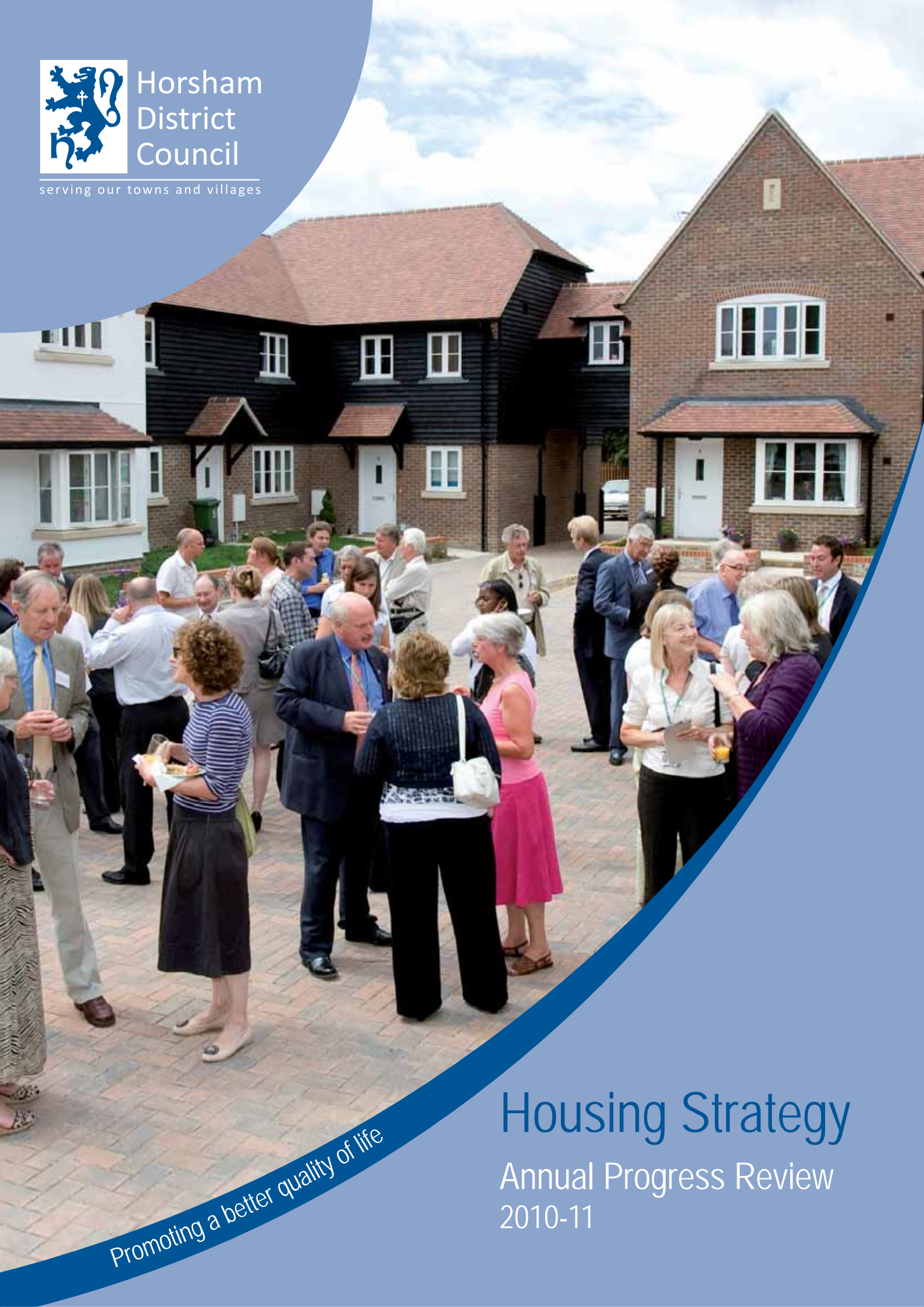




Horsham
District
Council

serving our towns and villages



Promoting a better quality of life

Housing Strategy

Annual Progress Review
2010-11

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We published our Housing Strategy (2008-2013) in November 2008 following its adoption by Horsham District Council on 22 October 2008. The Strategy outlines our objectives for providing housing and housing-related services for all residents in the District and sets out how we plan to meet those objectives.

We made a commitment that we would monitor and manage the Strategy primarily by means of an Annual Progress Review. This Review highlights each objective in our Strategy, and explains how we are working towards meeting those objectives. The aim is not to repeat all of the background information in the Housing Strategy, and this Review should be read in conjunction with that document.

Cover photograph: Opening Newlands Gardens, Amberley



Introduction



We published our 5 year Housing Strategy in November 2008, and completed a Progress Review in May 2010, just before the General Election. The election was followed by a Comprehensive

Spending Review in October and the biggest shake-up in a generation of how affordable housing is delivered and managed.

We immediately focussed on how these changes would affect us as a Council. Taking into consideration that Government funding for new affordable homes has been cut by 60%, we have identified significant challenges ahead. In February 2011 Registered Providers were invited to bid for £2.2 billion of funding under the new affordable homes programme. With flexible tenancies, rents at up to 80% of market rates and a four-year funding allocation replacing the current process of bidding rounds, the new model is designed to give providers greater funding certainty and allow them to meet the needs of local communities more efficiently.

Will all this work in Horsham District? Housing pressures in the south east are well-documented and we are very clear that with less money available there is an overwhelming requirement for innovation and better use of existing assets.

To put things into perspective, at the time of writing, we have 1250 households on our housing register - 490 with an assessed housing need. Seventy five households are in temporary accommodation, 18 of which are currently in Bed & Breakfast.

What are we going to do about this?

