



Building better chances in life
Sedgemoor District Council's Housing Strategy
2010-2015

1.0 Introduction



...by Councillor Paul Herbert, the Housing Portfolio Holder

"Working together we will make Sedgemoor a safer, cleaner, more pleasant and vibrant district in which to live, work, learn, invest or to visit." This is the Vision for Sedgemoor within which housing plays a significant and essential part. As Portfolio Holder for Housing and part of the Executive Team for Sedgemoor District Council, it is my privilege to introduce this Housing Strategy Document, Building Better Chances in Life. Its purpose is to recognise the role that housing has to play in supporting the wider social, economic and community agendas for Sedgemoor. The Housing Strategy's vision of 'working together to meet housing need' focuses on working in partnership with stakeholders and residents so that the Housing Service can help enhance the area's economic development, encourage employment opportunities, increase educational attainment, ensure community cohesion and above all, make the District of Sedgemoor an attractive place to live and work. Housing clearly contributes to all three themes of the Council's Corporate Strategy:

- **Economic Growth and Regeneration,**
- **Health and Wellbeing,** and a
- **Clean and Sustainable Environment.**

The Housing Strategy integrates with the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and emerging Local Development Framework. This strategy, together with other documents, including the Council's Corporate Plan, the Private Sector Housing Policy and the Countywide Homelessness Strategy link together the Council's overall corporate priorities as set out in the Sedgemoor Corporate Strategy 2009-2014, of:

- **Housing**
- **Efficiency**
- **Regeneration** and the
- **Environment**

Each of these corporate priorities has a direct link to this strategy, 'Working towards providing all with a decent and affordable home in the District'. This is clearly an aspiration, but never the less something to which we are committed. As a housing authority we are exploring all options to maximize resources and the benefit of those resources by

joint working to increase housing choice for our residents. The national context for this strategy is completely different from that of previous strategies. Its development was to a large extent driven by nationally and regionally imposed targets eg Decent Homes, Regional Spatial Strategy, Temporary Accommodation Reduction Targets etc. However the RSS has been revoked by the new government and the deadline to meet Decent Homes and TA targets has passed, and this is the last year of the Local Area Agreement to which Building Better Chances in Life was to contribute. Instead local people and local organisations will have the freedom to agree our own local priorities and targets and this strategy will evolve to reflect this new localism over its 3 year lifetime. However there is also no escaping the challenges that lie ahead; the Government is reviewing Housing Benefit levels, security of tenure and the regulatory framework for social tenants, and the planning system, all of which will contribute to a radical change of the housing landscape as we know it. These changes will be underpinned by a significant financial challenge. Sedgemoor District Council is committed to making the most effective use of all resources to ensure value for money, looking at ever more innovative ways to deliver services. This strategy will be reviewed following the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 to ensure that the identified priorities can still be achieved.

This strategy has been developed in partnership with the Sedgemoor community through feedback by questionnaires, face to face interviews with key stakeholders and conferences engaging Members, Parish Councillors and residents. Four strategic housing priorities will be the focus for the period 2010 to 2015:

- **Meeting the housing needs and aspirations of local communities**
- **Improving the quality of housing across the District**
- **Increasing housing supply in Sedgemoor**
- **Addressing the needs of homeless or potentially homeless people across the District by increasing housing options**

Building better chances in life is supplemented by a Technical Annex containing data which informed the priorities. An executive summary is also available.



...by Gary Orr, Chair of Sedgemoor in Somerset Partnership

The Local Strategic Partnership continues to work to bring together the views of local people and local organisations in order to set out a long term vision for Sedgemoor to 2026. The role of the LSP is being reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant and a partnership of purpose, complementing the new Localism agenda. The Housing Strategy clearly contributes to the 6 themes of our Sustainable Community Strategy outlined below:

- **Making a positive contribution - closer working between organisations and engaging local people and communities in decision making**
- **Living sustainably - making Sedgemoor an affordable place for people to live**
- **Ensuring economic well-being - planning for new sustainable communities to be built in Sedgemoor**
- **Enjoying and achieving - promoting and supporting independent living**
- **Staying safe - delivery of healthy and safe housing, in particular in the private rented and social housing sector**
- **Being healthy - delivery of decent homes with adequate levels of thermal comfort and modern facilities.**

I am very happy to endorse this housing strategy and welcome the value it brings to the Sustainable Community Strategy for Sedgemoor.

2.0 Our vision and purpose - Working together to meet housing need

We recognise that we can only address the challenges of meeting housing need in Sedgemoor by working effectively with our partners, stakeholders and residents. Working together to meet housing need we must also incorporate the Council's agreed priorities:

- **Housing**
- **Regeneration**
- **Efficiency**
- **Environment**

The Council has worked in the context of the national and local agenda to develop a range of priorities for the delivery of the housing service within the District.

The priorities in this housing strategy have built on those established as part of the last Strategy and been updated in the light of varying challenges across the District. In particular, this includes:

- the effects of the recession on availability of credit, a refreshed Supporting People Strategy; Independence and Opportunity,
- the allocation of accommodation based on Choice Based Lettings,
- Working with the community on developing and delivering a new local decency target now that the previous Government's Decent Homes Programme has come to an end,
- accommodation requirements coming out of the Taunton Strategic Housing Market assessment.
- meeting the housing and support needs of substantially increased numbers of households, older people and younger people up to 2026
- The development of Hinkley Point C, creating 5000 jobs during the construction phase and 900 during the operational phase and providing opportunities for short term accommodation for workers to provide a legacy of affordable housing
- The county-wide vision of shared strategic services
- The impact of climate change particularly as much of Sedgemoor is in areas categorised as Flood Zone 3.

Priority Improvement Plan

Priority Area: Meeting the needs and aspirations of the local community
<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working towards meeting the decent homes standard • Reducing crime and the fear of crime within our housing communities • Reducing anti-social behaviour • Improving the cleanliness and environmental aspects of our housing estates • Working in partnership with the police, social services and other agencies to address the needs of vulnerable clients
Priority Area: Improving the quality of housing across the District
<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the Government's Decent Homes Standard • Meeting tenants aspirations for their homes and the community and environment • Ensuring all new housing is high quality, well designed and built to a high Standard • Maximising the use of the Council's enforcement powers to protect tenants in the private rented sector from the effects of bad housing and help to regenerate and revitalize our town centres
Priority Area: Increasing Housing Supply
<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising the delivery of affordable housing across the district by effective use of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > All available funding > The Council's planning powers > The use of public land and resources • Bringing more empty properties back into use • Maximising the benefits from the Council's own housing stock • Maximising the benefits from the District's private rented sector
Priority Area: Increasing Housing Options
<p>Aims: To continue the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of homelessness prevention • Provision of quality housing advice • Provision of quality advice and support to those who do become homeless

3.0 Local influences

The coalition government has changed the national context of this strategy, removing national and regionally ??????? targets. This further demonstrates how Building Better Chances in Life relates to other local strategies

Sub-regional Priorities: Key issues

Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-26 Sets out the long term vision for Somerset in 2026, bringing together views of local people and organisations. The overall vision is of a dynamic, successful modern economy that supports, respects and develops Somerset's distinctive communities and unique environment

Homes in the Community Agency Single Conversation In order to qualify for financial support LAs must have developed and secured local agreement to soundly based strategies and business plans from local, sub-regional and regional partners.

Taunton & South Somerset Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) - 2008 Provides a detailed sub-regional market analysis of housing demand and housing need for the Taunton Housing Market: Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane & West Somerset, providing a robust evidence base for the development of local policy for planning and strategic housing

Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2008-11: Making Homes, Helping People, Changing Lives Joint Action Plan aims to achieve positive outcomes in the support for vulnerable people, tackle the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, provide more settled homes, and provide a context for tackling homelessness through joint working.

Somerset Supporting People Strategy 2005 - 10: The Big Picture Outlines the vision to 'support vulnerable people to live with dignity and independence in their community, either in their own homes or in supported housing'

SDC Strategies Relevant to Housing: Key issues

Sedgemoor Corporate Strategy 2009-2014 Corporate vision is 'to make Sedgemoor a safer, cleaner, more pleasant and vibrant district in which to live, work, learn, invest or visit. Housing is a corporate priority - to achieve decent and affordable homes for all

Sedgemoor Housing Strategy 2008 Identifies the 4 key housing priorities for Sedgemoor

Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace Local Plan 1991-2011 The LDF contains a number of policy documents to guide future planning decisions

Local Development Scheme Sets out the programme and timetable for preparing the LDF policy documents

Sedgemoor Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2008 Ensures that flood risk taken into account to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2009 Identifies potential housing sites so that the LDF may then determine the distribution strategy and which sites should be allocated to housing development

Core Strategy Primary part of the LDF as it sets out the main decisions about development in the area, ie how much and broadly where

Affordable Housing Delivery Plan 2010 States what SDC intends to do to deliver more affordable homes

Sedgemoor Sustainable Communities Strategy Sedgemoor in Somerset is the Local Strategic Partnership

Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy 2009 Sets out the economic vision for the Sedgemoor District: 'Sedgemoor - heart of the south West's enterprise coast: a smart economy, where dynamic places, entrepreneurial business and independent people prosper'.

Sedgemoor Corporate Equalities Plan 2007-2010 Contains the General Equalities Actions, the Disability, Race, Gender Equality Schemes, Actions to promote equality with regard to Age, Religion and Sexuality

Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership Private Sector Renewal Policy and associated strategies The Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership covers Sedgemoor, West Somerset and Taunton Deane. There are a number of strategies designed to improve properties in the private sector, eg: Fuel Poverty and Affordable Warmth Strategy 2009 - 2014, Empty Property Strategy 2010-2013, etc.

Homes in Sedgemoor Delivery Plan 2009-2010 HiS aspires to be the best Landlord and best employer in Somerset, with the mission to provide high quality homes and services for this generation and the next.

4.0 The local context



Further information on the statistics relating to this section is contained in the Technical Appendix

Sedgemoor is a thriving community covering 564 square kilometres. The area, although mainly rural, contains seaside resorts, wetlands, hills, sparsely populated villages and busy towns. There are 55 parish councils and over 70 towns and villages. The main centres of population are Bridgwater with just over 36,000 people, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge with 17,800, and Cheddar 5000. The population of Sedgemoor is 112,800 people, according to NOMIS data from 2008, living in approximately 48,000 households.

4.1 The local demography - an increasing population

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) population projections for the District of Sedgemoor estimate that the population is expected to increase by 20,600 people, an increase of 18.5%, by 2026. This is in comparison to a population change of 14.2% for the South West region and 10.1% for England.

The key trends in population changes are:

- **A significant increase in older people.** The number of those aged 60 to 74 is expected to increase by 54% and the number of those aged 75 and over by 72.0%. These figures are much higher than the projections for the South West region and England - 38% and 33% respectively and 61% and 54% for those aged 75 and over.
- **An increase in the number of children and young people** - by 4% for those under 14, and 6% for people aged 15-29. This compares with a rise of between 2-3% in the South West, and a drop of 1.2% for 15 - 29 year olds in England.
- **The only decline in numbers is for those aged 30-44** which is expected to decline by 3.2% by 2026. This is in comparison to an increase in the South West region for the same age range of 2.9% and a small increase in England of 0.8%.
- **The number of households** in Sedgemoor is projected to increase by 14,000 from 48,000 in 2006 to 62,000 in 2026, an increase of 29.2% in comparison to 24.4% in the South West, and 20.7% for England. This increase in the number of households can be a result of a number of contributing factors, but most notably these include family breakdown and the rise in single parent households and in-migration by those of working age and older people.

- **As a result of local migration** Sedgemoor gains a net 50 people a year as a result of the total net flow across all neighbouring authorities. It loses a net 119 people per year to Taunton Deane but gains a net 179 people per year from North Somerset.
- **Changes to Sedgemoor's population also occur as a result of international migration**, most notably from 'A8' countries. The A8 countries include Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. The greatest numbers of national insurance applications are from Polish nationals. The total number of applications from nationals of 'A8' countries was 580 in 2006. In relation to the population of Sedgemoor, this accounts for 0.52%.

The changes in demography will influence future housing requirements in Sedgemoor and the increase in the 75+ populations could have implications for supported housing.

The Housing Strategy must ensure that the appropriate housing and housing related support exists for:

- the aging population in Sedgemoor
- children and young people aged under 29
- increasing number of households
- minority groups

4.2 The economic context - increasing skills and employment opportunities

Located in the West of the District, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge have a large tourist and retail offer. The Tourist Information Centre records over 100,000 visitors a year. 7 miles of sand stretches from the seaside resort of Burnham-on-Sea, north past the holiday villages of Berrow and Brean, which are almost entirely dedicated to tourism during the summer months.

