

# Private Sector Housing Strategy 2006 – 10

## April 2009 Update

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 This strategy was launched in 2006 to build on the highly successful strategy (2000-05) which proved extremely effective at improving standards.
- 1.2 Its prime aim and outcomes are set out below.

**Aim** – A decent home for all in a balanced community

#### **Outcomes by 2010**

- For 80% of vulnerable households to live in a decent home;
  - To reduce long term empty homes to 1.8%;
  - To reduce the number of homes with a poor energy rating to 3%;
  - To ensure the price gap between areas does not widen between 2005-2010.
- 1.3 The strategy's priorities were set by close analysis of the 2005 stock condition survey. Effectively, its overall success in achieving its outcomes will be determined by the results of the 2010 stock condition survey. However, actions in trying to achieve these outcomes are set out within the action plan.
  - 1.4 Initial milestones covering 2006-08 were set out in the original strategy and these were reviewed and updated in 2008.

### 2.0 Progress 2008/09

- 2.1 The progress against the revised actions is set out within the action plan.
- 2.2 In summary strong performance has occurred:
  - Securing and ensuring the future of expanded housing advice agencies for older people;
  - Work to launch a new landlord accreditation scheme and private sector leasing scheme linked to the affordable housing strategy;
  - Additional DFG resources obtained;
  - Review of the Councils assistance policy undertaken;
  - Funding provided to the successful alleygating scheme;
  - New empty homes proposals within the new assistance policy;
  - Establishing an Affordable Warmth Access Referral Mechanism (AWARM);
  - Continuing good progress in terms of activity making homes decent and in regenerating priority areas.
- 2.3 Activity levels and spend levels within the Assistance Policy framework are enclosed. They show the continued commitment to private sector housing improvements and, since April 2006, over 1,200 vulnerable households have been assisted by the Council to improve their homes. Alongside Warm Front activity and private

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investment this points to continued improvements in the Boroughs housing conditions.

2.4 Areas where progress needs to be reinforced include:

- Completing the better procurement proposals within DFGs;
- Reinforcing efforts to increase housing supply in light of the housing recession;
- Continuing review work on the Renewal Area approach;
- To increase the rate of progress with regard to empty homes initiatives in light of trends.

2.5 Based on a combination of current activity and intelligence, the likelihood of meeting the 2010 targets is as follows:

Outcome	Likely Progress
80% of vulnerable households to live in a decent home.	Confident that conditions have improved with high levels of targeted investment via the Councils Assistance Policy and Warm Front. The uncertainty in this target is due to considerable increase in the number of vulnerable people due to the recession.
Reduce long term empty homes to 1.8%	Highly unlikely to meet this target. The number of empties has increased to 2.6% in light of the recession. The bulk of the increase is due to the numbers of new homes that are empty. Hope to reduce this total before 2010.
To reduce the number of houses with a poor energy efficiency rating to 3%.	Good progress is being made in this area via resident investment and Warm Front grants. It is hoped that the AWARM scheme will add to this success.
To ensure the price gap between areas does not widen 2005 / 2010.	So far the price gap between areas has narrowed over the period. However, given the uncertain market, future trends are hard to predict.

### 3.0 Conclusions

3.1 As a result of this evaluation and due to the pressures caused by the increase in demand for affordable housing and the effects of the recession, actions in 2010 will have particularly strong emphasis in the following areas:

- To increase the level of advice to people on housing options;
- To strengthen efforts to ensure access to decent affordable homes;
- To increase efforts to bring empty homes back in to use.

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Additional points have also been made to ensure good progress is maintained in terms of:

- Ensuring value for money within adaptations;
- Efforts to minimise fuel poverty;
- Increase housing standards in the private rented sector.

Preparations for the 2010 stock condition survey will also need to be commenced.