The Localism Bill will require us to look at the needs of our communities and plan how these needs will be met. Our officers have already been doing that, and this Review highlights some of the changes and new approaches that the team have put in place. Delivering a steady supply of affordable homes has been difficult in the first two years of the Strategy - however, I am happy to report that 83 new homes were completed during 2010-11 - exceeding the Council's target of 80 per annum, and we expect to see around 300 new affordable homes start on site between now and April 2013.

It's imperative that there continues to be robust, proactive and ongoing discussions between us and our providers. We have been encouraged by discussions with five of our key providers which have revealed a united aim to deliver affordable homes to meet housing need in the most effective way possible. We are committed to providing the right kind of affordable homes at the right time in the right place, and to meet the new District Plan's objective: provide access to appropriate and affordable housing.

There are certainly challenges ahead. If we are to effectively meet housing need in the future, we have to be creative and flexible in the way we deliver a Housing Service and provide new homes. Achieving this requires strong, clear leadership and some bold moves!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Howard'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Councillor Ian Howard
Cabinet Member for Living and Working Communities





Leggyfield Court

The first phase of extra-care homes at Leggyfield Court were completed at the beginning of 2011



How have we done?

The Housing Strategy sets out five major objectives:

- Objective 1** Tackling affordability and meeting housing need
- Objective 2** Preventing homelessness and supporting homeless households
- Objective 3** Improving the quality of life for vulnerable people through housing and related support
- Objective 4** Supporting living and working rural communities
- Objective 5** Ensuring we have the means to deliver

Under each objective there is a series of priorities for action that can be assessed and measured at regular intervals during the life of the Strategy.

It is important to consider each priority for action and state how we have achieved what we proposed or not - and if not, the reasons why.

A better place to live



Objective 1

Tackling affordability and meeting housing need

Increase supply of affordable housing, including affordable rented and shared ownership properties.

Outcomes:

1

Affordable housing delivery

By 31 March 2011, 83 new affordable homes were completed. This is a significant increase on the previous year, and the Council's target of 80 affordable homes has been exceeded:

Newland Gardens in Amberley is the result of many years' hard work involving Amberley Parish Council, Horsham District Council and Saxon Weald. The scheme of 4 houses and 8 flats is occupied by those with a strong connection to Amberley Parish and was officially opened in June 2010

Gardener House was built by Saxon Weald in Southwater on a site formerly occupied by bedsits. The scheme provides affordable housing for the elderly in the area and is made up of 10 one bed and 20 two bed flats. Photovoltaic roof panels help provide reduced communal electricity costs. The scheme was funded by Saxon Weald with grant from Horsham District Council

Leggyfield Court, 10 minutes from Horsham town centre, consisted of 44 older persons' bedsits with outdated communal facilities.

The building was considered no longer fit for purpose and a new modern development of 57 retirement and extra care 1 and 2 bed flats is being built in its place. Due to the size and complexity of the project the redevelopment is taking place over two phases. The first phase completed in November 2010. All the remaining existing tenants from the old building were then successfully transferred into their new homes. The demolition of the remaining part of the old building started in January 2011 with the completion of the remaining 36 flats due in March 2012. The second phase will exclusively provide extra care housing with 12 of these units available for purchase under a shared equity scheme.

Nightingale House and Skylark House, Pulborough, consist of 20 one and two bedroom flats for retirement housing. Residents enjoy exceptional views across the Pulborough Brooks nature reserve. Saxon Weald received funding from the Homes and Communities Agency and a grant from Horsham District Council. Six of the new residents have moved from a nearby retirement housing scheme which has now closed.



2

The year ahead

The development programme for the coming year is encouraging and shows an increase in the number of affordable homes to be delivered. In spite of severe restrictions on funding from central government, it is expected that around 100 homes will be completed by the end of March 2012.

Saxon Weald, Southern Housing Group, Moat Housing Association and Hastoe Housing Association are all currently developing schemes in the District. Hastoe, a rural specialist affordable housing provider, has secured funding from the Homes and Communities Agency to deliver 10 rural affordable homes in Lower Beeding. Further details can be found in chapter 4.

Moat Housing Association will provide 10 family homes near the centre of Horsham, and Saxon Weald will start constructing over 100 homes in the District, many of which should be completed and ready for occupation by the end of March 2012. Fifty nine of those homes will receive grant from the Council in the form of developer contributions, and that number includes family homes, fully wheelchair accessible units and homes built to exceptionally high levels of sustainability and renewable energy.

Saxon Weald is building 38 affordable homes on the former Bryce Lodge site near Horsham station. The scheme consists of a mix of family housing and supported housing for people with special needs. The homes have been designed to a very high standard with 12 family houses aiming to achieve the German *Passivhaus* standard and the remaining 26 flats and houses aim to achieve level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. These new homes will



Bryce Lodge
Homes under construction on the former Bryce Lodge site.

help the fight against fuel poverty with residents' annual fuel bills costing around 10% of existing properties.

Southern Housing Group is currently redeveloping the former Bridge House and Council Depot in Horsham and will provide 49 affordable homes.

The Council allocated a sum to help fund the scheme as up till March 2011 no grant was available from the Homes and Communities Agency. However, Southern



Tackling affordability and meeting housing need

Housing Group resubmitted a bid to the HCA with full Council support at the beginning of 2011. Due to 'slippage' (grant funding not taken up on other schemes), the bid was successful and nearly £2m has been allocated. The Council's agreement to provide financial support was a major contribution to the decision made by the HCA to fund the scheme.

District councillors and officers have worked very hard throughout the year to secure affordable housing provision on the large strategic sites west of Horsham and west of Bewbush (Crawley). Affordable housing packages consisting of numbers of units on site and additional developer contributions in lieu of provision on site have been negotiated.

On each development the total affordable housing contribution exceeds 30%.

It is expected that the first phases of affordable homes will begin to be delivered during the coming year.

In addition to outline planning applications granted permission on the major strategic sites, planning consent has been obtained for a further 180 affordable homes at various locations across the District.