The District benefits from good transportation links. The M5 motorway runs north to south through the District and the main road, the A38, runs parallel to the motorway. The West Coast main railway line also passes through the District and provides short travel times to London and the Midlands. This could offer opportunities for a number of knowledge intensive industries promoting location of strategic office sites and distribution operations. A particular focus on energy related businesses and the creative, digital and media sector is being promoted through the [Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy 2009](#)

The rural economy is vulnerable, currently facing change and uncertainty. Low productivity, further concentration of activity in declining sectors (manufacturing and agriculture) and a limited range of employers are key issues accompanied by the high house prices widespread in the rural areas. This tends to encourage rural areas to become small enclaves for the wealthy as well as commuter dormitories with declining local services and housing that is unaffordable for local people. The small town of Cheddar in the North East of the District represents the main 'rural' settlement. It provides a focus for enterprise and business in this part of the District and hosts a range of small workspaces supporting local business.

Compared to the South West and England, Sedgemoor has:

- a higher percentage of jobs in the manufacturing sector,
- a similar percentage of jobs in the construction industry, and
- a lower percentage of jobs in the services industry.

- however, in the services sector, Sedgemoor has a higher percentage of jobs in distribution, hotels and restaurants than comparative percentages for the South West and England.

The key impacts of the global recession on Sedgemoor are:

- Over representation in the industrial sector leading to localised job losses as global trends result in production transferring abroad. While the economy of the Bridgwater area appears to have performed well over the last decade and we have seen this success rewarded in the form of Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Grant (LABGI) there has been a decrease in the proportion of total employee jobs within the manufacturing industry.
- The number of people claiming job seekers allowance in Sedgemoor has almost doubled from 1,070 in February 2007 to 2,110 in February 2009, demonstrating that Sedgemoor is less economically resilient than many other economies in the south west. One in five of those employed in Sedgemoor works in sectors in decline.
- While there has been significant employment growth the resilience of this employment is poor. The number of unfilled job centre vacancies in Sedgemoor has actually decreased from 717 in August 2007 to just 340 vacancies in August 2009.
- The picture is dominated by the extent of worklessness and low skills. In 1998 21.3% of Sedgemoor's working age population were qualified to NVQ level 4+; by 2008 this had dropped to 19.8%. Increasing the proportion of more highly skilled people in the workforce would have a positive effect on the resilience of the economy.

SDC has responded to the impact of the recession by developing support mechanisms for the local economy and for individuals within the local communities. For further information see:

- [Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy](#) sets the goal

of moving to a higher value added knowledge driven economy over the course of a single generation.

- [Sedgemoor Financial Inclusion Strategy](#) put in place an emergency 'Credit Crunch' fund of £125,000 to support local businesses and residents by providing access to financial advice and products. This funding has enabled the Council and Homes in Sedgemoor to work with the Sedgemoor Savers Credit Union to guarantee bonds to residents and tenants with no previous saving records, as well as provide funding for a Development Worker to increase Credit Union capacity. We are developing a number of financial initiatives with key partners including Sedgemoor Citizens Advice Bureau, Sedgemoor Savers Credit Union and Wessex Reinvestment Trust.

The Housing Strategy recognises the need to work in partnership with stakeholders to strengthen the links between housing and the up-skilling of tenants and residents affected by the decline in the manufacturing industry.

The Housing Service will:

- Provide timely and targeted housing assistance at households affected by the credit crunch/recession
- Provide appropriate and affordable housing options in partnership with improving employment opportunities to encourage younger people and families to remain living in the Sedgemoor district.
- Target households making new claims for benefits who may never have made previous claims, ensuring that they have access to timely advice and assistance.

4.3 Reducing the level and impact of deprivation

This Housing Strategy is about more than providing housing across the district and about working with partners to address a range of social and environmental issues. A number of neighbourhoods within Bridgwater do suffer from high levels of deprivation in particular in relation to low skill levels and educational attainment. Four of the most deprived wards in Sedgemoor are located within the town of Bridgwater with Highbridge also featuring.

The [Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy](#) recognises that a number of communities exhibit characteristics that typify areas where a localised cycle of decline has occurred. A shortage of appropriate jobs can lead to an exodus of skilled labour as the more able look to move to opportunities elsewhere. This sorting effect, often reinforced through social housing allocations, can lead to concentrations of workless, low skilled and vulnerable people, and cultures of low aspirations can develop. This can lead to poor outcomes across a range of other measures, including the degradation of the physical environment; overstretch of public services, high levels of crime, and poor education and health outcomes. Raising aspiration, tackling worklessness and improving economic performance will be at the heart of regeneration.

Operating across the Council, and with Homes in Sedgemoor, we are working through a number of regeneration projects to make environmental improvements and improve the social environment for our residents:

- Bridgwater Vision, which is a place shaping plan produced

by the Bridgwater Challenge, a partnership project that aims to ensure the town is fit for the future, provides a sustainable mix of uses that meet the needs of the local community and attracts investors, employers, families and younger people.

- North East Bridgwater is a planned employment-led regeneration project which will create up to 2000 homes and 3400 jobs. Morrison Plc is a key partner in this development, with the planned construction of a Regional Distribution Centre.
- The development of Hinkley Point C will create 5000 jobs during the construction phase and 900 during the operational phase. Commissioning will commence in 2012 and the plant will start operating late in 2019.

In autumn 2007 the LSP agreed to target the 10 most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Sedgemoor as their approach to dealing with the majority of LAA targets and to tackle inequality in the district. A gap analysis and Action Plan is now completed and funding secured of around £40k to begin addressing the gaps identified.

A number of other grants and loans were targeted at these areas as a result of their status as LSOAs. Their status will affect targeting of Private Sector Renewal Sources in the lifetime of this strategy and alongside the intervention in accordance with targets under the Sustainable Community Strategy Action Plan, including, for example, targeting crime/the fear of crime.

Case study - Building on success

It is also important to build on the successes of recent interventions. The evaluation of the SRB Programme in Hamp found a number of key achievements in increased provision of advisory and other services and enhanced takeup of learning through ICT provision and boosting support to young people through activities in schools and a new ReCreation centre. In spite of limited SRB resources the Programme delivered a number of physical enhancements to the estate and complemented other investment e.g. housing. Three quarters of residents agreed that the estates environment had improved. The Programme was also found to have indirectly assisted a number of individuals to set up business as well as provide support for social enterprises such as the Furniture Store.

4.4 Addressing the challenges of equality and diversity

Sedgemoor is taking positive steps to ensure that we meet the varying needs of our communities with approved policies to support this.

- All services are required to undertake Equality Impact Assessments for the policies supporting services and the way in which they are delivered. In so doing we aim to ensure that the needs of the range of identified groups are addressed.
- Sedgemoor has a higher percentage of white British than the comparative percentages for the South West region and England and lower percentages for black and other ethnic minority groups. Nevertheless, recognising the changing ethnic demography within the District we do produce information and leaflets in other languages and offer a translation service to those who require it. We also seek to ensure that all council documents clearly publicise these services.

- In order to achieve equality of access to services for those members of our population with a disability we are working towards meeting the targets as set by the Disability Discrimination Act and have achieved 100% accessibility for our corporate buildings.
- Homes in Sedgemoor has adapted communal areas within our housing properties to increase compliance for all medium and high rise homes.
- We have established an ongoing consultation forum with various disadvantaged groups through which we can consult on a wide range of issues.
- We have staff that are trained to Sign and documents can also be obtained in both large print and Braille.

Gypsies and travellers

A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment undertaken across Somerset in 2007 suggested that 17 residential pitches were required by the district. 21 pitches have now been granted planning permission (or are only awaiting 106 agreement). A further Somerset Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment will be reporting in October 2010 in partnership with the other four Somerset District Councils and Somerset County Council.

Working closely with the Gypsy and Traveller communities and other partners provides greater validity to the findings of accommodation assessments and we are continuing to do this with the new GTAA and to establish a protocol for a common approach to addressing needs.

The Council's vision is for gypsies to be able to physically and legally run their own sites wherever possible.

5.0 Priority 1: Meeting the housing needs and aspirations of local communities

Case Study 1

Housing estate inspections

Helps to:

- Address issues around under provision of services
- Address anti-social behaviour, or fear of anti-social behaviour
- Ensure environmental improvements
- Increase resident involvement in their community
- Hold the Council to account on their performance



This priority outlines the work that the Council and its partners will undertake to support local communities, making them more inclusive and cohesive.

The recently published [Guidance for Local Authorities on how to Mainstream Community Cohesion into other Services, 2009](#) from the Department of Communities and Local Government makes the following statements in regards to community cohesion.

- Studies that have looked at the relationship between community cohesion and crime have suggested that more cohesive areas have lower crime levels. The theory behind this is that higher levels of social integration can lead to the community sharing the same values and goals and these include keeping the neighbourhood safe and free from crime.
- The environment within which a person lives, such as how cohesive it is and the social networks a person keeps, can impact on the likelihood of them suffering certain types of health ailments and thus impacting on the cost to the health service for treatments relating to depression, loneliness and mental issues.
- It is believed that the building of social networks can help people find employment.
- Research has shown that companies are more likely to invest in cohesive areas and that businesses are easier to run in cohesive areas.

This priority can be clearly linked to the [Somerset Community Cohesion Strategy](#), which raises a number of challenges to community cohesion. We are working together with the Somerset Equalities Officers Group to minimise the impact of a number of issues including the following:

- Growing issues around migrant workers who are sometimes perceived to be taking jobs and housing away from local communities
- Ongoing areas of conflict in relation to gypsies and travellers.
- Anti social behaviour exacerbated by the rural isolation of young people.

- Some wards have higher than national average levels of teenage pregnancy.
- Frequency of racial incidents. In 2007-2008 across the County, 262 racial incidents were reported.
- Cultural and community isolation in rural communities
- Media concentrating on negative aspects within the community and promoting biased views.

Homes in Sedgemoor:

The council's housing stock is managed through our Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS). The HiS Board manages the ALMO and consists of five Tenants, five Councillors and five independent board members. Three committees have been established to which operational responsibilities are delegated; customer services, audit and resources. The ALMO employs 70 staff to deliver its service functions which are summarised below:

- Resident Involvement
- Capital and revenue stock investment and responsive repairs to occupied and void properties
- Rent collection and arrears management
- Estate and tenancy management including cleaning and caretaking
- Support at Home services for older people
- Lettings, transfers and managing under occupation
- Enforcement of tenancy conditions and dealing with anti-social behaviour affecting Council owned properties
- Leaseholder services and management of home ownership schemes

The key actions required by Sedgemoor District Council in relation to Housing and as specified in the annual audit letter are:

- Demonstrate consistently good value for money across the Housing Service
- Work with Homes in Sedgemoor to maintain the current rate of improvement in performance
- Further improve the performance indicators that remain

in the lowest quartile

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA), Homes in Sedgemoor's regulatory authority, is proposed to be abolished by the new Government. However, the regulations are to be retained with milestones remaining in place. Greater tenant involvement and the new Government's focus on localism and resident-focussed services are very much in keeping with HiS objectives.

While national standards were set by the TSA, HiS will agree our 'local offer' with tenants focussing on tailoring services to meet the local needs and priorities. The nation standards cover:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment
- Home
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and community
- Value for money
- Governance and financial viability

SDC and HiS are producing an Annual Report for residents in October 2010 and will then issue our 'offer' against the above standards in April 2011 based on resident feedback

HiS produces annual delivery plans and the HiS [Draft Delivery Plan](#) has the following 5 year priorities:

- An Excellent 3 star Housing Service as judged by our customers and stakeholders

- Successful delivery of a decent homes programme
- Increased local decision making and customer choice
- A financially viable HRA, or a sustainable housing service in whatever form
- A new local standard; Decent Homes, Decent Environment and Decent Communities
- Service standards aligned to the TSA regulation regime and HiS local offers
- HiS acting as a 'conduit' for social enterprise activities
- Demonstrating value for money and maximising income opportunities
- Ambitions to build or extend management services to other organisations
- Increasing support services for older and vulnerable people
- Times 100 employer
- Improving communal areas and general environments to a high standard for the benefit of local residents
- Working with partners, to ensure that our residents feel safe in their homes and local environments

Within the next 3 years Homes in Sedgemoor aims to provide the best performing landlord in Somerset. It will judge its success by receiving feedback from customers, improving the condition of the housing stock and securing positive regulatory assessments.

It is important to recognise the impact that Housing Services can have on improving community cohesion.

The Housing Strategy will ensure that we:

- Work with partners to tackle anti-social behaviour on our housing estates, reducing crime and the fear of crime for our tenants and residents.
- Encourage tenant and resident involvement so as to improve community spirit and increase their sense of belonging.
- We will target our deprived communities and provide our tenants and residents with access to a holistic Housing Service that includes making the links with employment opportunities, education and health care.

