them carry out housing needs surveys and identify suitable sites for development. This project is producing results and has great potential: as at August 2009, 44 homes have been provided and there are 13 developments in the pipeline which will provide another 165 new homes. Site canvassing could yield an additional 50 homes.

Parish council events are held to promote rural housing to meet local needs. Parishes that have successfully completed rural schemes sell the idea to other parish councils.

Parish plans articulate the needs and aspirations of communities. To encourage more rural communities to consider their local development needs, the Council has agreed a £25,000 parish plan pilot project. The project provides policy guidance and seed corn grant monies to parishes to assist them to produce realistic parish plans. It is a condition of the grant that parishes agree to undertake a local housing needs survey.

### **Improving the supply of housing and its sustainability**

*The Meeting Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document 2008* (SPD) concerns both affordable and market housing. It describes how the Council will work in partnership to

- 1) Contribute to the creation of a balanced housing market
- 2) Enhance the sustainability of all new housing
- 3) Ensure local housing needs are more effectively addressed, especially by boosting the provision of affordable housing
- 4) Assist in the effective implementation of the *Housing Strategy*
- 5) Increase the supply of new homes in rural areas
- 6) Promote best practice in the development of all new housing
- 7) Make effective use of funding

The SPD details affordable housing 'quality benchmarks': standards for development, management, delivery and allocation, and monitoring and evaluation of completed housing schemes.

It also sets out optimum stock mixes for market housing (with an emphasis on providing more 2 and 3 bedroom houses) and for affordable housing; demands the integration for market and affordable housing; and specifies that 50% of all homes should meet the Lifetime Homes standard.

The SPD also covers space standards for affordable homes; working from home; extra care housing; making houses family friendly by providing reasonably sized gardens; responding to climate change and the importance of pre-planning application discussions.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

Affordable housing is 'secured' on sites via Section 106 legal agreements. In order to expedite the delivery of affordable housing, the Council commissioned an expert review to update its model Section 106 agreements in light of the SPD and other changes.

### **Funding affordable homes**

Obtaining funding for affordable homes at the right time is critical. Although housing associations borrow, or use their own reserves, to help fund the development of new affordable housing, additional funding is usually required.

On developer led sites that include open market and affordable housing, the *Meeting Housing Needs SPD* expects developers to provide affordable housing without public subsidy through discounted land values and internal cross subsidy generated from profits on the sale of open market housing. This approach has been very successful.

However, to ensure that the provision of affordable housing and other 'planning obligations' is not so onerous that it prevents sites coming forward and stifling development of both open market and affordable housing, the Council commissioned a study of the viability of residential development in the District.<sup>3</sup> This assessed the likely impact of all planning requirements upon development viability, taking account of all the other potential costs which arise before, during and after the development process. This was done for a series of typical potential housing developments in different circumstances. Use of the viability models from the study should facilitate the negotiation of the reasonable maximum amount of affordable housing on each development site.

Grant funding is particularly required for rural and special needs schemes. As affordable housing is a long standing corporate priority, the Council – using its Affordable Housing Investment Programme fund – has since April 2004 committed over £5m of its own capital to fund more affordable homes. Investment by the Council helps to lever in much larger amounts of Government grant: the District has attracted over £9m of Government grant since April 2007.

### **Working in partnership**

To facilitate and promote the development of affordable housing and ensure the efficient management of its housing development programme, the Council has established the Stratford-on-Avon Housing Partnership. The Partnership currently includes five preferred partners for general needs housing development.

However, in line with the Government's *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing*, the Council has adopted a 'level playing field' approach for all

---

<sup>3</sup> *Development Viability Assessment Model: Final Report* Baker Associates September 2009

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

potential affordable housing providers. Any provider can join the Partnership, and in the case of 'developer led sites', there is no compulsion on developers to work with any specified housing association. There is instead an emphasis on meeting the defined 'quality benchmarks' and other requirements of the *Meeting Housing Needs SPD*. On all other sites it is up to local communities to determine which housing association they wish to work with. This approach has been endorsed by the Homes and Communities Agency.

The Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sub-regional Housing Growth Strategy identifies the District's priorities for affordable housing investment as:

- Single rural programme package
- District-wide strategic affordable housing sites (allocated in planning documents)
- Stratford Cattle Market.

### **Evaluating completed schemes**

All affordable housing schemes are evaluated on completion to record development outcomes, including feedback from tenants and purchasers and the wider community. The evaluation assesses effectiveness in meeting housing need; 'Lifetime Homes' standards and accessibility; scheme / estate layout and design; architecture, specification and build quality; internal and external space; safety and security; environmental sustainability; management arrangements; and delivery performance.

### **Monitoring delivery**

The Council monitors what affordable housing is expected to be delivered in the short, medium and long term. This information is widely shared with partners and within the Council. Delivery of Local Area Agreement and Corporate Strategy targets, such as increasing the number of affordable homes, is reported monthly. Detailed progress reports on the delivery of affordable housing, which also highlight risks to the programme, are considered at every meeting of the Council's Housing Advisory Panel.

### **What we need to do**

The Council and its partners have been very successful and innovative in delivering affordable homes. To a large extent all the basic foundation blocks are in place - we need to continue to focus resources on what we are already doing. However, it is important that the Council is flexible enough to make the most of new opportunities and respond to changing circumstances.

We need to continue to maximise the amount of affordable housing and ensure that it is the right type, size and tenure.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

Knowing what funds are, or are not, available is essential in order to successfully plan and deliver affordable housing in the medium and long term. The Council needs to clarify with the Homes and Communities Agency if, and in what circumstances, it is prepared to provide Government grant funding for affordable housing. As at November 2009, there is £217,000 uncommitted in the Council's Affordable Housing Investment Programme fund. The Council will need to decide whether or not it can afford to invest any more capital to fund new affordable homes.