In the Housing Strategy Annual Progress Review for 2009 -10, we highlighted a possible development of open market and affordable homes on Council-owned land off Rascals Close in Southwater. The scheme was approved and will deliver 29 homes, 11 of which will be affordable.

The Council's Strategic Land and Property Manager collaborates with Planning and Housing officers to examine the Council's land and property portfolio and identify suitable development opportunities. Consideration is also given to the acquisition of property and the potential to form partnerships and joint ventures with public and private organisations.

The delivery of affordable housing on land which the Council owns or plans to acquire forms an integral part of the strategy brief. The scheme at Rascals Close, Southwater provides a good recent example of how this approach can deliver results.



Bridge House, Horsham: Southern Housing Group are building 49 affordable homes. The scheme has been funded by the Homes and Communities Agency and Horsham District Council



Tackling affordability and meeting housing need

3

Future funding

The Homes and Communities Agency requires all local authorities to create a Local Investment Plan in order to qualify for potential government subsidy for affordable housing.

The plan is the basis of dialogue between the Homes and Communities Agency, Horsham District Council, Crawley Borough Council, Mid Sussex District Council and other key partners. Its main purpose is to highlight the key priorities for housing investment over the short to medium term and to enable investment to be planned strategically. It will help inform the Homes and Communities Agency on the level of investment required to support the delivery of affordable housing and associated infrastructure in the three local authority areas comprising northwest Sussex.

The partners to the Local Investment Plan have adopted the following vision:

Ensuring the delivery of high quality housing which is affordable, sustainable and in the right place to support economic vitality, to enhance the quality of life in North West Sussex and to make it an even better place in which to live and work.

The proposed Localism Bill sets out reforms that will mean more decisions about housing are taken locally, and the system becomes fairer and more effective.

In November 2010, the Department for Communities and Local Government published *Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing* - a consultation document on proposed changes to the structure of social housing. This heralded the introduction of a new type of tenure, *Affordable Rent*, which offers shorter fixed term tenancies at a rent higher than social rent, to be a maximum of 80% of local market rents.

The Affordable Rent model introduces a new way of paying for the development of social housing by housing associations: the additional income derived from Affordable Rent can only be used to subsidise new development. This effectively reduces grant allocations awarded by the Homes and Communities Agency and replaces the model used to build new social housing that has been in use for many years.

The new system allows for a proportion of existing housing stock to be re-let at Affordable Rent levels, although this must fit into the stated aims of the relevant local authority strategic tenancy policy (see Objective 2).



Tackling affordability and meeting housing need

4

Planning

The Core Strategy Review is underway and a detailed assessment of affordable housing viability was produced in August 2010. The study demonstrates that at the time of preparation, 40% affordable housing on developments of more than 15 dwellings was viable. Although the funding mechanisms have changed since the publication of the Study it does include a 'dynamic viability' tool that will enable the Council to reflect changes in the market and affordable housing viability over time. The study also recommends a sliding scale of affordable housing contribution on developments of 14 homes or less.

The study will be used to inform new affordable housing policies in the Core Strategy Review.

5

The wider picture

The Council continues to facilitate and participate in local and wider forums that share best practice, networking and shared goals; for example: West Sussex Planning and Affordable Housing Group, Horsham Registered Provider Development Forum, Rural Housing Working Group, Sussex Rural Affordable Housing Partnership, Horsham District Community Partnership and the West Sussex Housing Delivery and Intervention Board.

A better place to live



Tackling affordability and meeting housing need

Provide customers access to housing in a way that promotes choice

Outcomes:

It has proved difficult to offer applicants a wide choice of options, especially where debt and low income prevent people from renting privately. Applicants do have a choice of area they would like to live in and are not forced to take the first property they are offered that meets their needs. However, options are limited and if applicants decline two properties they are removed from the Housing Register for a period of 12 months.

Despite a marked decrease in the amount of properties available for rent in Horsham District over the past year, the Council has still helped 39 households obtain accommodation via the Rent Deposit Scheme. The scheme is used to provide rent in advance and deposits for successful applicants. It will continue in 2011-12, and is largely self financing with income from deposits issued between 2006 and 2010 financing loans in 2010-11. This has meant no increase in the budget over the last two years.

A Private Sector Lettings Officer, funded by a Government grant, will be recruited shortly/has been recruited to work with landlords across West Sussex to access private rented accommodation for homeless applicants. As a result of the shortage of private rented accommodation locally, the Lettings Officer will focus his/her efforts on properties outside of Horsham District.

Moat Housing Association acts as the Homebuy Zone Agent for West Sussex, processing all applications for shared ownership and other intermediate affordable housing. Officers from Moat attend the quarterly Housing Liaison Forum and update the group on publicity initiatives and advertising.

During the year round 200 applicants registered with Moat for shared ownership homes in the District.

Choice based lettings has been considered as an option but rejected. Applicants who do not have an assessed housing need could 'jump the queue' and successfully navigate the lettings process in front of applicants who do have a need, and require support in accessing a suitable home. In addition, the Council is not currently in a position to accommodate the extra cost associated with choice based lettings.



Tackling affordability and meeting housing need

Improve the condition, quality and sustainability of housing in the District

Outcomes:

We have carried out the annual review of our Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy which aims to:

a. enable owner-occupiers and landlords of dwellings that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard or that pose a serious health and safety risk to any occupiers or visitors, to bring their homes up to the Decent Homes Standard and to alleviate serious risks to health and safety

b. enable owner-occupiers and private sector tenants to carry out improvements and repairs to their homes

c. enable owner-occupiers and private tenants to make their homes energy efficient thereby reducing the incidence of fuel poverty and secure, as far as possible, against crime

d. enable owners of empty properties to bring them back into residential use

e. enable residents, particularly older people and disabled people, to remain in their own property

f. enable people to move to alternative living accommodation where their existing home is unsuitable for adaptation.