Priority: Meeting the Needs and Aspirations of Local Communities
Housing Strategy 2007-10 - What we achieved

- We produced useful and comprehensive information for customers with identified service standards
- We developed better website information
- We developed appropriate information in a range of formats to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups
- We established policy and procedures with a range of partners across service areas including homelessness prevention, debt advice, housing of ex offenders etc
- We ensured that contractors and partners working with HiS are committed to and have effective measures to deal with racial harassment
- We developed alternative options for improving the condition of non-decent local authority housing e.g. working in partnership with energy suppliers and energy saving trust advice centre to improve energy efficiency in our stock
- We developed involvement with hard to reach groups through a suite of equality impact assessments
- We worked with tenants to review the framework for resident involvement
- We expanded tenant and resident groups
- We developed victim support for those experiencing ASB

Priorities and Actions 2010-15 and beyond

- Working in partnership with Homes in Sedgemoor to support them in achieving a two star service rating
- Assisting HiS to achieve 100% 'decent' Local Authority dwellings by 2015
- We will work in partnership to tackle the occurrence of anti-social behaviour on our housing estates to reduce the fear of crime
- We will work in partnership with the police and our RSL partners to improve the design of our new housing estates and 'design out crime'
- We will regularly engage with our tenants and residents to continually assess and address their concerns
- We will work in partnership to provide an holistic Housing Service in our most deprived communities making the links between housing, worklessness and re-training of our tenants and residents to reduce the incidence of worklessness, debt and homelessness

Meeting the Housing Needs and Aspirations of Local Communities Outcomes

What we want to achieve - see Action Plan

- Reduction in the occurrence of anti-social behaviour and fear of anti-social behaviour
- Increased number of mechanisms by which customers and residents are able to feedback on our services
- Increased customer satisfaction with opportunities to participate in management and decision making
- Reduction in debt, unemployment, worklessness and subsequent homelessness
- Working with Homes in Sedgemoor tenants to develop a new Local Standard: Decent Homes, Decent Environment and Decent Communities
- Achieving 100% decent homes by 2015

6.0 Priority 2: Improving the quality of housing across the district

Case Study 2

Group repair scheme, Burnham-on-Sea

Helps to achieve:

- Wind and watertight homes
- Bring units of empty property back into use
- Increased energy efficiency and CO2 savings
- Regeneration of an area of town
- Enhancement of seafront facades with positive impact on economy, tourism

Before



Housing and Communities

High quality homes are an essential part of creating thriving and sustainable communities and are vital for the health and well-being of those living in them. Studies from Sheffield University and Carrick Housing have proved that people living in decent homes have better mental health, resulting in fewer referrals to GP's. Poor quality housing on the other hand can cause the following detrimental effects to the households living within them:

- Negative effects on the health & well-being of occupants and resultant higher healthcare costs, poorer educational achievement and lower employment opportunities.

.....and after



- Poor energy efficiency leading to increased fuel bills reducing the disposable income of occupants and increasing the likelihood of the household experiencing fuel poverty
- Insecure housing can increase the chances of occupants being a victim of burglary and anti-social behaviour and increase the occupant's fear of crime
- Clusters of poor quality housing can have a detrimental effect on a neighbourhood

Housing and Health

The Government introduced a 'Decent Homes' target in 2000 that all social Tenants and 70% of Private Tenants would have a decent home by 2010. A decent home is one which is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. A decent home meets the following four defined criteria:

- the current statutory minimum standard for housing - dwellings below this standard are those where a Category 1 hazard exists under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- is in a reasonable state of repair
- has reasonably modern facilities and services
- provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort with effective insulation and efficient heating.

According to the BRE Housing Stock Projections 2007 it is estimated that 16,532 dwellings of all Private Sector stock would be considered 'non-decent'. This is a percentage of 41.2%.

Energy Efficiency

Information provided in the Taunton & South Somerset Strategic Housing Management Assessments 2008 gives the average energy efficiency rating (SAP rating) of Private Sector properties in Sedgemoor as 53 which is above the national and south west average. A target has been set at increasing the rating to 62 by 2015. The SAP rating is 62 in council stock with a target of 64 for 2010/11 and 72 by 2015. (The SAP rating is the Government's standard assessment procedure for the rating of the energy efficiency of dwellings. The SAP scale works from 1 to 100 where a score of 100 relates to the lower the running cost of the dwelling and the better the energy).

Climate Change

We believe the best way to deal with climate change is, as far as possible, to make energy efficiency the first priority as this represents the most cost effective way of delivering climate change objectives.

The Somerset West Biomass Project, a collaboration between Sedgemoor, West Somerset and Somerset Councils, and Exmoor National Park Authority, will provide wood product from sustainable woodlands for supply to district heating schemes. It is hoped to have a functional pilot district heating scheme in West Somerset and Sedgemoor by 2012.

Sedgemoor has 41% of private sector homes as 'non decent' and a higher than average SAP rating. This priority will ensure that we maintain, improve and influence the quality and sustainability of existing housing stock across all tenures so that everyone has access to good quality housing.

We will work in partnership with Homes in Sedgemoor, RSLs and with the private rented sector to improve the condition of housing across all tenures:

- improving decent homes standards in the private sector
- improving energy efficiency and ensuring affordable warmth for households

Priority: Improving the Quality of Housing in the District**Housing Strategy 2007-10 - What we achieved**

- Formalised arrangements for Sedgemoor to manage the private sector housing services of Taunton Deane and West Somerset, this partnership has increased efficiency, effectiveness and value for money
- Finalised the Core Strategy Issues and Options second stage consultation for the LDF. The LDF process will improve access to services, decrease levels of deprivation and manage the quality of development
- Developed the low interest loan scheme across Somerset for low income and vulnerable clients with our partners Wessex Reinvestment Trust - offering our community greater access to funds to improve their own homes
- Reinvigorated the private sector landlords forum increasing opportunities to improve conditions in the private rented sector and increasing housing options
- Completed the mandatory licensing of 3 storey houses in multiple occupation improving the condition of properties with the highest risk in the private rented sector
- Reviewed and implemented the requirements of the DCLG review of disabled adaptations increasing opportunities to access funding, making clearer the criteria for grant funding and increasing the grant maximum

Priorities and Actions 2010-15 and beyond

- Improve the advice, information and assistance that is available to all households on energy efficiency and work in partnership with HiS to ensure that our tenants receive the best possible advice, information and assistance in tackling fuel poverty
- Work in partnership with Homes in Sedgemoor to achieve improved (SAP) ratings for the local authority stock
- Work in partnership with Homes in Sedgemoor to deliver 100% 'decent' local authority dwellings by 2016
- Develop a standard approach to the delivery of housing related support across Somerset to remove inequities
- Improve partnership work with the private rented sector to improve the condition of private rented stock. We will do this via a number of mechanisms, for example:
 1. Continuing to hold regular Landlords' Forums
 2. Introducing Landlord Accreditation
- Enforce against sub standard stock and where necessary, Grant Aid
- Improve advice and information available to Private Landlords

Improving the Quality of Housing in the District Outcomes

What we want to achieve - see Action Plan

- Working with the community on developing and delivery of a new local decency target across all tenures
- Increased energy efficiency ratings of housing stock
- Reduction in number of households in fuel poverty
- Increased energy efficiency rating of Council stock
- Achieve 2 star inspection rating for the ALMO
- Remove inequalities in services across Somerset
- Reduce the number of 'non-decent' private rented sector properties
- Ensure all customers are receiving a service which reflects the requirements of Central Government

7.0 Priority 3: Increasing housing supply

Case Study 3

Finished Affordable Housing Project Castle Moat, Bridgwater

Helps to achieve:

- Re-use of Brownfield land
- Consequent reduction in anti-social behaviour; fear of anti-social behaviour
- Provision of decent, affordable housing
- Regeneration of an under-used area of town
- Environmental improvements



7.1 The local housing market

Housing Supply

Under the previous Government housing targets were set in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), which provided the framework for Local Authority development plans.. Although the Regional Spatial Strategy was revoked by the Coalition Government, the target of an additional 510 homes every year will remain as it is based on local needs data as well as housing needs information from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Although the RSS has been revoked it provided an indication of the number of homes required to meet housing demand between 2008 and 2026. Sedgemoor was required to provide a total of 10,200 new housing units over the time period at an annual average rate of 510 units per year.

- The total sourced housing supply so far for 2008-2026 is 6,853 new units.
- The number of new housing completions for the period 2006 to 2008 shows a total of 1,210 new housing completions. By combining the data there have been 1,210 completions during the period 2006 to 2008, 2,883 permissions and 3,970 identified units. This gives a total supply of 8,063 for the period 2006 to 2026.
- According to current plans, there is provision for 3,304 new homes over the next 5 year at a rate of 660 per year which is equivalent to 6.4 years supply.
- The Local Area Agreement target for 2008-9 was 124 affordable homes.
- The Council delivered 139 affordable homes in 2008-9
- There is a shortfall in the number of homes delivered over what is required. The RSS estimated this to be 2137 homes by 2026
- Sedgemoor is currently unable to meet its annual net affordable housing need even if 100 percent of all its new build stock was designated as affordable housing

The provision of affordable housing is likely to be more challenging as the new Government's austerity measures are implemented. There is further short-term uncertainty caused by a radical review of the planning system, combined with the ongoing decline in development because of the recession.

We will have to look at more innovative ways of delivering more for less.

Tenure

Sedgemoor has a higher than the regional and national average number of owner-occupiers and lower than the same averages for those living in the social and private rented sectors. The district also has a higher than the regional and national average number of detached and semi-detached properties and lower than the regional and national average number of terraced properties and flats/maisonettes.

Affordability

The average house price in Sedgemoor (as at February 2009) is less than that for the South West which in turn is less than the national figure. Average house prices in Sedgemoor appeared to 'peak' in the third quarter of 2007/08, dropping to their lowest value in the first quarter of 2009/2010, which is also the case for the South West and England. This is a drop in value of 24.0%. This is much higher than the comparative figure for the South West, 15.5% and 11.3% nationally.

The average gross annual pay for the Sedgemoor District is roughly £1,300 less than the average for the South West and more than £4,000 less than the national average. Property in Sedgemoor is now 7 times the average annual salary for the region, making property purchases in the district more affordable on average than in the South West region or UK as a whole, but still beyond the reach of many potential purchasers.

Housing Need

The Housing Needs Assessment Model as completed by the Taunton & South Somerset Housing Market Assessment in 2008 calculates the housing need in Sedgemoor:

- Current housing need, which includes homeless households and those in temporary accommodation and overcrowded and concealed households, is 1,512 households.

- It also estimates future housing need; which includes new household formation, the proportion of households unable to buy or rent in the market and existing households falling into need, at 1,151 households, (gross estimate per year).

[Sedgemoor Housing Needs Survey 2008](#) estimates that the annual net affordable housing need is 891 units. This is 2.3 times the annual supply of affordable housing which is currently 387 units.

The RSS requirement is 510 new housing units per year for Sedgemoor.

Sedgemoor is currently unable to meet its annual net affordable housing need even if 100% of all its new build stock was designated to affordable housing.

Size

The greatest need is for single persons accommodation, with a preference for two-bed roomed properties.

Rural Need

The Sedgemoor District consists of a high proportion of rural area. There are three 'non-urban' categories - town & fringe, village and hamlet. 55.3% of households live in urban areas, leaving 44.7% of households residing in what would be considered rural locations. This is higher than the Taunton Housing Market Area average of 42.0% and much higher than the national average of 20.0%. Rural housing priorities are to deliver the projects as set out in the [Rural Affordable Housing Work Programme](#), ideally identifying a suitable development site in each village.

7.2 How we will increase housing supply in Sedgemoor

The Council's draft [Affordable Housing Delivery Plan 2010-11](#) was published in April 2010 which details how we will maximise the supply of affordable housing.

- We will ensure that new affordable housing is of a type and size that suits local housing requirements, is of a design that fits with the character of the town or village where it is built and is of a standard that ensures high energy efficiency ratings.
- We will work within the Local Development Framework to ensure that new affordable homes can be supported by and contribute to the local economy.
- New affordable housing in towns will be accompanied by the local infrastructure necessary to support it and its occupiers.
- In rural areas, the emphasis will be on rural enabling and affordable housing aimed at meeting local needs, ensuring that local and young people have access to housing.
- We will work in partnership to ensure that people have better access to community facilities to meet daily needs and that new affordable housing is delivered in a way that respects village character.

The Single Conversation

The Government via the Homes and Communities Agency, has introduced a new business model for investment, known as the Single Conversation. In Somerset the conversation will be led by Somerset County Council, with SDC and the other district councils taking an active role in helping shape the Local Investment Plan (LIP). SCC intends to publish its draft LIP by December 2010, clarifying where funds will be committed from 2011 onwards.

However the majority of central government funds for 2010/11 have already been pre-allocated. SDC already has a large programme which it would wish to secure financial support for. Any housing provider looking to develop grant aided affordable housing is encouraged to talk to the Affordable Housing Delivery Unit as soon as possible.

Nuclear Expansion Legacy

Hinkley Point nuclear power station expansion proposals will have a significant impact on the Bridgwater housing market. The Council is actively responding to pre-planning consultation and is in discussion with EDF to direct what and where housing will be provided to service these proposals. The project carries both risks and potential benefits. The Council wishes to ensure that the influx of several thousand construction workers are housed in the most appropriate locations and type of housing. The authority is also trying to mitigate against the impact of so many workers on the local housing market by securing some longer term affordable housing delivery from this project.