There is a need to determine whether affordable housing on sites 'allocated' in the Core Strategy should in the first instance be reserved for local people in that town or village or, alternatively, for local people living anywhere in the District.

Similarly, we must ensure that new affordable housing is allocated in line with identified needs. A needs survey may identify households such as young people as being in need of affordable housing. A scheme is then developed to meet these specific needs. However, there is a possibility that no young people will get any of the new affordable homes because they will all go to households with greater priority for housing. Parish councils have asked for this to be changed so that towns and villages have more balanced communities and in order that young people, whether single or a childless couple, are not forced to leave villages and towns owing to a lack of affordable accommodation.

Sustainable homes and communities remain the ultimate aim. The Council will do all it can to ensure that all new affordable housing continues to meet high quality and design standards.

The Council is working with its partner housing associations, the Homes and Communities Agency, and the Rural Housing Enabler to establish and deliver an ongoing rural development programme. This involves packaging several rural housing schemes together to ensure stability in the longer-term development programme and to achieve economies of scale.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

**Aim 1:**  
**To increase the supply and choice of good quality affordable housing for local people.**

**Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014 Actions:**

1. Seek to negotiate and deliver the optimum amount and type of affordable housing on every relevant development site.
2. Seek the maximum investment in the District from the Homes and Communities Agency and establish a medium to long term budget for District Council support to increase or enhance affordable housing provision.
3. Ensure new affordable housing is allocated so as to enhance the long-term sustainability of communities.
4. Continue to seek the highest practicable quality standards for affordable homes to help deliver sustainable communities.
5. Continue to encourage and enable rural communities to meet their housing needs.
6. Establish and deliver an on-going rural development programme.



Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

**Aim 2:  
To improve existing housing and  
help people live as independently as possible.**

**Local Area Agreement outcomes:**

Reduce child poverty \* Improve mortality rates \* Supporting carers  
Supporting independent living \* Reduce greenhouse gas emissions  
Cohesive communities \* Supporting vulnerable people

**Stratford Sustainable Community Strategy objectives:**

- Improving, expanding and extending at-home services, and adapting more properties to meet the needs of older people and people with disabilities
- Delivering more accessible homes
- Supporting and setting standards for home energy efficiency and the supply and use of renewable energy
- Making more accommodation available by bringing more empty homes into use and encouraging older people who want to do so to move to smaller properties

**CONTRIBUTION TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

Adequate and continued investment by the owners of existing housing (in any tenure) means that homes will last for many more decades; the need for new building is reduced; and a major contribution is made to the attractiveness of the District. There is the potential to reduce significantly the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted and thus mitigate climate change.

The main purpose of maintaining and improving the physical fabric of housing is to ensure its continued ability to provide good homes: homes that remain suitable as the needs of their occupants change; are safe and healthy; and affordable to run. These requirements are particularly important to people who are vulnerable: children, disabled people, those with chronic health conditions, and older people. Most people want to live as independently as possible: they want to be able to choose to stay in their current home or to move to a more suitable property. Better housing and support options improve quality of life and can mean longer lives.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## **Theme B: Better homes**

### **The housing stock**

The District had 53,740 dwellings in April 2009: around 77% were owner-occupied, 10% were rented privately and 13% were housing association affordable rented properties (as the Council does not own any housing).

All affordable homes in the District are expected to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard by the December 2010 target date. A decent home is defined as one that is free of serious hazards, warm, in a reasonable state of repair, and having reasonably modern facilities. Orbit Heart of England Housing Association owns over four fifths of the affordable rented housing in the District: 98% of its homes met the Standard in summer 2009.

Councils are legally required to keep housing conditions within their areas under review. The *Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009* describes local housing conditions in the owner occupied and private rented sectors, based on physical surveys and household interviews relating to 1,200 homes. In addition, the survey looked at the condition of the approximately 750 mobile homes in the District occupied as a main home.

There are very few larger houses in multiple occupation in the District – eight such houses have been licensed by the Council.

### **Adaptations and repairs**

Housing adaptations enable disabled people and people with mobility impairments to continue to live independently in their own homes rather than having to go into residential care or nursing homes. Adaptations restore privacy, confidence and dignity to individuals and their families, and significantly improve people's health and quality of life. They can ease the burden on carers.

The objectives of *The Warwickshire Accessible Housing and Inclusive Design Strategy 2008 – 2012* (also known as Warwickshire Adaptations Strategy) include:

- To enable older and disabled people to remain and live independently in suitable accommodation.
- To maximise the provision of more inclusively designed housing and the utilisation of adapted housing.
- To streamline systems to deliver adaptations with minimal delay.
- To promote, encourage and ensure fair access for all.
- To provide a service, which is outcome focused, evidence based and value for money.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

In 2008/09, mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants up to £30,000 or discretionary grants up to £25,000 helped 175 households with the cost of property adaptations; repairs; or energy efficiency, security or home safety works.

Satisfaction with these Council-administered grants services is very high: 94% of customers rated the services as "very good", although customers are concerned about the length of time the whole process takes.

There is a limited handy person service to do small jobs in people's homes and to check home safety.

Warwickshire Supporting People has received £310,000 Government funding over two years to increase the provision of handy person services across the County. This is due to start in early 2010.

The Government views Home Improvement Agency (HIA) services as the "hub around which vulnerable people are provided with personal support to make informed choices about their housing options and home environment".

Warwickshire local authorities are working together to create a single County-wide HIA to deliver economies of scale and a more comprehensive and responsive service. The new HIA will speed up the provision of property adaptations and assist older, disabled and vulnerable people to repair, improve, or maintain their homes. This might involve the provision of advice, grants or loans. It will help achieve Local Area Agreement targets relating to health and social care such as NI 13.9 (the extent to which older people receive the care they need to live independently).