(See full policy at:

http://www.horsham.gov.uk/Files/Private_Sector_Assistance_Policy_Booklet_2009.pdf)

We participated in the Warm Front pilot project which was a national trial of insulation for 100 mobile homes using funding from the Government's Warm Front Scheme.

Sixteen mobile homes on a site in the Horsham District have now had insulation installed. The fuel consumption data will be collected and the long-term effects compiled into a report which will hopefully convince the Government and energy companies of the benefits of this type of insulation.

We revised and updated the Empty Homes Strategy to reflect the practical ways we are attempting to bring empty homes back into use, from persuasion to enforcement.

The overall aims of our Strategy are to encourage homeowners and landlords to bring vacant homes back into use, considering all the options available for tackling the problems and making every effort to bring the home back to a good standard and into use as a dwelling, and to remove the negative impact empty homes in poor condition are having on their neighbourhood

We have formed an Empty Homes Enforcement Group consisting of officers from all Departments across the Council who have an input into Empty Homes. This group co-ordinates the Council's actions for the most effective approach



Tackling affordability and meeting housing need

to bringing the more difficult long term empty homes back into use.

We have commissioned Brighton and Hove Empty Property Officers to send letters and information to owners of long term empty property in Horsham District; to maintain an active current list of empty properties, monitor and report back on properties brought back into use and to deal with day-to-day queries about empty property options for private owners in the Horsham District Council area, including queries from private developers.

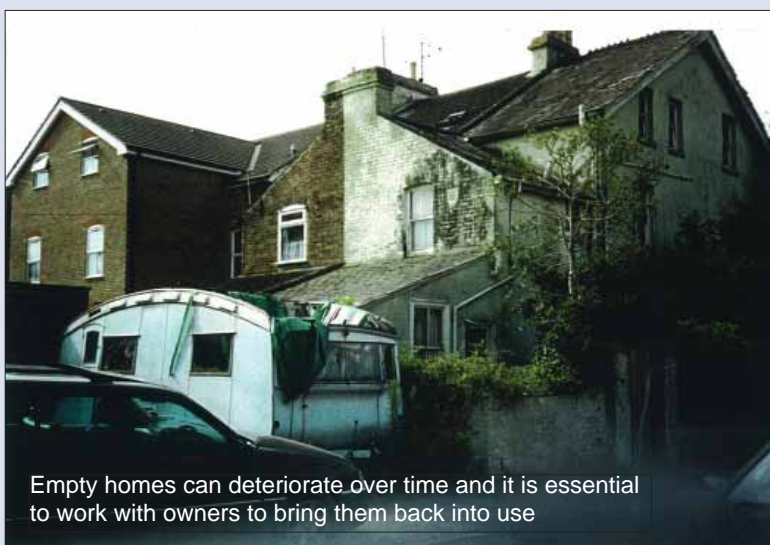
We offer grants to induce owners of empty property to bring the property up to a good lettable standard, and in return are granted nomination rights for tenants taken from the Council's waiting list for the subsequent 5 years.

In 2009-2010 we brought back 9 empty homes into use by our direct actions though many other long term empty properties in our area have come back into use through our advice or influence. Some homes were put through the forced sale procedure to recover debts on the homes as a way of achieving the aim of allowing them to be re-occupied. We are on track to bring more homes back into use this year than last.

The Council, together with Arun, Adur, Crawley, Mid Sussex and Worthing Councils (West Sussex Partnership) successfully bid to the Regional Housing Board for funding to provide

energy efficiency measures to vulnerable households within the region.

The Partnership received just over a million pounds over a three year period and was able to undertake some additional projects which included cavity wall and loft insulation in blocks of flats and houses in multiple occupation, an emergency heat scheme, renewable energy loans and the provision of insulation to mobile homes.



Empty homes can deteriorate over time and it is essential to work with owners to bring them back into use

New developments of affordable housing are all achieving at least Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Housing Associations are currently waiting for new guidelines from the Homes and Communities Agency regarding future sustainability and renewable energy standards.

All 38 homes on the Bryce Lodge development will either be built to Level 5 of the Code, or to the *Passivhaus* standard.



Tackling affordability and meeting housing need

Improve understanding and knowledge of housing need and housing markets in the District

Outcomes:

The local planning authority now has the responsibility for planning for housing provision. In view of this, Horsham District Council completed a 'Locally Generated Needs Study' to gain an understanding of housing needs within the District. The original report was published in April 2010, with an 'Additional Analysis' paper published in August 2010.

(http://www.horshamdistrictldf.info/LDDS/local_dev_documents_4650.asp).

The study looks at evidence of housing need and demand and considers the factors which will affect future requirements for housing in the District. Whilst the report makes recommendations based upon a number of scenarios, this will need to be informed by assessments of potential suitable land, infrastructure capacity, delivery issues and opportunities for supporting a vibrant economy, as well as consultation with local communities. This work will be undertaken alongside, and form part of, the Core Strategy Review. Horsham District Council is also participating in joint working with neighbouring authorities to understand the wider context and ensure the needs of the wider area are met.

The Horsham District Community Partnership's Goal Group, 'A Better Place to Live' has set an objective *to stimulate the provision of affordable housing to increase supply, reduce demand and reduce homelessness.*

One aspect of the objective is *to visit 50% of all Parish and Neighbourhood Councils in 2010-2011 and the remaining 50% in 2011-2012.*

The purpose of the visits has been to raise awareness of the need for affordable housing and encourage Parishes to undertake housing needs surveys in partnership with the Council and Action in Rural Sussex. Full details of the parishes visited and resulting surveys can be found under Objective 4.

A better place to live



Objective 2

Preventing homelessness and supporting homeless households

Improve customers' access to high quality housing options advice and information from the Council

Outcomes:

In 2009/10, there were 233 cases of homelessness being prevented or relieved. This fell to 183 cases in 2010/11 but the numbers are now increasing again.