Making better use of existing housing stock

The cost of building new affordable housing is much greater than renovating existing housing stock so we also recognise that we can increase the supply of affordable housing and make significant savings if we target resources at making better use of our existing housing stock. For example:

- **Empty Properties:** Of the dwellings in the Sedgemoor District, the HSSA 2010 estimated that 1,543 long term empty dwellings i.e. 3% of the housing stock in the Private Sector are empty. The Audit Commissions 'Building Better Lives Report 2009' estimated that if only 5% of empty properties could be brought back into use Councils could save their annual homelessness bill £1/2 billion and use that renovated unit of accommodation to house a homeless household.
- **Disabled Adaptations:** The Taunton and South Somerset SHMA 2008 identifies 15,424 households with a limiting long-term illness (LLTI), this accounts for 34.7% of households. This is higher than the national average of 33.6% and the South West average of 33.1%. It is likely that the age profile will heavily impact upon the number of people with an LLTI. The number of households with an LLTI is likely to increase with the ageing population of Sedgemoor. Spending between £2,000 and £20,000 on adaptations that enable an elderly person to remain in their own home can save £6,000 per year on care costs and

reduce the need for that individual to access supported housing (Audit Commission, Building Better Lives, Sept 2009).

- Inappropriately sized housing: We recognise that there are residents living in inappropriately sized social housing accommodation. Incentive schemes will be targeted at

moving these households into more appropriately sized homes, which will assist in freeing up much needed family size social rented accommodation.

Priority: Increasing Affordable Housing Supply

Housing Strategy 2007-10 - What we achieved

- Implemented the Affordable Housing Best Value Improvement Action Plan
- Established the Sedgemoor Housing Forum to develop and oversee the Affordable Housing Strategy
- Appointed the Sedgemoor Affordable Housing Champion
- Strengthened partnership approaches particularly with the private rented sector and enhanced cross-boundary arrangements, developing meaningful relationships with developers, landlords, funding providers and public bodies
- Increased staff resources dedicated towards new affordable housing delivery
- Developed the Local Development Framework Core Strategy to ensure sufficient sites are identified in the future and robust policies are in place to ensure sustained levels of affordable housing can be delivered
- Explored options for funding future affordable housing delivery in the absence of adequate central and local funding
- Reviewed use of existing affordable housing with providers to ensure stock is being used in the most efficient manner
- Successfully delivered the 2006/08 approved grant funded schemes
- Supported RSL and other housing providers during the 2007 bid to secure grant funding for 2008/09 - 2010/11 period

Priorities and Actions 2010-15 and beyond

- Work in partnership to link new housing with the local economy and recognise housing's role in 'place-shaping'
- Work with the Local Development Framework to ensure that housing developments provide a consistent proportion of affordable homes
- Provide more affordable housing in rural areas
- Address the shortage of affordable two bedroom properties
- Carry out a Rural Housing Market Assessment to better understand rural housing issues and improve rural housing enabling
- Maintain an understanding of and respond to local housing need
- Ensure that new housing policy is informed by future need. Key consideration will be the changes in demographics to 2026; building suitable accommodation for an aging population but also encouraging younger people and families to Sedgemoor by providing well designed, appropriate and affordable housing for people who cannot afford to rent or buy on the open market
- Identify empty properties and provide a range of solutions to owners of empty properties; identifying larger units of accommodation and exploring the potential uses for these buildings. We will provide assistance to Private Landlords in marketing their vacant properties through Homefinder Somerset choice based lettings

Increasing Affordable Housing Supply Outcomes

What we want to achieve - see Action Plan

- Increasing number of affordable housing units completed . There are 1228 planning consented affordable houses in the programme and 298 completions planned for 2010-11
- Develop affordable rural housing
- Maintain an up-to-date Housing Strategy
- Reduce number of empty properties across the district
- Increase the number of empty properties brought back into use
- Reduce the number of properties under-occupied to release more family sized accommodation for those in need
- Reduce the number of properties over-occupied by provision of adequate sized housing in accordance with housing need

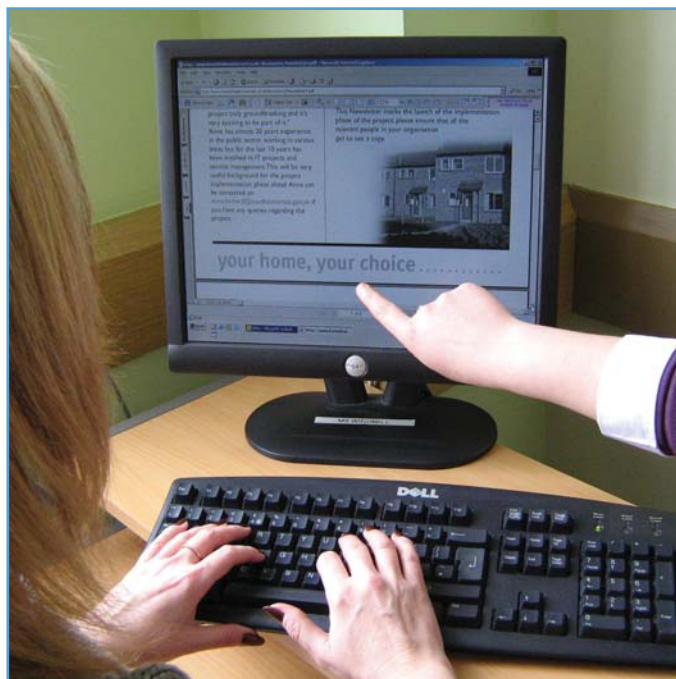
8.0 Priority 4: Increasing housing options

Case Study 4

PC Advice - Housing register application

Helps to achieve:

- Access to decent, affordable social housing
- Greater choice in location of your home
- Access to housing advice, benefits advice and financial advice
- Prevention of homelessness



This priority will ensure that clients are provided with a range of housing options to meet their housing need, particularly at crisis point where a range of options can prevent the occurrence of homelessness.

Somerset Joint Homelessness Strategy 2008-11

At a county level, preventing homelessness continues to be a high priority, illustrated by the 2008 jointly commissioned [Somerset Homelessness Review and Prevention Strategy: Making Homes, Helping People, Changing Lives](#) for all five District Authorities exploring joint working initiatives and disseminating best practise for implementation at County level. Priorities in the Strategy are:

- Floating Support Services
- Homeless Prevention
- Improved Access to the Private Sector
- Improved Access to appropriate housing
- Improved Protocols and Partnerships to tackle homelessness.

Homelessness is known to have impacts beyond immediate housing issues, having wider social and economic impacts as well. Therefore, activities aimed at the prevention of homelessness have a wide reaching benefit including reducing the need for public sector services and costs to public finances as well as the obvious savings to the Council made from reduced use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation. Common themes surrounding homelessness include:

- Loss of connection to support from friends and family
- Disruption to schooling for children
- Physical and mental health impacts
- Worsening of any existing problems, for example, financial, health and addictions
- Difficulties accessing employment
- Increased risk of injury
- Increased risk of being a victim of crime

There are a number of current homeless prevention schemes in operation at Sedgemoor District Council which are summarised below.

Prevention scheme	Description & access criteria
Deposit guarantee scheme	Sedgemoor households homeless or threatened with homelessness
Relate mediation	Any resident
Referrals to support services	Any household who is homeless or threatened with homelessness
Referrals to private sector landlords	Any household who is homeless or threatened with homelessness

There are also a number of joint working initiatives at County level aimed at preventing homelessness, summarised over the page.

Impact of Recession

The current economic climate places new pressures on Housing Services:

- Data provided by the Council of Mortgage Lenders in May 2009 suggests that the number of properties taken into possession during the period 2008, nationwide, was 40,000 properties. This is an increase of 13,800 properties on the figures available from 2007 (26,200 properties). We anticipate the number of people presenting with mortgage payment difficulties to continue to increase and have implemented a number of initiatives including the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme, and Repossession Prevention Funding. In addition we have part funded the joint county-wide post of Recession Impact Co-ordinator to co-ordinate a multi-agency approach, setting up the Somerset Mortgage Advice Partnership with initiatives such as the Mortgage Information Packs and Mortgage Helpline.

Joint Initiatives

Prevention scheme	Description & access criteria
NOVAS	Single people floating support for single people homeless or threatened with homelessness
Move On	Any supported housing tenant when ready to leave supported housing is visited and banded into the highest priority band, the Gold band, and offered other options including a rent deposit to access the private rented sector.
Carr Gomm	Family floating support for families requiring assistance, homeless or threatened with homelessness.
Care leavers	Countrywide protocol in place to ensure that care leavers, approaching their 18th birthdays can, where possible, remain in their current accommodation until a long term solution is found.
Client group protocols	Young peoples protocol, dangerous and potentially dangerous offenders protocol, teenage pregnancies protocol.
Homestart	Support service for households with at least one child under 5 years old.

Impact of Recession (continued)

- Consideration needs to be given to targeting assistance at households homeless as a result of the credit crunch/recession. They are a previously unknown group

and still of unknown quantity and as such consideration should be given to how this group may access help and housing services.

- As a result of a change in economic circumstances due to the credit crunch availability of credit has reduced. This will have an impact on both middle-income highly-g geared households that may rely on the ability to refinance their obligations in order to keep up with repayments and low-income families who have come to rely on credit on a regular basis to make up any shortfall.

Homelessness

In 2007/08, Sedgemoor made 98 homeless acceptances. In 2008/09, 53 acceptances were made; a reduction of 45.9% in homeless acceptances that can be explained by the proactive work being undertaken by the Council in preventing homelessness.

The most common reasons for the loss of the last settled home for households in the Sedgemoor area found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need are parents or relatives no longer willing to accommodate young people and loss of tenancy (either an assured short hold tenancy or tied accommodation).

In 2005, the Government introduced a target of halving the number of households living in temporary accommodation by December 2010. The target for SDC was 25 households living in temporary accommodation. As at 31st March 2010 the Council had 18 households residing in temporary accommodation, and we have therefore met the 2010 target set by Government, despite increasing numbers seeking housing advice and increasing homelessness applications.

Young People

We are particularly concerned about homelessness among young people who are over represented amongst homeless applicants. Councils are no longer permitted to place 16 and 17 year olds in bed and breakfast accommodation except in an emergency, and only then for a maximum of 6 weeks. For

these reasons the Council is working with a number of partner agencies to develop a range of initiatives to prevent young people from becoming homeless, and also to provide more appropriate assistance to those who do. These partnerships have been developed in Sedgemoor through the Youth Housing Forum and countywide through the 13-19 Commissioning Body Task and Finish Group.

The Sedgemoor HOME Project is primarily a partnership between SDC, Somerset County Council's Children and Young Persons Directorate and Bridgwater YMCA, supported by other partners in the Youth Housing Forum. The HOME Project is a one-year pilot, providing a holistic package of inter-related measures:

- H** - Housing
- O** - Options
- M** - Mediation
- E** - Education

Incorporating the Tenant Accreditation Scheme, the Nightstop project, mediation and education.

Working together to reduce housing need is the Councils housing priority. This will be achieved by preventing homelessness in partnership with other agencies including providing enhanced housing options to make the link between homelessness, creating employment opportunities and promoting the financial inclusion agenda.

This housing strategy also prioritises

- focusing homeless prevention activities at the main reasons for loss of last settled home.
- further reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation.

Priority: Increasing Housing Options**Housing Strategy 2007-10 - What we achieved**

- Introduced a range of measures to help prevent homelessness by building on our success and learning from best practice elsewhere e.g. we carried out more home visits to those in housing need in order to quickly establish the most appropriate assistance and set up a bond scheme in partnership with Taunton Association for the Homeless and Taunton Deane Borough Council
- Improved training to staff in order to ensure they were equipped to meet customer demands
- Worked in partnership with other local authorities in Somerset to develop innovative homelessness prevention measures and adopted a holistic approach to advice and support including links with social services, placement in accommodation, developmental learning and job opportunities
- Worked with Relate on a pilot mediation scheme
- Worked with partners to set up a Youth Housing Forum to tackle homelessness amongst young people
- Provided good quality housing advice and restructured the current service to develop a team of well trained and experienced Housing Advisors who meet the needs of our housing customers. Performance against the Housing Advice Service Standards is showing most of the targets being exceeded
- Provided a safety net for those who did become homeless. Worked to the agreed protocols with the police, probation and domestic violence unit ensuring that victims and ex-offenders were supported to maintain accommodation
- Reduced the time homeless households spent in temporary accommodation
- Ensured that those in temporary accommodation were moved into settled accommodation more quickly

Priorities and Actions 2010-15 and beyond

- Introduce a system of Enhanced Housing Options for Sedgemoor residents
- Continue to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation beyond the statutory target of 25 (half the figure from 2005 levels)
- Pursue the creation of a social lettings agency, advocated in the recent Government response to the Rugg Review. We will improve partnership working with the private rented sector
- Provide pro-active mediation services and investigate whether mediation services could be expanded to include evictions and mortgage repossession cases
- Improve the provision of housing and housing related support for young people and reduce the number of young homeless people from 2009 levels
- Investigate the need and approve a strategy to improve the provision of housing and housing related support for older people
- Ensure that the Gypsy and Traveller community have fair access to suitable accommodation
- Continue to provide housing and housing related support for households with disabilities
- Engage with minority groups to ensure provision of a range of appropriate housing options and housing related support
- We will end rough sleeping by 2012

Increasing Housing Options Outcomes

What we want to achieve - see Action Plan

- An increase in the number of cases where homelessness is successfully prevented
- A further reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation
- Increased numbers of households housed in the private sector
- Increased numbers of homeless prevention cases resolved via mediation
- A reduction in the number of rough sleepers to zero by 2012
- A reduction in the number of youth homeless applications and acceptances
- Increased numbers of households supported to live independently
- Meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers
- Increased representation of minority groups within resident and tenant groups

9.0 Our values for delivering the housing service *Delivering the right services the right way, first time, every time...*

9.1 Easier Access

Delivering effective services to our customers relies on a range of skills and technology. Sedgemoor has invested in both staff and systems to ensure that access to council services are as easy and as streamlined as possible reaching all groups within our diverse community. This includes greater ability to access services over the Web and improvements to our Customer Contact Centre, which is designed to deal with the majority of council service enquiries and transactions. We also work with a wide range of partners to ensure that services are delivered not only effectively but also by the right agency whether that is ourselves, another council, the voluntary or private sector.