### **Assistive Technology (Telecare)**

Assistive Technology – also known as Telecare – refers to the use of digital systems to allow real time monitoring of emergencies and lifestyle changes so as to manage the risks associated with independent living. It includes social alarms, lifestyle monitoring and telehealth (remote monitoring of vital signs), and covers a wide range of equipment (detectors, monitors, alarms, pendants etc) and services (monitoring, call centres and response).

The Council holds national Beacon status for 'Digital Inclusion' and has some funding to develop partnership services that use technology to help people overcome barriers to independent living.

As part of the digital inclusion programme, the Council has joined with NHS Direct (West Midlands), Warwickshire County Council, Age Concern Warwickshire, NHS Ambulance Trust, Wolverhampton University, Coventry University, Tunstall and the First Responders programme to deliver a substantial telecare pilot project. The project is part funded by Government. It aims to improve the quality of life of older people, people

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

with learning and or physical disabilities, people suffering domestic abuse, migrant workers and people being discharged from hospital. Partners will assess the cost effectiveness of the project and determine its potential for roll out nationally.

### **Raising standards**

Councils use the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to assess whether homes provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor. The most serious hazards – Category 1 - are strongly associated with older dwellings, and dwellings occupied by older people, people with disabilities, people on low incomes and those in receipt of benefit.

The *Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009* shows that the main hazard failures in the District are excess cold, and falls on level surfaces and stairs. Private rented properties are more likely to have Category 1 hazards than owner occupied properties. In 2008/09, the Council took action to ensure that 20 dwellings with Category 1 hazards no longer posed a serious threat to the health and safety of tenants.

The Council will continue to safeguard residents and to promote high standards in the private rented sector. It will insist on good standards for any accommodation let under the Rent Express Scheme that assists people who may be threatened with homelessness to access private rented accommodation.

The Council runs a well-supported Landlords Forum for private sector landlords and local letting agencies that focuses on improving standards, sharing good practice, and promoting the Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme. This scheme recognises landlords who provide their tenants with good quality, safe accommodation and awards them a quality mark. Prospective tenants can view a list of accredited landlords on a website.

### **Empty Homes**

Although the proportion of homes in the District that are empty is lower than the national average, such homes are a waste of a valuable resource. There is ongoing work to identify why owners keep houses empty but it can be assumed that some are simply properties that have not sold in the current economic climate.

The Council's *Empty Homes Strategy 2008-2011 – From Empty Houses to New Homes* sets out how the Council will seek to reduce the number of long-term empty homes, as required by its Corporate Strategy. One of the tools being used is to give the owner a grant of up to £30,000 to bring empty dwellings back into use in return for the Council being able to nominate a tenant for a minimum period. In 2008/09, the Council enabled 16 empty homes to be brought back into use through one or more of the interventions set out in the Strategy.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## Grant funding

Legislation allows Councils to adopt a flexible approach to giving financial assistance for housing adaptations, repairs and improvements to reflect local circumstances and resources.

<b>Grants budget for 2009/2010</b>	
Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)	£420,000 plus £80,000 reserved for Orbit Heart of England Housing Association properties
Discretionary Grants	£150,000
Empty Homes	£390,000 as at 1 August 2009 (Funding can be rolled forward each year)
Reserved for issues identified in the Private Sector House Condition Survey	£71,000 as at 1 August 2009 (Funding can be rolled forward each year)

## Improving environmental sustainability

The *UK Low Carbon Transition Plan* White Paper (July 2009) sets out the Government's transition plan for building a low carbon UK: cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, maintaining secure energy supplies, maximising economic opportunities and protecting the most vulnerable. The Plan includes measures to cut emissions from existing and new homes by 29% by 2020 by improving their energy efficiency and using more low carbon energy sources such as heat pumps and solar power. Key proposals include:

- Subsidising home energy saving works and insulation, and more generous energy efficiency grants.
- Installing 'smart meters' to help people understand their energy use.
- 'Pay as you save' long term financing to help people make their homes greener.
- Introducing payments for low carbon energy generation.
- Pilots to deliver green homes in low income areas.
- Tackling fuel poverty, and energy price caps to protect the most vulnerable households.
- Requiring by 2016 all newly built homes to be 'zero carbon'.

The Council's promotion of energy efficiency measures has contributed to a 30.7% reduction in residential energy consumption / CO<sub>2</sub> emissions across the District between 1996 and 2008.

Improving residential energy efficiency is particularly important in tackling fuel poverty. Households are considered to be in fuel poverty if they need to spend 10% or more of their net household income on all domestic fuel

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

use to provide a adequate warmth and hot water. These households are more likely to be people living alone; households on low incomes; and to live in homes with poor energy efficiency. People who are at home during the day (through, for example, unemployment or retirement, long-term sickness or disability) have a greater requirement for heat and hot water.

Cold and damp homes threaten good health, reduce quality of life and result in an increased number of deaths during the winter months. The highest concentration of fuel poverty is in the private sector (both owner occupied and private rented housing).

Eliminating fuel poverty is the overall objective of *South Warwickshire's Affordable Warmth Strategy*. One of the key players is Act on Energy, an independent energy advice service, which was established by the Council.

Local Area Agreement NI 187 relates to fuel poverty. It requires local authorities to measure the proportion of households on an income related benefit living in dwellings with SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) ratings below 35, and 65 and above. The objective is to decrease the former and increase the latter.

There are ambitious targets to improve SAP ratings in the District by 1.5% of all households claiming Council Tax benefit each year. In April 2009, of the 7,800 households claiming Council Tax benefit:

- 16% of households live in a home with a SAP rating below 35
- 32% of households live in a home with a SAP rating 65 or above.

The Council and its partners will review the assistance available to households experiencing fuel poverty in the light of the *Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009*. This will involve updating the *South Warwickshire Affordable Warmth Strategy*.