Despite significant increases in enquiries the advice and solutions that we have put in place have enabled numbers on the register to remain fairly static.

The application process has been the focus of attention through the 'Redesign' programme (see Objective 5). All applicants are required to describe their housing issue(s) to a Housing Options Officer before being given an application form. Housing Services no longer supply application forms on the internet, from partner agencies or through the post.

This system was devised to ensure that all applications are processed efficiently and that applicants' expectations are managed. The new system has proved very successful in terms of customer satisfaction with 100% of applicants who had spoken to a Housing Options Officer in the first 5 weeks of the pilot reporting that they were fully satisfied with the clarity of the advice given. New leaflets have been prepared

and printed and checklists issued to officers to ensure that all applicants receive the same quality of advice and assistance.

Any applicants who require a home visit will be visited within 5 working days. The aim is to ensure vulnerable and minority groups are not disadvantaged and that appropriate measures are in place to assist all who require support.

A prioritisation system has been implemented to ensure those in need from the District are recognised and dealt with as promptly as possible.

The Housing Options Team has been strengthened by the addition of one extra officer and all officers have undergone extensive training to enable them to provide the most effective support to those who attend drop-in sessions.

Housing Officers work with staff from the Census Partnership to maintain high standards, particularly with reference to Housing Benefit, and monitor impact of the Local Housing Allowance (rent payments made by Housing Benefit). They liaise closely with the





Housing Options Assessment Procedure

With effect from 31st January 2011, you will no longer be required to complete a Housing Options Assessment Form before speaking to a Housing Options Officer.

You will, however, need to provide the following documents at your initial interview.

Photo proof of ID: Passport, new style driving licence or photo card supplied by employer/college, etc

An application for housing cannot be progressed until these documents have been provided as knowing who you are and your housing circumstances will form the basis of the advice you are given by the Council's Housing Options Officers.

The new system of 'drop ins' at the Council offices for people in housing need has proved very successful.



Preventing homelessness and supporting homeless households

Census partnership to ensure appropriate measures are in place to deal with non payment of rent by vulnerable households. Changes to Local Housing Allowance may increase the risk of homelessness both in the private and social sectors. Close working with Census will continue to mitigate the effects of homelessness wherever possible. Negotiations are taking place with the Census partnership with a view to the Housing Options team taking responsibility for Discretionary Housing Payments.

There have been 15 payments from the Homelessness Prevention Loan Fund and 10 payments from the Prevention Grant during 2010/11.

The Council continues to fund two days work a week by the Citizens Advice Bureau. Applicants are directly referred and receive an hour long appointment to discuss benefit entitlement, debt repayment and mortgage problems.

Southdown Housing Association continues to deliver the West Sussex Signpost services in Horsham and offers a range of assistance to anyone over the age of 16 to help them prevent the loss of their home or to access suitable housing.

The Court Desk Service is now funded through the Community Legal Advice Service and Shelter provides valuable assistance to local residents at repossession hearings. Close liaison with Housing Services follows where appropriate.

The Sussex Oakleaf scheme continues to support those recovering from substance misuse problems and the emergency rooms at the 'Y' Centre, partly funded by Horsham District Council, offer two bed spaces for young homeless people to whom the Council owes a duty.

Sixteen/seventeen year olds are dealt with by a young person's worker and a Connexions worker based in Crawley. West Sussex County Council

Children's Services have the ultimate responsibility of determining whether a young person is a 'child in need' and the Council rarely becomes involved in this assessment.



Preventing homelessness and supporting homeless households

Improving the quality of temporary accommodation provided in the District to meet Government Standards and provide support where necessary.

Outcomes:

As homelessness increases, the number of households the Council has to place in bed and breakfast accommodation is rising. This is a very expensive way of meeting temporary housing need, and for most households is unsatisfactory, even in the short term.

The problem has been compounded by no voids in temporary accommodation in 2010/11. In response the Council has taken the decision to purchase additional houses on the open market for use as temporary accommodation. One million pounds was set aside in 2010/11 and a further million has been set aside for 2011/12. So far four 3 bedroom properties have been purchased and three more are under offer or awaiting exchange of contracts. Further investment will be considered based on a viability assessment of each property on a case by case basis.

We continue to fund a Buildings Supervisor to maintain the accommodation and a Housing Officer with special responsibility for supporting households entering, staying at and leaving temporary accommodation.



Rising numbers of families in bed & breakfast accommodation has strongly influenced the Council's decision to acquire houses on the open market as temporary homes for families in need.



Objective 3

Improving the quality of life for vulnerable people through housing and related support

Elderly

Outcomes:

Saxon Weald Homes is currently reviewing its older person's accommodation throughout the District. Accommodation that is not fit for purpose, with shared facilities, will be decommissioned and new or refurbished homes will be provided.

'Supporting People' funding is being withdrawn from Extra Care, with emphasis being placed on personal care packages. Saxon Weald is reassessing its position in the light of this decision.

The schemes at Leggyfield, Gardner House, Nightingale House and Skylark House replace bedsits that shared bathrooms with high quality self-contained one and two bedroom flats. The details of these schemes can be found under Objective 1.

London & Quadrant Housing Association has no immediate plans to remodel the South Holmes Estate, Horsham. Although the Association recognises the need for refurbishment, there are ongoing difficulties with obtaining agreement from leaseholders.

A key requirement to providing more family accommodation is the release of such housing

that is under-occupied. The proposed new flexible tenancy will allow Providers to assess the level of need when a tenancy is to be renewed or terminated. Those who no longer need larger family accommodation will be encouraged to move to more suitable retirement housing.

The Council published a 'Preparing for an Ageing Population' Strategy in March 2011.