So what have we done and what are we continuing to do?

- Homes in Sedgemoor reception at Bridgwater House, Monday - Friday 8:45am -5:00pm
- Homelessness and Housing Advice information point at Bridgwater Housing- staffed 8:45am - 5:00pm Monday - Friday
- Homeless Hostel in Highbridge
- Close links with Women's Refuge at Bridgwater
- CAB surgery at Bridgwater House
- CAB financial advice and mortgage rescue service at the Exchange, Bridgwater
- Working with local supported housing providers to improve access of persons from supported housing into permanent accommodation
- Housing Benefits and Housing Advice services weekly in Burnham-on-Sea
- Housing Benefits advice services weekly in Wedmore
- Home visits for housing advice to vulnerable customers wishing to access CBL and other housing options
- Referral process in place with Citizens Advice Bureau and SHELTER

9.2 Maximising Customer Choice

- Piper Lifeline Service available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week Available to all sections of the community.
- Independent Living Day promotion event in November 2009
- Restrictive age allocation policy lifted on Council properties, to widen opportunities for all age groups to be re-housed
- Supported Housing now made available to persons of non-pensionable age who can prove that they have enduring support needs.
- Working with Novas Floating Support service to identify those in need of support and to provide support to vulnerable single persons 16- 65
- Provision of floating support to families through Children and Families team at Social Services
- Working with Local Supported Housing Providers to deliver housing support to those in Supported Housing and in the wider community through implementation of the 'hub and spoke' model.
- Working with RSL and private developers to provide a range of housing options from rented, sub market rented, home buy and discounted home ownership
- Identifying specific units within RSL new build to provide permanent move on accommodation
- Ensuring a range of options is available to enable people to remain in their homes or to move without becoming homeless.

9.3 Respect

We recognise individual's rights and responsibilities, respect the rights and aspirations of others including those of neighbouring communities by working across housing market areas, district and County boundaries and have due regard for the needs of future generations in current decisions and actions. We recognise the increasing diversity of our population and appreciate the added value of each individual's differences and uniqueness.

9.4 Homefinder Somerset

One of our mainstream policy goals is achieving better social inclusion by ensuring that people, individuals and communities have access to the opportunities that give the greatest impact on life chances. Working together with district and RSL partners we have provided a Choice Based Lettings scheme that ensures that best use is made of the available social housing in the district and that applicants are offered the widest choice of accommodation and, as far as possible, a single point of access to that accommodation. We believe that the customer experience is the most important thing for the Council and ensuring that the service is delivered effectively. We have published a Customer Charter that sets out our standards for customer access to services and information.

9.5 Value for Money

Sedgemoor acknowledges its duty to deliver best value and continually works to improve performance and demonstrate that services meet the needs and expectations of our communities.

9.6 Working together to make a difference

Within the framework of the LSP and the Sustainable Community Strategy there has been developed a vision and a series of promises. The local priorities are:

- Climate Change
- Economic development
- Reducing deprivation
- Provision of decent and affordable housing
- Preparing for an increasingly elderly population

By ensuring that the Local Strategic Partnership is an active partner in the delivery of the housing strategy and homelessness strategy, issues of climate change, lack of services, poor employment and education opportunities can be addressed holistically. The Local Strategic Partnership also feed upwards in to the Local Area Agreement the primary aim of which is to facilitate the delivery of these service outcomes through partnership.

9.7 Health services

There is a well-established link between housing and its effects on people's health. Poor housing plays a role in perpetuating health inequalities. NHS Somerset is committed to partnership work to reduce inequalities in health. It has identified areas of need where targeted works are needed. This will include Bridgwater (around Hamp, Sydenham and Victoria) and Highbridge. Links are already established with Bridgwater Sure Start and the Bridgwater Education Achievement Zone. The intention is that where there is capacity to target communities these areas will be prioritized.

9.8 Educational services

The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Programme in Sedgemoor is looking at design issues that will explore how we can make schools more welcoming and encourage enterprise and innovation and involve the community in business ventures. The BSF, proposed development of a nuclear power station at Hinkley Point and development of mixed housing and industrial use at NE Bridgwater are all looking at a local labour agreement to encourage use of local labour and businesses to create opportunities for local people and provide access to training. Training and development is a high priority as skill levels are currently very poor and present an economic barrier for the district. If the economy is not restructured in a positive way then other areas of housing strategy such as housing advice will have lots more customers.

9.9 Supporting People Strategy

Somerset County Council, through the Housing Related Support Advisory Group works closely with the district councils. The HRSAG advises on the delivery of needs led, high quality, cost effective, reliable and sustainable housing related support services which complement existing care and specialist support. Within Sedgemoor we are developing a good understanding of the needs of each client group and the service response that makes best use of the housing stock and resources available. This is achieved through public, private and voluntary sectors co-operating in order to meet identified need. One key achievement has been the development and expansion of tenant support services across the county. This service has been invaluable in reducing homelessness brought about through tenancy failure and has improved the Council's ability to secure suitable housing for vulnerable people. The move towards one provider will improve the targeting and efficiency of this service. For more information on the Supporting People Strategy or to obtain a copy please contact the Somerset Supporting People Team, Telephone 01823 355995 or e-mail: SupportingPeople@somerset.gov.uk

10.0 Working in partnership

We have an excellent track record of working with partners to achieve our objectives. Our key partnerships include the following.

10.1 Strategic Partnerships

The key partnership is the Somerset Strategic Housing Officers Group, working with other partners as the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership. The partnerships aim is to work together to improve the health, economy, environment, sustainability and cohesion of Somerset's communities. The partnership is a coalition of Strategic Housing Officers, Members, the Housing Corporation, Government Office for the South West, Policy Planning Officers, the NHS Somerset and the Supporting People Team. This group has achieved the following:

- The appointment of two Rural Housing Enablers working across Somerset to assess housing needs at village/parish level and the formation of the Somerset Rural Housing Enablers Steering Group.
- A tender for county coverage of Home Improvement Agency Services
- The introduction of a Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings System (Homefinder Somerset) in December 2008.
- The introduction of common IT system, policies and practices for the County, covering homelessness and housing advice.
- A Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the Taunton and South Somerset housing market areas.
- A countywide Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment.

10.2 Working with Housing Partners towards the delivery of new Affordable Housing

The Council is committed to enhanced partnership working in tackling the need for an increased supply of affordable housing.

The Taunton & South Somerset Housing Market Partnership brings together representatives from public and private sector agencies that contribute to and influence delivery of housing and sustainable communities in the Taunton and South Somerset housing market areas. The Partnership membership comprises local authorities, housing associations, public and private sector organisations. The Housing Market Partnership is intended to:

- Provide a strategic overview of the assembly, interpretation, review and updating of the evidence base for Local Development Framework preparation and advises the local housing and planning authorities on the formulation and delivery of related policies;
- Develops partners' common understanding of housing markets;
- Builds commitment to tackling housing problems and issues on a mutual basis;
- Provides opportunities for partners to have an early input into housing policy and strategy formulation; and
- Provides opportunities for partners to contribute their experience and expertise.

At a district level the Council works closely with a number of RSL partners through the coordinated Sedgemoor Development Partnership. This forum deals with practical and policy issues; examples include supplementary planning guidance up-date, the role of the Rural Housing Enablers and sustainable construction targets. The Sedgemoor Affordable Housing Forum brings together all the key partners involved in the delivery of affordable

housing including landowners, Registered Social Landlords and private developers. This approach results in a more efficient response to the topic and ensures that the issue has the highest possible profile.

At the local level the Council supports the establishment of local development project teams to oversee affordable housing projects, bringing together the Council, the housing provider and representatives from the community [often the Parish Council]. This has been particularly effective in rural locations. The Council has also developed regular liaison meetings with RSL housing management staff through the existing RSL forum.

10.3 Homes in Sedgemoor

Homes in Sedgemoor are active partners in many of these groups. It also works in partnership specifically in the following areas:

- Working closely with tenants and leaseholders in influencing services provided on behalf of their landlord
- Driving down the incidence and impact of anti-social behaviour and all types of hate crime and domestic violence
- Improving the living conditions inside and outside their homes for Council tenants and leaseholders
- Supporting the Council in improving financial inclusion for those living on low incomes and those who are vulnerable and need support
- Helping those who are out of work to access training and support to access work opportunities

10.4 Working with our Community

Consultation with our residents on housing services has taken place in the following ways:

- District tenants forum and area groups
- A questionnaire survey in our housing advice reception
- Through focus groups and standing groups such as the Somerset Polish Communities Association and Somerset Black and Asian Development Agency.
- Quarterly issue of the Four Seasons Newsletter that goes to all tenants and leaseholders on a wide variety of subjects.
- Through a Private Sector Housing Newsletter that goes to all private sector landlords on our circulation list
- The quarterly Homefinder Somerset Newsletter which is circulated among all stakeholders involved in Choice Based Lettings
- The Homes in Sedgemoor reading circle for publications
- The Council has consulted with the community over key issues such as the implementation of choice based lettings, the delivery of the Local Development Framework, new service polices, and appointment times for repairs and services for leaseholders.

10.5 Other Partnership Groups

Other Partnership Groups include:

- Sedgemoor Supported Housing Forum- meets quarterly
- Sedgemoor RSL Forum- meets quarterly
- Sedgemoor Homelessness Forum
- Somerset County Enablers Group and Somerset Rural Housing Enablers Steering Group
- Somerset West Home Improvement Agency
- Sedgemoor Disabled Facilities Group
- Sedgemoor Community Mental Health Forum
- Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (between Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils)
- Somerset Strategic Planning Conference

10.6 Consultation

We have developed this strategy through ongoing consultation with partners and stakeholders; twenty-two key issues and four priorities arose from the consultation. Over sixty Housing Strategy Questionnaires were sent out by e-mail and post to stakeholders in July, August and September 2009 these included District Council Officers, County Council Officers, Homes in Sedgemoor, Housing Associations, support agencies, Councillors and residents. The questionnaire asked for stakeholders' views on housing improvements made in the last three years, areas within which stakeholders felt improvement was required and a list of housing issues for stakeholders to prioritise. These arose from robust needs analysis such as the Taunton Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, National Register of Social Housing Statistics, CORE data, Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix data, Private Sector House Condition Survey responses etc. Respondents were asked to consider a list of housing issues and prioritise them by indicating whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the issue. A further analysis has been conducted on the responses by breaking down the number of people who commented positively on a housing issue in relation to the number of people who commented negatively on a housing issue.

As well as being questionnaires to complete, our consultants attended, for example, the Somerset Private Sector Landlords Expo, the Somerset Affordable Housing Conference, the Somerset Private Sector Housing Managers Meeting and the Homes in Sedgemoor Tenants Conference and stakeholders were also offered the opportunity to meet with the consultants in person to discuss the strategic housing role and what priorities should be in the new housing strategy.

Please see Appendix 2 for further details of the consultation process

11.0 The housing strategy - circulation, consultation and monitoring arrangements

To ensure that this strategy is widely available a number of copies of the full document will be published and the draft made available on the Council's web site www.sedgemoor.gov.uk.

A summary version highlighting key issues and priorities has been produced and will be circulated widely across the district, inserted in tenants' newsletter and placed in key public buildings including Council offices.

Sedgemoor Strategic Partnership meets every three months and is seen as particularly important to the further development of this document.

Within the Sustainable Community Strategy for Sedgemoor the Housing Strategy is seen as the means of delivering the housing targets necessary to meet the Socio-Economic priorities of Sedgemoor residents.

Copies of the summary version on tape, in larger print and in other languages are available on request.