Orbit Heart of England Housing Association has over 5,800 homes and is the largest landlord in the District. It is developing a Decent Homes Plus strategy to focus further investment on a programme of retro-fitting its homes to reduce running costs for tenants and the carbon footprint of the homes. At Lighthorne Heath, the occupants of 80 existing homes and 22 new properties are now benefiting from significantly reduced energy costs as a result of installation of ground source heat pumps.

A further Orbit Heart of England Housing Association project is expected to radically improve the environmental sustainability of 50-60 of its existing homes. The project will apply the principles of the 'Passive House' standard: energy use is cut to a minimum because of good insulation and airtightness, with good air quality guaranteed by a mechanical ventilation system. This, coupled with some solar gain, should eliminate the need for heating. The performance of the improved homes will be the subject of technical evaluation to determine the most cost-effective interventions. The health benefits to residents will also be tracked. The project has the potential to act as a model for housing in any tenure.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## **Theme C: Housing for older people**

This section covers issues that are particularly relevant to older people. However, much of what is described elsewhere in this Housing Strategy also affects older people. For example, the Council's commitment to Lifetime Homes as described under Aim 1, and all the initiatives set out in Theme B: Better Homes are important to older people.

Local and national policies are committed to improving the quality of life and well-being of older people. The Government's vision for older people is set out in *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society 2008*:

"Older people will have housing that supports healthy, active and independent living in welcoming communities. Housing, neighbourhoods and communities will be more inclusive, attractive and sustainable for an ageing population. There will be more mainstream and specialist homes of the right type in the right location for older people. New housing will be planned and built to Lifetime Homes Standards and new communities will be built to be Lifetime Neighbourhoods. The implications of ageing for housing and communities will be well understood by professionals and the public alike.

Excellent information and advice will be available for all. Many more homes will be warm and comfortable. Major and minor adaptations will be more easily obtained. Home improvement and handy person services will be widely accessible in every part of the country. Where housing services are needed, they will be more personal, progressive, high quality and joined-up."

The Government's *Putting People First Protocol (2007)* and *Independent Living Strategy (2008)* confirm its continuing commitment to the personalisation agenda for older and disabled people. This includes giving people personal budgets to enable them to control and choose how social care and support is delivered.

Consultation on this Housing Strategy has again demonstrated the popularity of 2 bed bungalows. We will bear this popularity in mind when considering development or redevelopment proposals, although the larger area of land often required for single storey buildings does pose significant challenges.

### **Sheltered housing**

Sheltered housing schemes are designed to meet the needs and interests of older people who want to live independent lives. Good schemes consist of grouped, self-contained accommodation with an emergency alarm system in each home, communal facilities, and support and advice from staff.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

Orbit Heart of England Housing Association owns and manages the 13 sheltered housing schemes in the District. The Association's *Older Persons Framework* encourages and enables independent living and choice for older people by contributing to and enabling:

- Economic well being
- Feeling safe and secure
- Health and wellness
- Choice and independence
- Able to make a positive contribution

The Association is reviewing its sheltered schemes to determine whether and how they can individually continue to provide attractive, comfortable and supportive accommodation, and collectively best address the needs of local older people.

### **Extra Care Housing**

Extra Care Housing (ECH) is specially designed housing that allows the provision of all levels of personal care and support. The care and support provided for each individual resident is responsive and flexible: it will change with the resident's changing circumstances, thus avoiding the need for them to move to other accommodation. ECH therefore combines the positive features of sheltered housing and a care home.

Briar Croft, Stratford-upon-Avon, is the first ECH scheme in Warwickshire. Managed by Orbit Heart of England Housing Association, the scheme consists of 64 one and two bed flats for rent and shared ownership. Capital funding for the scheme included Government grant, a committed sum secured by the Council and the Association's own monies.

It is estimated that, by 2025, over 1,000 Extra Care dwellings will be required in the District and that around a quarter of these should be socially rented homes for those unable to afford to buy or part buy.<sup>4</sup>

The *Extra Care Housing Strategy for Older People in Warwickshire 2008* seeks to:

- Increase choice and control for citizens with a wider range of innovative, high quality and flexible care options that are joined-up.
- Provide more community based services, enabling people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.
- Promote independence and well-being.
- Improve outcomes for service users and carers.

The Council is working with Warwickshire County Council and other partners to decide how best to provide additional Extra Care housing in

---

<sup>4</sup> Based on the Institute of Public Care's Predictive Model and Needs Assessment.



Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

the District. This includes investigating whether some traditional sheltered schemes should be adapted to provide further Extra Care housing.

### **Specialist residential provision**

In addition to proposing more Extra Care Housing, Warwickshire County Council's *Care and Choice Accommodation Programme* seeks to replace its traditional residential care provision (care homes) with more specialist places providing care for people with dementia or other diseases often associated with old age. There is currently no specialist care home in the District for people with dementia.

### **Housing options service for older people**

Providing older people with sufficient information and advice to make informed choices about their housing, care and support needs is critical. Currently, older people can get advice from a number of different agencies including Age Concern Warwickshire, the Council and Warwickshire County Council. Within the District, Senior Citizens Action Network (SCAN) meetings also play a significant part in keeping older people up to speed about the various services and options available.

Linked to the delivery of the *National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*, Warwickshire Supporting People has successfully bid for £192,000 Government funding to establish a pilot housing options service for older people. It will provide an independent County-wide information and advice service. This will help older people judge whether they can continue to live in their own homes or whether they should consider other housing possibilities. If they decide to stay in their existing home, the housing options advisor will help them to access services to enable them to do so safely. The housing options service will also assist older people who wish to move home but require support to do so.