The Strategy highlights key points regarding the housing needs of older people:

- ◆ Changing needs of housing stock, both in terms of affordable housing and market housing; the provision of suitable and attractive accommodation may encourage less under occupancy
- ◆ Likely increase in housing applications from older people for sheltered and extra care housing
- ◆ When writing policy and planning for new housing, greater consideration may be required (e.g. in the Local Development Framework) to ensure good links to existing community services (e.g. healthcare, shops, public transport etc) for creating and maintaining sustainable settlements





Skylark House - older persons' accommodation in Pulborough



Gardener House, Southwater, was built on the site of a former sheltered housing scheme that was no longer fit for purpose



Improving the quality of life for vulnerable people through housing and related support

Mental Health

Outcomes:

The Richmond Fellowship continues to provide a specialist support service for people with mental health needs and learning difficulties. Blatchford House has been refurbished and reconfigured. Housing Services continue to liaise closely with Langley Green Hospital, the Community Mental Health Team and local GPs with regard to applicants who have mental health problems and are in housing need.

Learning and physical disability

Outcomes:

Saxon Weald Housing Association will provide five homes for those with learning disabilities within the new redevelopment at Bryce Lodge, Horsham.

The Association has also acquired land for affordable housing provision on a development in Billingshurst. Plans are currently being prepared for two 3 bed chalet-style homes, fully adapted for disabled use.

Westhope operates Residential Care homes and Supported Living accommodation in Horsham: Westhope Lodge, Westhope Mews and Westhope Place.

Southdown Housing Association's HOLD (homeownership for people with disabilities) has been successful and is set to expand in the future into the private rented sector.

West Sussex County Council has been

reviewing its priorities for investment in Supported Housing across the County.

The key priorities emerge from a Joint Strategic Needs Analysis and use of a model to further assess need.

The County Council predicts:

- ◆ An increase the percentage of older people as a proportion of the population
- ◆ An increase in the number of people with learning disabilities and chronic or long term conditions
- ◆ New household formation being dominated by older people

The results of the analysis also show an increasingly pressurised housing market in which:



Improving the quality of life for vulnerable people through housing and related support

- ◆ Overall housing supply is not increasing at the same rate as household formation or population growth
- ◆ Home ownership, despite falls in house prices, is still beyond the means of first time buyers on median incomes
- ◆ Access to the private rented market in several parts of the county will be increasingly difficult for households dependent on benefit
- ◆ The availability of affordable housing, through reduced turnover (relets) and limited new supply results in growing waiting lists.

The County Council's first priority is to support the delivery of new homes of which a proportion are affordable. This is the key requirement for many of the vulnerable client groups in which the County Council has a specific interest.

The County Council is to support additional accommodation suitable for Multi-Agency Public

Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) clients in the Crawley/ Horsham/Haywards Heath area.

Some of this accommodation may well be deliverable through remodelling of existing low demand schemes including some sheltered housing and shared supported housing schemes.

Despite the pressures of an ageing population and an increasingly pressurised housing market a report commissioned in 2010 by West Sussex County Council did not identify a shortage of supported housing for older people within Horsham District.

The Head of Housing and Community Development and the Housing Needs Manager will continue to monitor supported housing needs based on the annual Joint Supported Needs Assessment and other commissioned studies. Regular meetings between senior housing officers ensure that this information informs discussion with providers.



Improving the quality of life for vulnerable people through housing and related support

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Outcomes:

The Council continues to work towards the production of a Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Sites Development Plan Document (DPD). The changes to the planning system have meant that the number of pitches required will now be set at a local, not regional level, and further work will need to be carried out to establish the need, although the needs identified in the Gypsies and Travellers Accommodation Assessment (2007) will provide a starting point. The Sites DPD cannot be completed before the Core Strategy Review, which will set out the overarching strategy for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and therefore publication of the Sites DPD will not take place before the next Housing Strategy Annual Progress Review (2011-12).

However, it is hoped that the site work, which will include looking at pitches that have received temporary permission in the past and unauthorised sites where currently no action is being taken may enable the Council to bring forward some proposals in the intervening period.

The Council is involved in a wider project seeking to increase the involvement of the Gypsy and Traveller Community in the democratic process. As part of this a seminar by the organisation Friends, Families and Travellers, was held for Members and Parish Councils in the summer of 2010; this has increased awareness of the issues and the need for engagement on all sides.

The Council has appointed a part-time Equalities Officer which is having a positive impact on ensuring that the needs of Gypsies and Travellers are taken into account in all areas of Council work.

We have reviewed our Equality Action Plan to ensure the Council's housing services are accessible to all including ethnic monitoring of applicants to the Housing Register. The Equalities Officer helps considerably to establish, monitor and improve arrangements.

Other related support for vulnerable groups

Outcomes:

Together with our Registered Provider partners, we continue to support West Sussex County Council Adult & Children's Services and Supporting People Team to develop and maintain day to day information about supported housing needs in the District.



Objective 4

Supporting living and working local communities

Set a framework that involves all key stakeholders; this will raise awareness of the need for, and improve the delivery of, rural affordable housing.

Outcomes:

We published our Rural Housing Strategy in 2008. The Strategy expires this year, and Horsham District Council is working in partnership with Mid Sussex District Council to produce a *Rural Affordable Housing Plan* for Mid Sussex and Horsham.

The partnership will include Action in Rural Sussex and Registered Providers with a track record of delivering rural housing. It is essential that the Providers in the Partnership are committed to the hard work that is inevitable when delivering rural schemes.

The Homes and Communities Agency has encouraged the formation of the Partnership and has indicated that funding for numbers of units across the two authorities may be easier to secure through joint working.

We hope that the partnership will provide a louder voice for rural affordable housing and aid the creation of sustainable communities.

It is anticipated that the Rural Affordable Housing Plan will be published during autumn 2011.

The Rural Housing Working Group within the Council has met quarterly to review progress and chart the course for rural housing delivery in the District. However, it is likely that during the coming year the group will develop into a joint working group with Mid Sussex District Council.