To continue to build on the consultation process events arranged with the following stakeholder bodies in 2010:

- Sedgemoor Supported Housing Forum
- Sedgemoor Local Strategic Partnership
- RSL forum

- Corporate Housing Team - (Meeting every six weeks to review progress against agreed priorities and objectives)
- Sedgemoor Tenants Voice
- Annual Housing Strategy Seminar - open to all
- Display boards at Council and corporate events
- Tenant's Forum Meetings and Sheltered Tenant's Meetings
- Resident meetings
- Parish Council meetings

Specifically to monitor performance and delivery of our key priorities the following arrangements are in place:

- The Executive Committee - all targets as monitored through the Council's corporate performance management system COVALENT
- Scrutiny Committee - all targets
- Sedgemoor Supported Housing Forum - delivering housing options
- Corporate Housing Team (SDC) - Improving quality across all priorities
- SDC/HiS Quarterly Monitoring Meetings to include monitoring performance against priorities
- Sedgemoor Homelessness Forum - tackling homelessness
- Sedgemoor Tenants Voice and Somerset Strategic Housing Officers Group - Improving Housing Services

We have established an internal Corporate Housing Team made up of key members of staff and Members from across the authority. This team will consider the results of consultation, satisfaction questionnaires, complaints and comments and advise on changes to the housing strategy as a result, where we cannot change policy as a result of a suggestion, feedback will be given on why it is not possible.

We will establish an external working group, with representatives of the local community and our key partners, to monitor and ensure that the Strategic Housing Service continues to deliver the right services in the right way.

For further information on the Housing Strategy or to obtain copies of the full document or summary please contact Customer Services by telephone on 0845 408 2540 or by e-mail: customer.services@sedgemoor.gov.uk

12.0 Resources

12.1 Introduction

We recognise the financial uncertainty facing both Central and Local Government and the pressures locally to provide high quality services yet still achieve value for money. For this reason we will allocate resources in accordance with corporate priorities and look to maximise resources wherever possible by closer working with partners. This strategy will support the case for Housing when the Council allocates its budgets. It is important that we recognise that we will need to be flexible with regards to adapting our Housing targets should our funding be reduced over the life span of this strategy.

12.2 Capital Resources for Housing

There are a number of sources of capital funding. All the Regional Housing Pot funding is allocated to meet the Decent Homes Standard in the Private Sector. Housing Supported Capital Expenditure is used solely to address the local authorities' council homes decency targets. Assumed Housing Revenue Account capital funding is based on Homes in Sedgemoor achieving its funding bid for £40 million, which is dependent on receiving a 2-star rating from the Audit Commission. This is illustrated in Table A.

Table A - Capital programme 2010/11 to 2014/15

	2010/11 est '000's	2011/12 est '000's	2012/13 est '000's	2013/14 est '000's	2014/15 est '000's
Strategic Housing					
Social Housing Grant	-	-	-	-	-
Disabled Facilities Grants	536	556	586	632	695
Housing Renewal Grant	190	210	231	254	279
Housing Renewal Loan	21	40	60	92	140
Landlord Accreditation	275	-	-	-	-
Total Strategic Housing	1,022	806	877	978	1,114
Housing Revenue Account *					
Disabled Adaptations	500	350	350	350	350
Decent Homes (HSCE)	1,425	22,880	12,930	12,980	13,030
Other	94	55	55	55	55
Total Housing Revenue Account	2,019	23,285	13,335	13,385	13,435
Total Capital Programme	3,041	24,091	14,212	14,363	14,549

* SDC is unable to break the HRA programme down into each work type. In the summary of expenditure over the five year period, following the announcement that the funding is being deferred, there is still uncertainty with the budget figures. Further clarification is awaited on what budget will be received for each year from 2011/12; in the meantime the original 2010/11 allocation has been spread over the remaining years.

12.3 Revenue Funding and Spending

Strategic Housing is funded from the Council's General Fund, funded from Council Tax and other income and balances held by the Council. Revenue income also comes from Government Grants, for example, the Homelessness Grant. Revenue spending on Housing Service functions is shown in Table B. It is estimated that the revenue spending on Strategic Housing will remain constant to 2015.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring fenced account that covers the tenancy management and asset management costs of the housing stock in ownership of the Council and managed by Homes in Sedgemoor. Revenue is delivered into the HRA by Government allocation, the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) and rent and services charge income. This is illustrated in Table C. The main source of income into the HRA is from rents.

The allowance paid into the HRA is delivered as part of the national subsidy scheme. This subsidy scheme is currently under review (Reform of Council Housing Finance) and it is important to note that major changes to the HRA may occur during the life span of this strategy. It is proposed that there be a move towards a more localised system of self-financing for all Local Authorities. The current national subsidy scheme is based on the principle that all Council Housing is viewed as a single national asset and the overall income achieved from this asset is distributed back to the Local Authority HRA according to a complex formula based on number and types of dwellings, age of stock, the costs of delivering a housing service (which may vary across regions nationally and any additional costs associated with housing management (for example in higher crime areas)

Table B - Revenue spending on housing services

	2010/11 est '000's	2011/12 est '000's	2012/13 est '000's	2013/14 est '000's	2014/15 est '000's
Social Housing Grant	53	53	53	53	53
Private sector renewal	(9)	(9)	(9)	(9)	(9)
Housing strategy	331	331	331	331	331
Housing advice	25	25	25	25	25
Homelessness	709	709	709	709	709
Enabling	80	80	80	80	80
Total	1,189	1,189	1,189	1,189	1,189

Table C - HRA 5 Year Revenue Budget Forecast

	2009/10	2009/10			2010/11			2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	ORIGINAL	FORECAST			FORECAST			FORECAST	FORECAST	FORECAST	FORECAST
	Total £000	Addition £000	Reduction £000	Total £000	Addition £000	Reduction £000	Total £000	Total £000	Total £000	Total £000	Total £000
Management fee HiS											
Base Budget	7,251			7,251			7,251	7,251	7,251	7,251	7,251
Total Management Fee HiS	7,251	0	0	7,251	145	(145)	7,251	7,251	7,251	7,251	7,251
Retained HRA											
Base Budget	1,042			1,042			2,967	1,039	1,014	1,040	1,065
Total Retained HRA	1,042	1,885	40	2,967	65	(1,993)	1,039	1,014	1,040	1,065	1,094
Revenue Cost of Capital											
Base Budget	2,804			2,804			2,844	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924
Total Revenue Cost of Capital	2,804	40	0	2,844	80	0	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924	2,924
Total Base Budget	11,097			11,097			13,062	11,214	11,189	11,215	11,240
Total Changes to Budget Aug MTFP		1,915	40	1,955	264	(1,875)	(1,611)	169	177	179	186
Total Changes to Budget Oct MTFP		10	0	10	26	(263)	(237)	(194)	(151)	(154)	(157)
Predicted Budget Requirement	11,097			13,062			11,214	11,189	11,215	11,240	11,269
Financed by:											
Base Budget	13,125										
Rents - Dwelling rents	467										
Rents - Non dwelling rents	688										
Rents - Charges for services & facilities	175										
Rents - Charges for heating	47										
Rents - Charges for leaseholders											
Rents - Contributions towards expenditure	62										
Subsidy - HRA Subsidy (net)	(3,914)										
Subsidy - MRA Subsidy Adjustment	0										
Other - Other income	4										
Total Base Budget	10,654			10,654			12,423	10,663	10,880	11,101	11,328
Total Changes to HRA Funding @ Aug MTFP		1,930	0	1,930	(1,729)	0	(1,729)	217	221	227	236
Total Changes to HRA Funding @ Oct MTFP		70	(231)	(161)	0	(31)	(31)	0	0	0	0
Predicted Funding	10,654			12,423			10,663	10,880	11,101	11,328	11,564
Opening Balance	1,465			1,632			993	442	133	19	108
Balance to Be Met From HRA Reserve	(443)			(639)			(551)	(309)	(114)	88	295
Closing Balance	1,052			993			442	133	19	108	403
Balance Minimum HRA Balances	634			630			630	630	630	630	630
Funding Gap	(418)			(363)			188	497	611	522	227

12.4 Managing our Budgets

Budget holders receive monthly monitoring reports concentrating on variances and actions to rectify any problems. Members receive quarterly reports on spending against budgets. We provide information to Tenants in an annual report. The management of our budgets is supported by Homes in Sedgemoor who have both a Value for Money Strategy and an Income Recovery Strategy. The Business Goal of the Value for Money Strategy is to make best use of resources available, by being cost efficient and rigorous in review, ensuring that they are directed to where they are needed most - in delivering and improving services to customers. The Business Goal of the Income Recovery Strategy is to maximise the income received by Homes in Sedgemoor in an efficient and responsible manner that recognises both the needs of the business and the needs of residents. We continue to develop our resident involvement to increase awareness amongst Tenants and Leaseholders as to how they may influence expenditure programmes

12.5 Overall Conclusions on Resources



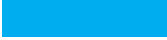

At the request of the Communities and Local Government, we spent funds brought forward from our Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) for 2010/11 in anticipation of receiving our decent homes funding on Homes in Sedgemoor winning two stars from the Audit Commission. However, this decent homes funding has now been deferred to 2011/12. This means that we have insufficient capital resources for Strategic Housing and the Housing Revenue Account and meeting the Decent Homes Standard. We will be almost totally reliant on the planning system providing affordable housing and balanced housing markets, supplementing our own programme with free land and commuted sums where possible.

The ALMO funding bid to Communities and Local Government highlighted that in order to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010; the Council faced a £40m deficit in funding. Homes in Sedgemoor have requested an extension to meeting the Decent Homes Standard to 2016 and believe that the funding gap will be addressed by achieving two stars from the Audit Commission on re-inspection in 2010.

However, it is important that we explore alternative options in meeting Decent Homes Standard should two stars not be achieved on re-inspection. Full details of the ALMO's bid for funding and background to how the Council reached the decision to establish an ALMO can be found in the Homes In Sedgemoor Bid Document for funding, submitted to DCLG.

Action Plan

The Housing Strategy and Action Plan will be monitored by the Corporate Housing Team, consisting of key local authority officers and Members and an external; Housing Strategy Monitoring Group, consisting of local stakeholders, who will report to the Local Strategic Partnership, Sedgemoor in Somerset Partnership. Both groups will meet regularly to monitor the action plan, including keeping it up to date and relevant for the district of Sedgemoor. Progress against the Action Plan will also be reported regularly to Senior Management Team and Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

-  Action can be completed in 12 months within existing staff resource
-  Action can be completed in 2 years within existing staff resource
-  Action can be completed in 5 years within existing staff resource
-  Action requires an additional funding commitment

Action Points arose from the study of Housing Needs data and through consultation with stakeholders and the wider community. These are grouped under the four Priorities for the Housing Strategy and specific targets attributed to their achievement.

General						
Priority	Action	Deadline	Budget	Outcome	Link to SDC Corporate Strategy 2009-14 Priorities; Sedgemoor Sustainable Community Strategy (SSCS) and other Strategy Aims	Responsible Officer & Partners
To ensure Housing Strategy is implemented and monitored	We will set up a Housing Strategy Monitoring Group	October 2010	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy Monitoring Group set up • Links with LSP and other sub-regional objectives • Housing Strategy progressed 	Corporate Priorities: Housing, Efficiency, Regeneration, Environment; SSCS: Making a positive contribution, living sustainably, staying safe, being healthy, ensuring economic wellbeing, enjoying and achieving	Strategic Housing Manager All Partners

1. Meeting the needs and aspirations of the local community

Priority aims:

- Working towards meeting the decent homes standard - See improving the Quality of Housing
- Reducing crime and fear of crime within our housing communities
- Reducing anti-social behaviour
- Improving cleanliness and environmental aspects of our housing estates
- Working in partnership with the police, social services and other agencies to address the need of vulnerable clients

Priority	Action	Deadline	Resources	Outcome	Link to SDC Corporate Strategy 2009-14 Priorities; Sedgemoor Sustainable Community Strategy (SSCS) and other Strategy Aims	Responsible Officer & Partners
Working with HiS tenants to develop a new local standard - Decent Homes, Decent Environment, Decent Communities		31.3.10	Existing tenants			
Achieving 100% decent homes by 2015		31.3.15	Additional			
We will work in partnership to tackle the occurrence of anti-social behaviour on our housing estates to reduce the fear of crime	Refresh and implement the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy through a multi-agency partnership	30.6.10	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in anti-social behaviour and fear of anti-social behaviour as measured by: NI 1, NI 17, NI 21, NI 24, NI 25, NI 45, NI 111, NI 21 • Implement the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy • Increase in tenant satisfaction with neighbourhood • Activity programme for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Priorities: Health and wellbeing, Clean and sustainable environment • SSCS: SDC is lead agency for NI 121; enjoying and achieving, staying safe, being healthy • Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy • Somerset Community Safety Partnership Plan 2008-11 • Homes in Sedgemoor delivery plan 2009/10 • SDC Corporate Strategy 2009/14 • Bridgwater Challenge • Somerset Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 	Community Safety and Health Team Leader SLSP CSP YOT Police HiS Affordable Housing Team Youth groups
	Work in partnership with the Police and RSL partners to improve the design of new housing estates and 'design out' crime	Ongoing	Existing resources			
	Improving the cleanliness and environmental aspects of the Council's housing estates	Ongoing	Staff time and additional maintenance costs			
	Work in partnership with Homes in Sedgemoor to create activity programmes for young people	31.12.10	Additional staff time and programme costs			