Warwickshire Supporting People – together with the Primary Care Trust and the local housing authorities – need to develop, in consultation with service users, the older people housing options service. Once the service is up and running, partners need to monitor outcomes for service users.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

**Aim 2:  
To improve existing housing and  
help people live as independently as possible.**

**Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014 Actions:**

7. Provide enhanced programmes of assistance for people in their own homes.
8. Take enforcement action when necessary to protect tenants in private rented accommodation, and encourage local private landlords to join Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme.
9. Deliver a well resourced programme of interventions to bring empty homes back into use.
10. Review the assistance available to help people stay warm in their homes.
11. Undertake a further programme of improvements to existing homes to reduce their environmental impact and running costs for occupiers.
12. Following a detailed review of each scheme, progress the modernisation/replacement of existing sheltered accommodation to provide more sustainable housing.
13. Promote the development of further 'Extra Care' schemes and specialist care provision to widen the housing and care options open to older people.
14. Develop a housing options service for older people to promote awareness of housing and care options to assist older people to choose the most appropriate option for them. Provide support to older people who choose to move home but need support to do so.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

**Aim 3:  
To prevent homelessness  
and the harm caused by it.**

**Local Area Agreement outcomes:**

*Improve the emotional health of children \* Cohesive communities  
Supporting vulnerable people \* Reduce number of young people not in  
education, training or employment \* Increase skills  
More affordable housing \* Supporting vulnerable people  
Increase average earnings*

**Stratford Sustainable Community Strategy objectives:**

- Improving vulnerable young people's wellbeing and independence through enhancing their accommodation and support options
- Reduce health inequalities by targeting resources where they are needed most

**CONTRIBUTION TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

Homelessness undermines communities. For the people directly affected, it is often stressful and unpleasant, and sometimes traumatic and dangerous. Its prevention thus contributes to better mental and physical health, and to keeping people safe. Preventing and responding to homelessness can assist independence and help people take a realistic approach to their housing arrangements. Prevention programmes are thus an efficient and effective use of public resources.

Young people who experience homelessness are particularly likely to suffer personal harm and economic disadvantage. Their ability to study, undertake training, and get or keep a job will be hampered. Participation in sport or positive activity might also be reduced, and their future housing prospects affected. Investment in preventing youth homelessness and providing good housing and support options is therefore a sensible priority for any District looking to a positive future.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## **Theme D: Tackling homelessness**

### **Homelessness Strategy**

This Housing Strategy describes the main strategic issues relating to homelessness. Detailed analysis and policy on homelessness is described in the *Stratford-on-Avon District Homelessness Review and Strategy 2008-2011*, the overall objective of which is to prevent homelessness whenever possible. The *Homelessness Strategy* considers the needs of all vulnerable people, and has three aims:

- Aim 1: To increase the range of housing options and improve existing options.
- Aim 2: To ensure that a high level of customer care and access is maintained.
- Aim 3: To ensure that the Council and its statutory and voluntary partners work in a joined up and planned way to address housing difficulties throughout the District.

### **Choice Based Lettings**

Demand for affordable housing in this District is high. There are over 3,000 households on the Council's housing waiting list. Approximately 400 affordable homes become available for letting each year.

'Home Choice Plus' is the sub-regional choice based lettings scheme for affordable homes. This operates across Stratford-on-Avon District and most of Worcestershire. The scheme helps people to make informed choices about their housing options by allowing them to check the number and types of properties that become available for letting, and compare their priority for housing with that of other people.

People 'bid' for affordable homes via the internet, and by telephone, text or in person at any of the Council's offices. The Council provides assistance to make it easier for vulnerable and older people to bid.

In the long term there are plans to use Home Choice Plus to advertise more private sector properties – currently only empty homes brought back into use as private rented accommodation are advertised.

Home Choice Plus went live in the District in December 2008, and customer satisfaction with the scheme in the first four months of its operation is high with 63% of people rating it as 'very good' and 28% as 'fairly good'.

To ensure that disadvantaged people can access Home Choice Plus easily and use it to find suitable properties, a Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review the impact of choice based lettings on service users and partners.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

In addition, the local authorities and housing associations running Home Choice Plus are to jointly review the scheme's policy and operation. The review will take account of *Fair and flexible* - the Government's statutory guidance on housing allocations<sup>5</sup>.

### Preventing homelessness

Over recent years, the Council has increasingly focused resources on preventing homelessness rather than just responding to it when it occurs. Evidence of this shift in focus is set out in the table below.

<i>Homelessness preventions and acceptances</i>		
	Number of households prevented from becoming homeless	Number of households accepted for permanent housing under homelessness legislation
2006 - 2007	72	73
2006 - 2007	107	130
2008 - 2009	241	101

The greater emphasis on prevention means that there is no longer any need for the Council to use bed and breakfast except for the odd emergency outside office hours. It also means that the Council should meet the Government target of halving the number of households living in temporary accommodation from a December 2004 baseline of 55 households to 27 households by December 2010. (As at June 2009, there were 18 households in temporary accommodation.)

Effective homelessness prevention relies on the Council, at an early stage, advising people in housing difficulties or those who are at risk of losing their homes about their housing options. Prevention also depends on good partnership working, and on organisations sharing information about the local housing market and economy, and maintaining their knowledge of each other's respective services.

The Stratford District Housing Forum co-ordinates much of the cross-agency work, including for example supported housing needs assessments; the dissemination of Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) statistics on employment, benefit, debt and housing enquiries; and how best to deal with loan sharks.

The Council sees people who are at risk of homelessness at its offices in Stratford-upon-Avon, Alcester, Shipston and Southam, or in their homes. To engage with more hard to reach groups, there is outreach work to vulnerable people, including those who sleep rough, at The Salvation

<sup>5</sup> *Fair and flexible: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England* CLG 4 December 2009

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

Army's project (approximately 50 to 60 people housed since 2004), at the local women's refuge, with young people in schools, youth clubs or colleges, and at community events. Customers can also access advice by e-mail, letter or telephone.