The Housing Strategy & Development Manager is actively contributing to the Core Strategy Review and will be involved in possible changes to policies CP5 and CP12, which control the delivery of affordable housing.



Amberley House. Homes at Newlands Corner, Amberley.
Great attention was paid to design and materials.



Supporting living and working local communities

Accurately identify and assess rural affordable housing need, through which investment in sustainable rural affordable housing can be directed and prioritised.

Outcomes:

We have maintained regular contact with Parish Councils and local communities through working with Action in rural Sussex, and through a series of visits to Parish Councils. These have taken place under the banner of the Horsham District Community Partnership - see Objective 1.

The purpose of the visits has been to raise awareness of the need for affordable housing and encourage Parishes to undertake housing needs surveys in partnership with the Council and Action in rural Sussex.

By 31 March 2011, the Council's Housing Strategy and Development Manager had visited the following parishes:

Storrington, Ashington, Billingshurst, Pulborough, Parham, Lower Beeding, Rudgwick, Southwater, Bramber, Nuthurst, Slinfold, Shipley, Amberley and Ashurst.

A member of Saxon Weald's development team has attended each meeting in order to speak on the actual delivery of rural affordable housing. Discussions with the parishes have been overwhelmingly positive, with Billingshurst, Pulborough, Parham, Southwater, Shipley and Ashurst Parishes currently carrying out housing needs surveys in partnership with Action in Rural Sussex.

Further visits to Parish Councils are scheduled to take place later in 2011.

Parish Council Working Groups have been formed in West Chiltington, Cowfold, Warnham and Upper Beeding. Each group is actively working with Action in rural Sussex and Horsham District Council to identify suitable sites for affordable housing. It is hoped that further working groups will be established following the completion of housing need surveys.



Supporting living and working local communities

Secure new resources to maximise the delivery of affordable housing units in rural areas to meet identified need

Outcomes:

Saxon Weald Housing Association completed a scheme of 12 affordable homes in June 2010 for local people in Amberley, and work is progressing on a similar scheme in Coldwaltham.

Planning permission for 10 affordable homes in Lower Beeding was granted during the year. The Parish and District Councils have worked hard for eight years to bring this development to fruition and the homes will be allocated to those with a strong local connection to Lower Beeding Parish.

Hastoe Housing Association has secured grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency for three of the dwellings, and the Council is providing the necessary subsidy for the other seven from developer contributions.

Thirteen affordable homes in Ashington were also approved as part of an overall development of 29 dwellings. English Rural Housing Association is currently negotiating the terms of the acquisition of the homes from the developer.

A Community Interest Company, similar to a Community Land Trust (CLT), is being investigated in Rudgwick. A CLT is an independent non-profit making trust that owns or controls land and housing in perpetuity for the benefit of the community.

The Council's Development Management North Committee granted a resolution to permit planning permission for the Rudgwick scheme and work is progressing on drawing up the terms of the Community Interest Company. Seven affordable homes for local people in housing need will form part of the development

We are supporting Raglan Housing Association to develop a 'Best Practice' rural affordable housing scheme in Coldwaltham that includes sustainable development technologies.

Achieving these priorities depends on a commitment by the District Council to continue to pay an annual grant to the Action in Rural Sussex Rural Housing Enabling Programme. This is in addition to annual funding from the Horsham District Community Partnership and the Rural Registered Providers. Each contributes approximately £3,000 - £4,000 per annum.

In preparation for the Core Strategy Review, the Council was involved in a joint study with five other