We will regularly engage with our tenants and residents to continually assess and address their concerns, and use their feedback when developing policy	Review and improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council/HiS websites Council/HiS newsletter Questionnaires Forums Leaflets 	30.9.10	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of mechanisms by which customers and residents are able to feedback on our services Increase (BV75a) NI 2, NI 3, NI4, NI 160 Increased customer satisfaction with opportunities to participate in management decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Priorities: Health and wellbeing SSCS: deliver revised programme of community engagement activity that will encompass hard to hear communities HiS Delivery Plan 2009/10 SDC Corporate Equalities Plan 2007/2010 Somerset: the single conversation Strong and prosperous communities 2006 	Resident Involvement Team Leader, Homes in Sedgemoor HiS staff Customers
	Expand coverage of community groups - an additional 4pa during the life of the strategy	Ongoing	Existing resources			
	Carry out regular customer consultation exercises reporting feedback to customers and groups	Minimum of 4 consultation exercises, reporting feedback quarterly	Existing resources			
We will work in partnership to provide an holistic Housing Service in our most deprived communities making the links between housing, worklessness and re-training of our tenants and residents	Economic Development Strategy C4: Integrate housing services with neighbourhood renewal, targeting areas of greatest deprivation	30.9.10	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halve the number of communities in the worst 10% and 20% nationally by 2017 Reduction in debt, unemployment, worklessness and subsequent homelessness NI 151, NI 152, NI 153, NI 161, NI 162, NI 163, NI 164, NI 165, NI 173 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate priorities: economic growth and regeneration; R4, R5, R6 SSCS: Ensuring economic wellbeing, enjoying and achieving SDC Economic Development Strategy 2009 South West Regional Housing Strategy Sustainable Communities: Settled homes, changing lives 2005 	Strategic Housing Manager HiS HB HAM SWPSHP Jobcentre+ DWP College
	Linking housing with employment, training, adult education opportunities	30.9.10	Existing resources			
	Providing a 'one-stop shop' approach	31.3.12	Premises Training Protocols			

2. Improving the quality of housing

Priority aims:

- Meeting the Governments Decent Homes standard
- Meeting tenants' aspirations for their homes and the community and environment
- Ensuring all new housing is high quality, well designed and built to a high standard
- To maximise the use of the Council's enforcement powers to protect tenants in the private rented sector from the effects of bad housing and to help to regenerate and revitalize our town centres

Priority	Action	Deadline	Resources	Outcome	Link to SDC Corporate Strategy 2009-14 Priorities; Sedgemoor Sustainable Community Strategy (SSCS) and other Strategy Aims	Responsible Officer & Partners
To ensure that appropriate housing and housing related support exists for the aging population of Somerset	Provide DFG grants to enable older/disabled people to remain living independantly in their own homes 66 DFG grants during 2010/11 312 DFG grants to 31.3.15	2010/11 31.3.15	CLG, SDC, RSLs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a service that ensures people can remain living independently in their own homes without the unnecessary burden for the client of relocation from their community, able to access appropriate support services • Development and delivery of Older Perons Housing Strategy and Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Priorities: Housing, Efficiency, Regeneration • SSCS: Making a positive contribution, living sustainably, staying safe, being healthy • National Strategy for Housing in an Aging Society 2008 • Somerset Supporting People Strategy • SDC Economic Development Strategy 2009 	Strategic Housing Manager Partners: Partnerships Manager, Housing Enabler, Planning, Housing Options, Homes in Sedgemoor, Supporting People, HIA, SCC Social Services, Somerset LAs, NHS
	Develop Joint Holistic Older Persons Strategy including housing, health, support etc	31.3.11	£36k - joint funding application Las, SCC, NHS, SW, RIEP			
To work in partnership with Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS) to improve the quality of the Council's homes	Working in partnership with HiS to support them in achieving a two star service rating and moving forward to a three star rating	31.3.11	Existing reources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased energy efficiency ratings of housing stock • Increased energy efficiency rating of Council stock • BV184a, BV184b, BV63, HS63, NI 158 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Priorities: Housing, Efficiency, Regeneration • SSCS: Living sustainably; ensuring economic wellbeing; enjoying and achieving; being healthy • Sedgemoor and West Somerset Fuel Poverty and Affordable Warmth Strategy 2009/14 • HiS Delivery Plan 2009/10 • SDC Economic Development Strategy 	Strategic Housing Manager/Homes in Sedgemoor Partners: HiS, Partnerships Mgr, Warm Front, Evnergy Saving Trust, HIA
	Assisting HiS to achieve 100% 'decent' local authority dwellings by April 2016	2016	HCA, DSC			
	Ensuring that the Council's tenants receive the best possible advice,					

	information and assistance in tackling fuel poverty				2009	
	Improve energy efficiency (SAP) ratings					
To improve partnership work with the private sector to improve the condition of private rented stock via a range of mechanisms	Working with partners formulate an Action Plan to address the 'red flag' issues in response to Audit Commission	30/9/10	£10k joint funding for co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved rating in Audit Commission inspection Reduce the number of 'non-decent' private rented sector properties Ensures that the stock throughout the district is well maintained Ensure that high risk Houses in Multiple Occupation continue to comply with all the current requirements and are safe to live in Ensure all customers are receiving a service which reflects the requirements of Central Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Priorities: Housing, Efficiency, Regeneration SSCS: Living sustainably, Ensure economic wellbeing, staying safe, being healthy SDC Economic Development Strategy 2009 Sedgemoor & West Somerset Fuel Poverty & Affordable Warmth Strategy 2009-14 	Private Sector Housing Manager Partners: Housing Options, Private Landlords in Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership, West Somerset and Taunton Deane Councils, Customers
	90 Decent Homes Assistance (grants) 390 Decent Homes Assistance (grants)	2010/11 4/15	CLG			
	30 referrals for low interest loans 166 referrals for low interest loans	2010/11 4/15	Existing resources			
	Improve partnership working with the private sector by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to host bi-annual Landlords Forum Expand Landlords Accreditation Scheme Improve advice and information available to landlords Introduce regular newsletter We will introduce a regular Landlords' Business Club 	Ongoing	Existing resources			
	Provide grant aid in accordance with our grant policy to assist vulnerable households living in poor quality accommodation	Ongoing	Existing resources			
	Enforce against sub standard stock and where necessary, grant aid: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60 private rented sector advice and enforcement visits 260 private rented sector advice and enforcement visits 2010/11 	2010/11 4/15	Existing resources			
	166 Warm Streets interventions 656 Warm Streets interventions 650 energy efficiency advice	2010/11 14/15 2010/11	Existing resources			

all households on energy efficiency and affordable warmth	interventions 2490 energy efficiency advice interventions	14/15		eradication of fuel poverty and to ensure that properties meet the Thermal Comfort element of Decent Homes • NI 186, NI 177, NI 188 • Reduce the number of households in fuel poverty • Increase in improvements in the energy efficiency ratings of new build housing • Number of energy efficiency grants provided • Number of properties improved by Grant funding	economic wellbeing, being healthy • SSCS: Living sustainably, ensure economic wellbeing, being healthy • SDC Economic Development Strategy 2009 • Sedgemoor & West Somerset Fuel Poverty & Affordable Warmth Strategy 2009/14	Partners: Planning Policy Manager, Developers, RSLs, Fuel Poverty Partnership, Warm Front, Energy Saving Trust
	Develop biomass district heating scheme	2012	Pursuing public/private finance			
	Plan to meet government target of all new homes to be carbon neutral by 2016	Ongoing to 2015	Existing resources			
Creating a better understanding of the local need for households with disabilities	Working with partners to formulate an Action Plan to address the 'red flag' issues in response to Audit Commission	30.9.10	See above	• Improved rating in Audit Commission Inspection • No. of households with disabled member able to remain in their existing homes	• Corporate Priorities: Housing, Regeneration, Efficiency • SSCS: Making a positive contribution, living sustainably, staying safe, being healthy • SDC Corporate Equalities Plan 2007/10 • Strategic Housing Role of Local Authorities 2008	Strategic Housing Manager Partners: Partnerships Manager, Housing enabler, Planning, Housing Options, Homes in Sedgemoor, Supporting People, HIA, SCC Social Services
	Implement SWPSHP Private Sector Renewal Policy to ensure targeted and timely property adaptations for households wishing to remain in their existing homes	30.9.10	Existing resources			
	Develop and implement a RSL DFG Policy, ensuring a partnership approach between housing providers and support agencies in meeting the needs of households with disabilities	31.12.10	Existing resources			
	Carry out needs assessment of households with disabilities to evaluate their housing and adaptation requirements, and support needs	31.3.11	Existing resources			

3. We will increase the supply of affordable housing

Priority aims:

- To maximize the delivery of affordable housing across the district by effective use of:
 - All available funding
 - The Council’s planning powers
 - The use of public land resources
- Bringing more empty properties back into use
- Maximising the benefits from the Councils own housing stock
- Maximising the benefits from the districts private rented sector

Priority	Action	Deadline	Resources	Outcome	Link to SDC Corporate Strategy 2009-14 Priorities; Sedgemoor Sustainable Community Strategy (SSCS) and other Strategy Aims	Responsible Officer & Partners
We will work in partnership to link new housing with the local economy and recognise the role of housing in place shaping	Work in partnership to ensure that local infrastructure exists to support new homes	Ongoing to 2015	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy and LDF aligned • Sustainable communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Priorities: Housing, Efficiency, Regeneration • SSCS: Making a positive contribution, living sustainably, ensuring economic wellbeing, enjoying and achieving, staying safe, being healthy • SDC Core Strategy 	Policy and Development Manager Partners: Planning, Sedgemoor in Somerset Partnership
	Establish tangible lines of communication between Housing and LDF and other partners to align strategies and policy	30.9.10	Existing resources			
We will increase the supply of affordable housing by:	Delivering the Affordable Housing Delivery Plan 2010/11	2010/11	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the no. of AH completed. 1228 affordable houses with planning consent • 298 completions planned for 2011 • Reduction in backlog need for AH • AH Development Programme completed and new AH targets set • NI 1255 • Initial development appraisal for partnership with SHALs • Rural Housing Market Assessment • Suitable site identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate priorities: Housing, Regeneration, Environment • SSCS: Making a positive contribution • Living sustainably, ensuring economic wellbeing, enjoying & achieving • Staying safe, being healthy • Draft Affordable Housing Delivery Plan • SDC Core Strategy • SDC Economic Development Strategy 2009 • Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy • Somerset: The Single Conversation • RPG10 • South West Regional Housing Strategy • The Strategic Housing Role of Local Authorities • Strong and prosperous Communities 	Policy and Development Manager Partners: Planning, RSLs, LDF, Major Projects Team, Developers, Sedgemoor in Somerset Partnership, Homes in Sedgemoor
	Seeking 35% affordable housing without the need for public subsidy from all eligible housing developments of 15 units or over, with a preference for 80% to be social rented housing	New LDF Core Strategy to be published 7/10	Existing resources			
	Develop and publish new, robust Affordable Housing Policy as part of LDF	31.7.10	Existing resources			
	Develop interim supplementary planning document on affordable housing	30.9.10	Existing resources			
	Publish further Developer Guidance on Affordable Housing to clarify the	31.3.11	Existing resources			

	negotiation process					
	Proactively engage with EDF on housing proposals associated with nuclear expansion proposals	Ongoing	Staff time in negotiation	in each key village identified in Rural Affordable Housing Work Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in number of affordable rural homes 		
	Working with RSL partners to encourage the development of new affordable housing and maximise recycled Capital Grant expenditure in Sedgemoor	Ongoing	Existing resources			
	Exploring the potential of working with RSL partners to develop SDC land to provide more affordable homes	Ongoing: Completion of Davis Close 31.3.10	Future HCA bids £0.48m secured for Davis Close			
	Providing more affordable housing in rural areas by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing a county wide Rural Housing Market Assessment Deliver Rural Affordable Housing Work Programme 	31.3.11 31.3.11	Existing resources			
We will plan for future demographic changes, ensuring that new housing policy is informed by future housing need, giving key consideration to the changes in demographics to 2026; the increasing number of households and minority groups, the building of suitable housing for an aging population while also encouraging younger people and families back to the Sedgemoor	Increasing the supply of affordable 2B homes in accordance with the recommendations of the SHMA by developing and implementing a 5 year rolling AH Development Programme to deliver new affordable homes	Complete AH Development Programme by 30.9.10 then ongoing	HCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable Housing Development Programme completed Increased number of affordable 2B homes Current, up to date, aligned Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing Delivery Plan 	As above	Strategic Housing Manager Partners: Homes in Sedgemoor, Council Tax, Landlords, RSLs
	Collating and maintaining up-to-date market and housing needs data, to help identify the impact on national, regional and local housing, economic and social trends	Annual review in April of Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing Delivery Plan to	Existing resources			

area by providing well designed, appropriate and affordable housing		ensure alignment				
Make better use of existing stock to provide more affordable housing by;	Implementing and monitoring the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership Empty Properties Strategy providing a range of solutions to reduce the number of empty properties	Implement EP Strategy April 2010	Existing resources from SWPSHP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce number of empty properties across the district • Increased number of EPs brought back into use • Reduction in associated crime and anti-social behaviour • Improved neighbourhoods • Reduction in the number of under-occupied properties • Reduction in the number of over-occupied properties 	As above	Strategic Housing Manager Partners: Homes in Sedgemoor, Council Tax, Landlords, RSLs
	In partnership with Homes in Sedgemoor, develop a Tenants Incentive Scheme aimed at encouraging tenants in inappropriately sized property to move to more appropriately sized accommodation	31.3.11	SDC £20k			
We will improve the provision of housing and housing related support for the gypsy and traveller community	We will work in partnership to undertake a Somerset Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment	31.10.10	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somerset Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment completed • Plans made to increase the provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Communities: Homes for all 2005 • The Strategic Housing Role of Local Authorities 2008 • South West Regional Housing Strategy • RPG 10 • Sedgemoor Corporate Equalities Plan 2007-10 	Strategic Housing Manager Partners: Homes in Sedgemoor, Polish Community Group, BME Groups
	Develop Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation and Support Strategy	31.3.11				
	Review options for ownership and management of existing SCC sites	30.12.10				
	Develop policy for dealing with Unauthorised encampments	31.12.10				
	Develop a Gypsy & Traveller forum	31.12.10				