There is a range of services to assist people in housing difficulty:

- Registering to bid on Home Choice Plus properties.
- Making a formal homelessness application to the Council.
- A Rent Express Scheme that assists households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to access private rented accommodation by providing deposit guarantees and rent in advance. In 2008-2009, 135 households used the scheme.
- Liaison between landlords and their tenants if difficulties arise. This includes the work of the District Landlords Forum.
- One-off payments from the Homelessness Prevention Fund. Payments are normally repayable, and monies are recycled to help other people.
- Housing support to enable people in all tenures to live independently.
- A mediation service for young people and their parents.

In addition to the above services, there are a number of welfare advice and financial inclusion measures:

- The Council sign posts and makes formal referrals for general budgeting advice, debt advice and access to affordable credit. More detail is given under Aim 4 (Theme H: Reducing Disadvantage).
- A CAB County Court help desk to assist people facing rent and mortgage repossession action.
- The Council encourages homeowners in mortgage difficulties to contact their lenders as soon as possible. Homeowners are also advised to check their eligibility for Government help with paying the interest on their mortgage, deferring a proportion of their mortgage interest payments or for the *Mortgage Rescue Scheme*. The latter assists households to stay in their own homes, and has been successful in the District.
- Benefit entitlement checks for people struggling financially.
- The Council aims to pay housing benefit, and deal with changes in households' circumstances, promptly. Consequently, people are less likely to get into arrears with their rent and be evicted.
- Private rented accommodation in this District is expensive. The Council uses discretionary housing payments to help people whose housing benefit does not cover the cost of private rented accommodation. An analysis of private rents in this District (April 2009) highlighted the affordability issues faced in particular by single people under 25 and households who require three bedrooms.
- Partner agencies support people to access training and jobs.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

Customer satisfaction with the Council's housing advice service is high with 73% of people rating it as 'very good' and 19% as 'fairly good' in 2008-2009.

Protocols are in place to help people move on from supported accommodation to other housing when they are ready, ensure people being discharged from hospital move to suitable accommodation at the right time, and to deal with the housing of witnesses who need protection and dangerous offenders.

### **Support for single people in housing difficulty**

The provision of additional accommodation and support for single homeless people of all ages is a strategic priority for the Council and its partners. The *Warwickshire Supporting People 5 Year Strategy* identifies single homeless people in this District as a priority for investment.

The most recent multi-agency monitoring exercise undertaken by the District Housing Forum in February 2009 found that during this one month 62 single people experienced housing difficulties. Of these 62 people, 42 considered themselves homeless. The exercise recorded that 10 people slept rough at different times in the month.

Currently there is no supported housing and no emergency access accommodation for single homeless people in the District. The nearest emergency access accommodation available to anyone who does not qualify for permanent accommodation under homelessness legislation is in Coventry. Warwickshire Supporting People has awarded a contract to provide an 8 bed supported accommodation service for single homeless people in the District. This is likely to include one to two bed spaces for people who sleep rough, with flexibility in the service to provide outreach support to identified people who are sleeping rough before they access the accommodation. The service will also provide short-term resettlement support for people moving to independent accommodation from the service.

The proposed scheme will fill some, but not all, of the gaps in service provision for this client group. The Council and its partners will carry out a full assessment of housing options for single people in the District once the scheme has been up and running for a few months.

## **Theme E: Young people**

### **Young people as a priority group**

In terms of housing and the support provided to enable independent and stable living, the phrase 'young people' refers to a different age range to that traditionally covered by 'youth services'. In this Strategy and Action Plan, 'young people' means 16 to 24 year olds. This recognises the

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

additional and particular problems faced by people of this age who find themselves in housing difficulty.

This vulnerability is the reason for housing and support services for young people being recognised – as noted in the Introduction above – as a priority in a range of local documents, including in the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement, Warwickshire Supporting People 5 Year Strategy, and the District's Sustainable Community Strategy.

In 2008, the Council undertook a detailed 'gap' analysis of housing and support provision for single young people in the District. This included discussions with referring agencies, and accommodation and support providers in order to understand the existing capacity issues and the options for strengthening local provision. We also looked at the examples of partnerships and projects detailed on the *National Youth Homelessness Scheme* website.

The situation revealed by this research and the preferred options for improvement were reported to a Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2008. It was agreed that a successful approach to establishing and sustaining good support for young people would be characterised by:

- Adequate capacity of provision across the District.
- Mutual understanding between service providers, and co-ordinated action.
- Regular discussion between providers, funders, other partners and the Council as strategic housing authority.
- Observance of best practice principles such as:
  - Offer consistent services tailored to meet individual needs
  - Recognise the particular needs of young people
  - Focus on positive outcomes for individual young people
  - Improve engagement with young people
  - Value homelessness prevention
  - Provide support for as long as it is needed.

Further feasibility work was carried out and reported to the Council's Housing Advisory Panel in March 2009. It was recognised that some of these key features of an excellent service could not be afforded while current financial conditions continue. An example is a dedicated centre to provide specialist housing information, advice and guidance to young people. The absence of such a specialist resource means that more focus should be placed on collaborative working and signposting between the existing agencies, education and outreach.

The overall objectives of the four proposed actions under this Theme are to prevent young people from becoming homeless; reduce the harm caused to them if they do; and provide a safe and supportive environment in which they can achieve and progress towards independence.

## **Mediation**



Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

'Crisis homelessness' can occur when a young person is forced, or chooses, to leave the family home in a hurry. The young person may have made no plans in respect of their accommodation, income or personal safety.

It is not always possible or safe for the young person to stay at, or to return, to the family home. But when that is both appropriate and what the young person wants to do, discussions with a trained mediator can result in an agreement for the young person to continue to live in the family home, or to leave home in a planned way when they are ready to do so.

There is a need to strengthen and expand the housing mediation services available to young people in the District. The success of the scheme is likely to depend on the involvement of many agencies, particularly in offering a choice of referral route so that a young person can receive support without necessarily making a formal approach to the Council.