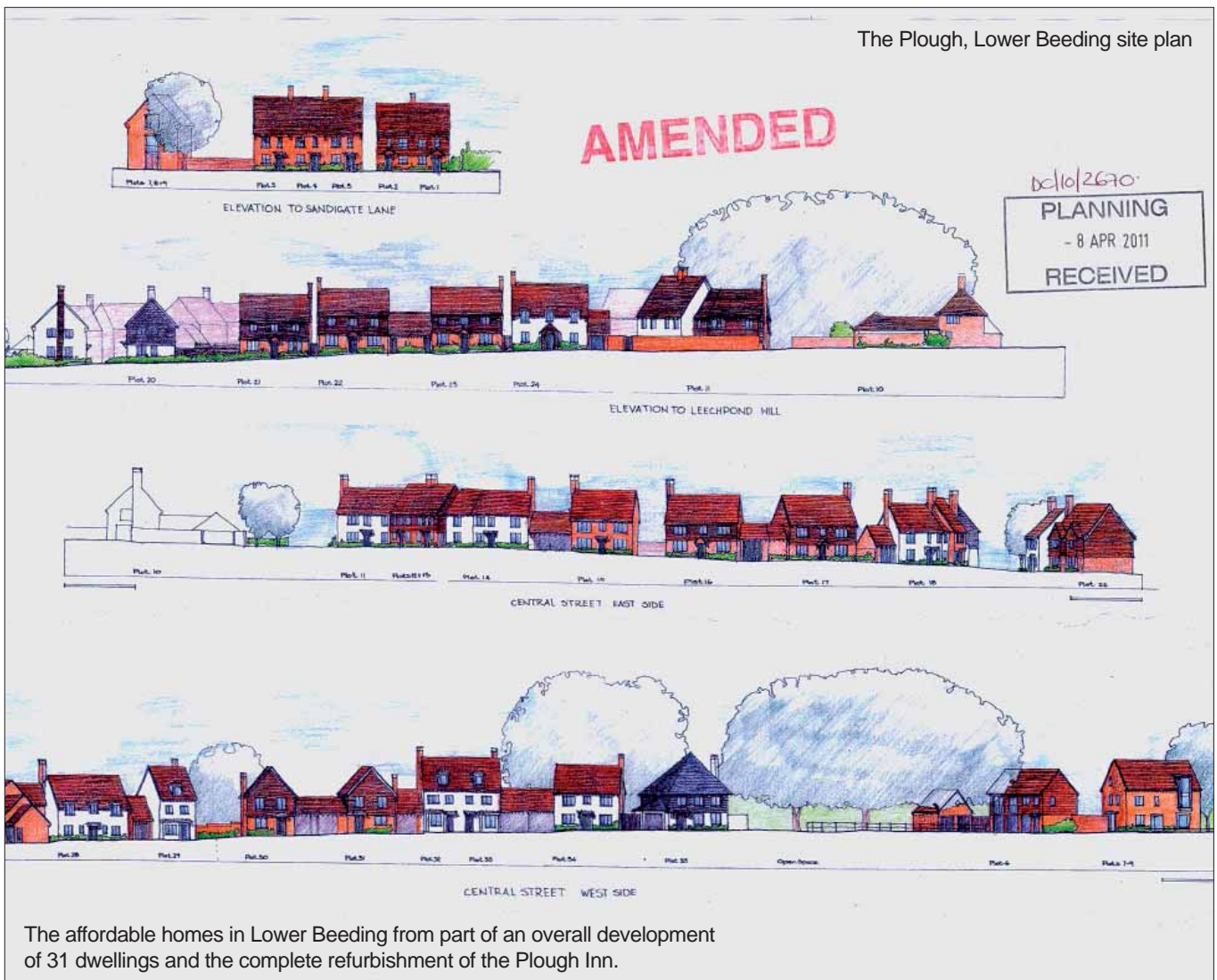


Supporting living and working local communities

local authorities to establish a robust evidence base for setting new renewable and low carbon energy targets. The West Sussex Sustainable Energy Study was published in October 2009.

The costs of new renewable energy technology have to be carefully considered in the current economic climate, as any additional costs can seriously affect the viability of a development, particularly if the scheme consists of a small number of homes.

The West Sussex Sustainable Energy Study will contribute to improving the standards of rural affordable housing by identifying feasible options for renewable energy generation.



Objective 5

Ensuring we have the means to deliver

Producing a Strategy is only valid if there is a commitment to deliver the Strategy and the right mechanisms are in place to ensure delivery.

There has been a 300% increase in the number of emergency requests for housing support made to the Council between 2007-8 and 2010-11.

Early in 2010 an additional member of staff was recruited to the Housing Options Team in response to the demand.

As mentioned under Objective 1, a Private Sector Lettings Officer has been recruited to work with landlords across West Sussex to access private rented accommodation for homeless applicants.

In addition, a 'Lean Review' of the housing application process has led to the redesign of how the Council receives and deals with requests for housing support. The redesign has enabled the Council to provide improved advice on first contact with enquirers. This has resulted in a reduction in applications where there is little or no chance of the applicant becoming a priority for housing.

The subsequent efficiency saving has enabled the department to cope with the ongoing increase in demand within existing resources and has been welcomed by both customers and staff.

The Housing Strategy is monitored through

the Performance Management System. The Council's Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Performance Management Working Group continue to monitor closely housing issues within the District.

We held a seminar for Members prior to the election to explain the changes proposed by the Localism Bill and discussed how we can move forward in the current climate. The seminar will be repeated post-election.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Development chairs a Members' Affordable Housing Advisory Group (MAHAG) which is well supported and meets four times a year.

We are committed to partnership working both internally and externally - groups meet regularly throughout the year to monitor progress and drive forward delivery of the Housing Strategy.

We hold regular meetings with housing providers regarding lettings, management and housing support services, as well as housing need, funding sources, design and quality standards and sustainable development.

The Housing Strategy and Development Manager, as a member of the Strategic and Community Planning Team, works closely



Ensuring we have the means to deliver

with the Senior Planning Officer with special responsibility for affordable housing. Planning policies that assist the delivery of new affordable housing including supported and specialist housing can now be more effectively monitored and developed, and the Housing Strategy & Development Manager is closely involved with reviewing the affordable housing planning policies in the Core Strategy Review.



The Head of Housing and Community Development, Housing Needs Manager and Housing Strategy and Development Manager meet regularly to ensure a joined-up approach on the delivery of affordable housing and housing services.

The Head of Housing and Community Development is part of the West Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group, and the Housing Strategy and Development Manager sits on the steering group for the North West Sussex Local Investment Plan. Both officers are at the forefront of responding to and informing local housing policy. The Housing Strategy and Development Manager also chairs the West Sussex Planning and Affordable Housing Group.

The Housing Needs Manager is part of the Supporting People Working Group and the Housing Needs Managers Group which both serve to monitor and assess changes and consequential impact on services.

The Housing Liaison Forum meets twice a year to inform Providers and receive feedback.

Since we produced our Housing Strategy in 2008, we have seen the most radical shake up in affordable housing in a generation.

The Audit Commission and the Tenant Services Authority have been abolished, and the Localism Bill proposes fundamental changes in the way affordable housing is delivered and managed, with the new 'Affordable rent' model and flexible tenancies at the top of the agenda

We need to monitor how these changes will affect the new District Plan's objective: *provide access to appropriate and affordable housing*. The Council and its partner Registered Providers, predominantly Saxon Weald, are working closely together to shape local allocation and tenancy strategies, and to maximise opportunities to secure funding for the affordable housing that we need.



Ensuring we have the means to deliver

By the time the Annual Progress Review 2011-12 is published, we should have a clearer view of how far the Government's changes have impacted the District. We will be able to report how we have responded to the challenges, overcome the obstacles and taken every opportunity to improve affordable housing supply and offer those in housing need the best possible service.

The Council and its partner Registered

Providers, predominantly Saxon Weald, are working closely together to shape local allocation and tenancy strategies, and to maximise opportunities to secure funding for the affordable housing that we need.



A better place to live





This publication can be requested in alternative formats.
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