4. We will increase housing options by:

Priority aims:

- Continued effective use of prevention measures
- Provision of quality housing advice
- Provision of quality advice and support to those who do become homeless

Priority	Action	Deadline	Resources	Outcome	Link to SDC Corporate Strategy 2009-14 Priorities; Sedgemoor Sustainable Community Strategy (SSCS) and other Strategy Aims	Responsible Officer & Partners
We will continue to implement and monitor the Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2008-11; making homes, helping people, changing lives	Homelessness Strategy Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floating support services • Homeless prevention • Improved access to the Private Rented sector • Improved access to appropriate housing • Improved protocols and partnerships to tackle homelessness 	31.3.11	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of sustainable tenancies • Increase in number of cases where homelessness prevented • Increased number of private sector tenancies • Improved partnership working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Priorities: Economic growth and regeneration, health and wellbeing, making a positive contribution • Sustainable Communities: Settled homes, changing lives 2005 • South West Regional Housing Strategy • Somerset Homelessness Strategy • SDC Economic Development Strategy 2009 	Housing Advice Manager Partners: Homeless Managers Group, HiS, DWP, CAB, Jobcentre+, Adult Ed, Childrens centres, Support agencies
	Develop new Homelessness Strategy 2011-2014	21.3.11	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved service for customers • BVPI 213 • NI 151, NI 152 • Long term improved housing options for customers 		
Introduce an Enhanced Housing Options service for Sedgemoor to provide a sustainable and holistic solution 'package' integrating housing, training, employment, skills, education and benefits	We will use good practice gained from the work of the Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazers	2011	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of cases where homelessness prevented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives 2005 • South West Regional Housing Strategy • Somerset Homelessness Strategy • SDC Corporate Strategy • SDC Economic Development Strategy 2009 	Housing Advice Manager Partners: Homeless Managers Group, Homes in Sedgemoor, DWP, CAB, Jobcentre+, Adult Ed, Childrens
	We will develop partnership approaches and referral systems with other agencies to tackle the wider causes of homelessness, help support sustainable tenancies and financial inclusion	2012/13	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BVPI 213 • NI 151, NI 152 		
	Incorporate Credit Union into the Rent Deposit Bond Scheme	31.12.10	Existing resources			

	Introduce an annual Housing Options Event	31.3.11	Existing resources			centres, Welfare benefits advisors, debt advice charities, local employment advisors
	Set up a one-stop shop	31.3.12	Existing resources			
We will continue to minimise the number of households living in temporary accommodation by:	Continued partnership and development of new partnerships and support agencies to assist clients to live more independently in more suitable, longer term accommodation	Target to be met by 12/10 then ongoing reductions	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government target for Sedgemoor = 25 households in temporary accommodation by December 2010 A reduction in the P1E quarterly statistics NI 156 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives 2005 South West Regional Housing Strategy Somerset Homelessness Strategy SDC Economic Development Strategy 2009 SDC Corporate Strategy 	Housing Advice Manager Partners: Support agencies, RSLs, Homes in Sedgemoor, Private Sector Landlords, HB
	Maintaining the governments target achieved in 2009/10 of no more than 25 families in temporary accommodation	Ongoing	Existing resources			
	Introducing weekly visits to all the premises and clients	9.10	Existing resources			
	Reducing the average time spent in hostel accommodation from an average of 14 weeks in 2009/10	12 weeks in 2010/11	Existing resources			
We will improve partnership working with the Private Sector	Pursuing the creation of a social lettings agency, advocated in the recent Government response to the Rugg Review	31.3.11	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of landlords attending Landlords' Forum Increase in the number of households housed in the Private Sector BVPI 213 Reduction in the number of empty properties NI 156 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives 2005 The Private Rented Sector: Professionalism and Quality 2009 South West Regional Housing Strategy Somerset Homelessness Strategy Somerset Draft Housing Strategy Sedgemoor Corporate Strategy 2009-2014 	Housing Advice Manager and Partnerships Manager Partners: Private Landlords, Landlords' Associations, Housing Benefit, Support Agency
	Working with the Private Sector and Housing Benefits teams to contribute to bi-annual Landlords' Forums and regular Landlords newsletters	Ongoing	Existing resources			
	Improving the support available to landlords and agents	31.3.11	Existing resources			
	Improving the support available to Tenants placed in Private Sector properties including extending the Tenants Accreditation Scheme	30.9.11	Existing resources			

	<p>We will carry out a comprehensive review of the current access arrangements for the Housing Options service and give consideration to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the Council's website and its updating • Range of leaflets • Availability of leaflets in large print/different languages • The expansion of home visits • The extension of opening hours/ provision of out of hours services • Provision of housing options surgeries in other locations throughout the District • 'Housing Information Points' in town/village locations 	<p>Review complete by 31.9.10 Then implement by 31.12.10</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review completed and SMART action plan produced following review • Increased customer satisfaction through improved customer accessibility to the service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives 2005 • Somerset Homelessness Strategy • Sedgemoor Corporate Equalities Plan 2007-2010 • Sedgemoor Corporate Strategy 2009-2014 	<p>Housing Advice Manager Partners: Homes in Sedgemoor</p>
<p>We will improve the provision of housing and housing related support for young people by:</p>	<p>Introducing and evaluating pilot Sedgemoor HOME Project Housing options, Mediation, Education</p>	<p>31.3.11</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI 156 • Reduction in the number of youth homeless applications and acceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Communities: SettledHomes, Changing Lives 2005 • Somerset Homelessness Strategy • Sedgemoor Corporate Strategy 2009-14 	<p>Housing Advice Manager Partners: Schools, youth support agencies</p>
<p>Introducing the Tenants Accreditation Scheme</p>	<p>30.9.10</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>				
<p>Introducing a programme of pro-active work with schools to highlight the reality of homelessness</p>	<p>31.8.11</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>				
<p>Proactively reducing parental evictions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making home visits in every case • Developing a Parental Guidance leaflet (Dos and don'ts) • Helping Parents Awareness Event with YMCA • Train staff in mediation to improve value for money 	<p>31.1.11</p>	<p>Existing resources</p>				

We will reduce rough sleeping	Set up a joint steering group to address all aspects of rough sleeping	31.12.10	Ongoing			
	Work with neighbouring local authorities and local churches and agencies to provide outreach service	31.3.11	Existing resources			
We will engage with minority groups to provide them with a range of appropriate Housing Options and housing related support	We will work in partnership with those who represent minority groups, for example, migrant workers and BME groups	Ongoing to 2015	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of working groups to represent minority groups on housing issues • Representation of minority groups within Resident & Tenant Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Communities: Homes for all 2005 • The Strategic Housing Role of Local Authorities 2008 • South West Regional Housing Strategy • RPG 10 • Sedgemoor Corporate Equalities Plan 2007-10 	<p>Strategic Housing Manager</p> <p>Partners: Homes in Sedgemoor, Polish Community Group, BME Groups</p>

Action Plan contact details

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

AH	Affordable Housing
ASB	Anti-social behaviour
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic individuals/communities
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureaux
CLG	Government Department of Communities and Local Government
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EP	Empty Property
HAM	Housing Advice Manager
HB	Housing Benefit, now Local Housing Allowance
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
HiS	Homes in Sedgemoor
Las	Local Authorities
LDF	Local Development Framework
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NHS	National Health Service
NI	National Indicator
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure
SCC	Somerset County Council
SDC	Sedgemoor District Council
SHAL	Sedgemoor Housing Association Ltd
SHMA	Somerset Housing Market Assessment
SLSP	Somerset Local Strategic Partnership
SWPSHP	Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership
SW RIEP	South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership
SSCS	Somerset Sustainable Communities Strategy
YOT	Youth Offending Team

Appendix 2: Housing Strategy Consultation

The key issues and priorities were discussed at a Housing Strategy Event in January 2010 in order to give partners and stakeholders the opportunity to influence targets and objectives within the Housing Strategy Action Plan. The day was used to identify how partners tackle some of the issues and could help us tackle the key issues, best practice examples, and any disadvantaged groups that might require priority.

Questionnaires, surveys and personal interviews were used at the very start of the Housing Strategy process to help identify the key issues and priorities that the Strategy needed to address.

Key Issues:

The housing issues mostly strongly agreed with were:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- Addressing the needs of homeless and potentially homeless households
- Meeting decent homes standards in all types of housing
- Promoting homeless preventing initiatives

The housing issues most positively agreed with were:

- Maintaining an understanding of /responding to local housing need
- Improve the range of housing advice, information and communications provided
- Promoting partnership working to improve services
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- Promoting homeless prevention initiatives
- Meeting decent homes standards in all types of housing

The housing issues most negatively agreed with were:

- Providing quality market housing - 3 (7.14%) respondents negatively agreed
- Increasing opportunities for home ownership (e.g. shared equity, low cost market housing)

However, it is important to note that negative responses might be based more on the 'personal judgement' of respondents and this should therefore, be taken into consideration when considering the direction of Housing Strategy

Respondents also felt that the following housing priorities were missed from the questionnaire list:

- Ensuring equality of provision across all of our communities and housing groups
- The housing needs of those with specialist needs such as disabilities, mental health issues and learning disabilities
- Innovative and sustainable housing design types
- The provision of a night shelter
- The shortage of two bedroom properties
- The shortage of affordable RSL accommodation
- Housing assistance for non-priority households
- The housing and housing support needs of young people
- The provision of a sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic violence
- Better management of Tenants with rent arrears to achieve homeless prevention objectives
- Regular reviews of the choice based lettings system to ensure equality of access and the development of alternative methods of bidding on properties
- Creating safer environments, taking action against anti-social behaviour and improving community spirit

Face to Face Interviews

The following key issues, not already mentioned in the strategy so far were highlighted in the face to face interview process and have informed the strategy action plan.

Key Issues:

- Ensuring that the right mix of new affordable housing is achieved
- The lack of an older persons strategy
- The lack of proactive Mediation was cited as a problem with services often being targeted at problems too late to be effective.
- It was felt that the current Sedgemoor District Council reception area does not promote accessibility for customers
- Improvements required in the relationship between Sedgemoor District Council and private Landlords/Letting Agents
- The housing and housing support needs of Gypsies and Travellers
- The lack of a 'flow-through' system of services for Clients was cited as a concern. It was felt that Clients can get 'lost' within the housing support 'system' and between referral agents. Suggestions for improvements included better referral mechanisms, information sharing protocols and partnership working. The lack of a 'flow-through' system was also suggested to contribute to Clients being seen at crisis point rather than earlier when their problem/s may have been easier to resolve. There was also concern that Clients could get 'stuck' in certain sections of the support system with no clear exit strategy to housing 'independence'.

Somerset County Council Place Survey 2008

The National Indicator set contains 25 indicators that are informed by citizen's views and perspectives. 18 of these indicators are collected via a 'Place Survey' administered by the Local Authority. The results from the Place Survey undertaken in the Sedgemoor District between September and December 2008 became available on 23rd June 2009.

Of the respondents for the Sedgemoor District, 39% of respondents felt that affordable decent housing was the most important factor in making somewhere a good place to live. This was ranked third to 50% of respondents feeling that level of crime was most important and 50% felt that health services were most important.

When asked about services that respondents felt most needed improving, affordable decent housing was ranked 5th with a vote of 28% to 50% voting for activities for teenagers, 35% for pavement repairs, 34% for the level of traffic congestion and 29% for improved public transport



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