### **16 / 17 year olds**

The severe vulnerability of 16 or 17 year olds in housing need is the reason for the special status given to them under both homelessness and children legislation. The relationship between the obligations placed on local housing authorities (such as Stratford-on-Avon District Council) and those placed on social services authorities (such as Warwickshire County Council) was the subject of a further House of Lords judgment in May 2009.

Locally, we recognise that there is considerable scope for better working between the District Council and the County Council on this matter, so that more is done to ensure that each young person in housing difficulty is provided with support – and possibly accommodation – appropriate to their circumstances. A protocol to guide Warwickshire authorities' individual and co-operative actions will be adopted, and its impact monitored.

### **Supported accommodation**

There is currently in the District:

- No emergency accommodation specifically for young people.
- Not enough supported lodging places where a young person stays with a private household or under a dedicated arrangement with a private landlord.
- Too few rooms in a scheme that offers accommodation in a shared house with on-site support or in sole-occupancy flats with visiting support.
- An additional requirement for long-term supported accommodation for those who have more serious support needs.

Improving the local supply of both emergency and longer-term accommodation for young people (including care leavers) is likely to focus on the use of existing housing rather than a proposal to build a new

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

scheme. Investment in the continuing support of the young residents is critical to enabling their future independence, as is the availability of appropriate 'move-on' housing.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## **Foyer**

Foyers provide a stable and secure home environment for vulnerable young people who commit to engage with a tailored programme focused on training, education and employment. Residents typically stay between 12 and 24 months before moving on to more independent living arrangements. Foyer schemes can be appropriate for small towns within a rural area. They can also act as bases for developing other support services to non-residents.

The Council regards the provision of at least one foyer in the District as a long term ambition. Capital and revenue funding will present significant challenges, and changes in the amount of other supported housing in the District might alter the need for a foyer. The feasibility of enabling one or more foyers will be kept under review and no commitment can be made at the moment.

**Aim 3:  
To prevent homelessness  
and the harm caused by it.**

**Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014 Actions:**

15. Keep the operation and impact of Home Choice Plus under review to identify any necessary improvements.
16. Continue to deliver a successful housing options service to prevent homelessness.
17. Maintaining good performance for dealing with housing benefit claims and applications for discretionary housing payments.
18. Consider the adequacy of current accommodation and support (including emergency access provision) in the District for single homeless people and people who sleep rough.
19. Enhance mediation services available to families that include young people at risk of homelessness.
20. Work in partnership to ensure proper accommodation and support is available to all vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds.
21. Improve the emergency access and longer-term accommodation and support for homeless young people (aged 16-24) within the District.
22. Keep under review the feasibility of enabling a residential foyer (with emergency access) for 16-24 year olds.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

**Aim 4:  
To strengthen the support to local communities.**

**Local Area Agreement outcomes:**

Cohesive communities \* More affordable housing  
Reduce child poverty \* Reduce anti-social behaviour  
Supporting vulnerable people \* Empowered communities  
Improve access to services

**Stratford Sustainable Community Strategy objectives:**

- Helping communities identify sites for affordable housing
- Extending the local choice scheme
- Giving everyone 'anytime anywhere' access to services and facilities through digital and other technologies
- Finding out the views of hard-to-reach groups

**CONTRIBUTION TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

The housing and associated support that is promoted and delivered by the Council and key partners must serve the needs of all local residents. In order to support community cohesion and sustainability, our policies and investment decisions should address communities' needs and priorities, including in particular those of the relatively disadvantaged and people at risk of exclusion. Services can be extended and made more accessible. We want to make it easier for residents to influence our decisions and help shape our policies.

These policies are based on a thorough understanding of the housing and economic circumstances of the District. Keeping this understanding up to date through research and analysis will allow housing and support programmes to continue to strengthen communities. Ensuring that the impact of these programmes and policies is kept under review will help reduce inequality and maximise effectiveness.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## **Theme F: Local Development Framework**

It is important that the Local Development Framework (LDF) sets out local planning policies and proposals for residential development that will help achieve balanced housing markets. These policies and proposals should take account of all the relevant evidence such as that presented in the *Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Market Review 2009*.

A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2008 and 2009 provides information on the extent of potential development opportunities in the District to meet strategic housing needs up to 2026. The SHLAA forms part of the evidence base for the Council's draft Core Strategy, which was published in October 2008. The Core Strategy 'allocates' sites to meet the District's housing requirements as determined by the Regional Spatial Strategy. It also encourages rural local communities to identify land to meet their own housing needs.

However, creating sustainable communities is about much more than the number of new homes in a particular location, and the facilities and services that allow communities to function. It is also about making sure that new homes are of the right tenure, type, size and design to meet the needs of the local population including people who are disadvantaged or who require specialised forms of housing. New homes must also be environmentally sustainable and affordable to run.

The evidence continues to show the principal need is for 2 and 3 bed homes in both affordable and market tenures.

Building the right homes depends on the Council having up to date information on local housing circumstances; demographic trends; and the current and future housing needs, demands and preferences of all sectors of the community.

The LDF is likely to take forward the proposals on improving the environmental performance of new housing that were set out in the Sustainable Low-Carbon Buildings Supplementary Planning Document 2007.

This Housing Strategy, and all the research and consultation that underpins it, will itself form part of the evidence base for the Examination in Public of the Core Strategy.

## **Theme G: Gypsies and Travellers**

A *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment* (2008) for Stratford and Warwick District Council areas and Worcestershire demonstrated a need for a significant number of additional permanent pitches and the provision of some temporary stopping places in the District.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

Local Development Framework documents will identify locations to meet this need. As it is likely to be some years before these locations are agreed, the Council is in the meantime examining the possibility of granting temporary planning permissions on some sites to make up the current shortfall in provision.

Pathlow Caravan site is the one authorised permanent Gypsy and Traveller site in the District – there are 30 pitches. The Council is refurbishing and upgrading all the facilities on the site, which it owns and manages. Most residents have lived on the site for some time and have regular contact with Council officers. Consequently, they are generally happy with the site (once the refurbishment is complete) and its management. Residents use local services and know what services are available.

The Pathlow site refurbishment was funded by a direct Government grant of £1.2m, a top up of £234,000 from Regional Housing Grant and £166,000 from Council capital funds. The tender process allowed around £150,000 of this total to be used for further Gypsy and Traveller site development.

However, Pathlow is cramped. When asked as part of the consultation on this Strategy, residents stated that the two things that would most improve their quality of life would be the provision of a children's play area and additional parking spaces. The Council is exploring whether it is possible to purchase some adjacent land to provide these additional facilities and a few extra pitches.

In July 2009, the Government published a good practice guide: *Gypsy and Travellers Site Management*. The guide states:

“Where sites are properly managed they can be successful, self-financing and sustainable, helping to ensure that the Gypsy and Traveller communities can co-exist peacefully with the settled population nearby. Gypsies and Travellers are a highly socially excluded group, with health and education outcomes significantly worse than that of the settled population. Clearly families able to settle on well managed and maintained authorised sites are better able to access health and education services, and access a better quality of life, than those unable to find an authorised pitch and forced to live on the margins of society.”

The Government is clear that new sites will only be sustainable if they are backed by good quality site management. As further authorised sites are developed in the District, it will be essential to ensure that minimum standards for management and facilities are in place.

Local authorities and housing associations can bid for Government capital grant funding to help them meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The quality of management arrangements is taken into account when bids are evaluated.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

## **Theme H: Reducing Disadvantage**

### **Financial inclusion**

Financial inclusion means everyone has access to appropriate financial services and products. This enables people to participate fully in modern day society and the economy. Exclusion from the financial system imposes additional costs on people – often those who can least afford them – and leads to greater social exclusion and exposure to risk.

The Government's *Financial Inclusion: An Action Plan for 2008-2011* sets out how it will help people to:

- Manage their money day-to-day
- Plan for the future and cope with financial pressure
- Deal effectively with financial distress

In other words, people need bank accounts; access to affordable credit such as overdrafts or personal loans; savings and adequate insurance to help meet unexpected costs; and reliable and impartial advice.

Statistically, people at risk of homelessness and social housing tenants are more likely than other people to experience one or more aspects of financial exclusion. The Council will work with housing associations and other partners to help more people escape financial exclusion or prevent them becoming excluded.

In addition to the financial measures detailed under Aim 3 (Theme D: Tackling homelessness), the following services are available in this District:

- Debt advice via the Citizens Advice Bureau and / or the National Debtline.
- The Coventry and Warwickshire Co-operative Development Agency working with the District Council, Orbit Heart of England Housing Association and Warwickshire County Council, provides free information and financial services including:
  - Budgeting advice
  - Assistance with opening bank accounts
  - Bill paying services
  - Access to low-cost loans
  - Regular savings
- All adult residents of the District can become members of South Warwickshire Credit Union. It offers members a savings scheme, bill paying service and access to low-cost loans.

### **Digital inclusion**

Digital inclusion means making the best use of digital technology to improve the lives and life chances of all citizens. The Government's *Delivering Digital Inclusion: an Action Plan for Consultation* (October



Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

2008) and its *Digital Britain* report (June 2009) emphasize the strong correlation between digital exclusion and social exclusion.

The digital inclusion action plan provides a framework for achieving greater digital inclusion and for using technology to tackle social inequalities via improved service planning and delivery for disadvantaged groups and individuals. It also recognises that, in the more rural locations in the UK, access to computers and the internet is a significant barrier to digital inclusion.

Some of the Digital Challenge funding the Council has received as a result of being awarded Beacon status for digital inclusion is to be used to improve access to housing, other public services and voluntary sector services in this rural District. This will be done by installing digital television.

## **Theme J: Continuing to meet residents' needs**

Ensuring that the actions in the Housing Strategy continue to articulate the views of local residents, and as far as possible address their housing and related support needs, is of paramount importance. We will only achieve this if we regularly take stock of our performance and link it with what local people are telling us about housing and with the latest research evidence. Responding actively to the views of customers and residents and considering the evidence will also help us achieve good value for money.

The activities that will make up our continuing review of the impact of this Housing Strategy (and the Homelessness Strategy) on customers are:

- Continuing to ask customers what they think about existing services, so we can be confident that the services we are providing are of the quality and standard that customers expect.
- Continuing to undertake regular diversity audits of frontline housing services, to ensure that we meet the needs and expectations of all people.
- Acting on this feedback and change things that are not working.
- Checking that we are providing the right services, and if there is anything else that we should be doing, we will involve potential customers in shaping new services.

Although residents can tell us a great deal about what is required in the District, we also have to rely on other sources of information to maintain an up to date understanding of local housing circumstances. This will include undertaking careful and detailed research to measure or assess the scale and impact of particular housing issues; interpreting and analysing new and existing data; and keeping up to date with new policy initiatives. The Council and other organisations use this research to better identify problems and solutions and to target resources more effectively.

Vision: A District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice, with the support they need.

The Council and its partners will monitor and report regularly on progress against each of the actions in this Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy.

This customer feedback, research and monitoring will inform the formal review of the operation and impact of this Housing Strategy. A fresh equality impact assessment will also be undertaken as part of this review.

**Aim 4:  
To strengthen the support to local communities.**

**Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014 Actions:**

23. Ensure Local Development Documents (including the Core Strategy) plan for the appropriate level, type, distribution and specification of market and affordable housing across the District to help achieve balanced housing markets.
24. Promote good site management and the provision of appropriate facilities for all authorised Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites.
25. Expand financial advice and products available to District residents.
26. Develop improved access to housing and other public and community services through the application of digital technology.
27. Continue to ask service users and residents about housing issues in order to inform service improvements.
28. Maintain an up to date understanding of local housing circumstances.
29. Monitor the success and impact of the Housing Strategy.