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What is the issue / problem we need to address?	How will we deal with it?	Resources	Milestones 2008 - 2010	SMART target for 2010	Responsibilities	April 2009 Position
<b>People and Choice</b>						
<p>Ensure older people have access to decent homes.</p> <p>Older people are particularly worried about safety, security and support.</p>	<p>The Older Persons Housing Study &amp; Action Plan 2005 has the following priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enabling people to stay in their own home</li> <li>• choice of home for those who wish to move</li> <li>• co-ordination of agencies.</li> </ul> <p>This strategy assists in delivering the first priority by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making homes more suitable</li> <li>• looking to extend schemes developed by the Home Improvement Agency and Age Concern</li> <li>• priority within the Council's Assistance Policy.</li> </ul>	<p>Mainstream monies, Supporting People monies and POPPS.</p>	<p>To ensure the expanded housing advice agencies (via POPPS) are mainstreamed and continue up to 2010. For the projects to be evaluated and to be procured via Supporting People.</p>	<p>Contribute to a range of SMART targets within the Older Persons Housing Study &amp; Action Plan 2005.</p>	<p>Steve Sargent Anees Mank Karen Spencer (C&amp;R)</p>	<p>Additional resources secured.</p> <p>Home Improvement Agency service expanded with a new service provider.</p> <p>Handy person and garden maintenance service continuing.</p> <p>Contractual issues included with the Supporting People procurement strategy.</p>

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<b>People and Choice (continued)</b>						
<p>Ensure vulnerable groups have fair access to decent housing.</p> <p>There is now a shortage of good quality housing for vulnerable groups. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the most vulnerable have access and efforts are made to increase the supply.</p>	<p>Key Contributions from this strategy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of the Bond Scheme</li> <li>• development of the Landlords Accreditation Scheme</li> <li>• work with vulnerable groups such as BME, asylum seekers / refugees and economic migrants.</li> </ul>	<p>Mainstream monies and external bidding.</p>	<p>To review the operation of the landlords accreditation scheme.</p> <p>To look to expand the bond scheme and consider a private sector leasing scheme.</p>	<p>Contribute to a range of SMART targets within the overall Housing Strategy.</p>	<p>Steve Sargent Anees Mank</p>	<p>New landlord accreditation scheme being introduced administered by Wigan Council.</p> <p>Bond scheme expanded and a major private sector leasing scheme to be commenced from May.</p> <p>Further measures linked to the affordable housing strategy and the Council's response to the recession also commenced.</p> <p>Work undertaken with the private sector to ensure asylum seekers who have been given leave to remain were re-housed.</p>

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<b>People and Choice (continued)</b>						
<p>Ensure people with disability receive adaptation services.</p> <p>There has been a major increase in the demand for adaptations and this has exceeded the resources available.</p>	<p>The key objectives are to provide an efficient adaptation service to those in greatest need and within the resources available.</p> <p>It has been necessary to prioritise applications for the agency service based on the level of need.</p>	<p>DFG allocations and mainstream monies.</p>	<p>To continue to seek further resources from Government to meet increased needs.</p> <p>To explore different options of procurement in an effort to reduce cost and improve services within stairlifts and level access showers.</p> <p>To consider the anticipated Government review proposals on DFGs and implement any recommendations.</p>	<p>To shorten the waiting time for all high level needs applicants by 25% by 2010.</p>	<p>Peter Layland Anees Mank Glyn Jones</p>	<p>Whilst additional allocations obtained from government underlying demand continues to rise.</p> <p>Success in 2008/09 in attracting top-up allocations.</p> <p>Ongoing work continuing in terms of improving procurement.</p> <p>Short list of 2 service providers agreed and looking to implement as soon as possible.</p>

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<b>Neighbourhood Renewal</b>						
<p>Borough has low prices and some areas have been shown to have unbalanced and weak housing markets, which are vulnerable to change. There is potential for market decline in certain localised areas. From the House Condition Survey 2005, work on housing markets and affordability and from the Housing Partnership's themed workshops, it is clear that this work not only needs to be continued but broadened in its approach to include wider housing market and community plan issues.</p>	<p>The key objective is to ensure that market decline in private housing markets is prevented and reversed.</p> <p>Continue to protect and maintain older Private Sector Housing within the existing Renewal Areas by incorporating visual, environmental and community safety initiatives, such as block facelifts, alleygating etc.</p>	<p>Mainstream monies.</p>	<p>To fully review the contribution of the Council's Assistance Policy in Renewal Areas.</p> <p>To explore the relationship with the wider housing market concerns, in particular the Affordable Housing Strategy.</p> <p>To review the Renewal Area approach and make recommendations on future action.</p>	<p>To ensure the average house price gap between Renewal Areas and the Borough average does not widen between 2005 and 2010.</p>	<p>Peter Layland Anees Mank</p>	<p>Review of Assistance Policy undertaken. Proposals to be presented to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in Summer 2009.</p> <p>Proposed work to declare a Renewal Area along Plank Lane to link with the HCA's Bickershaw South scheme.</p> <p>Funding provided to expand the alleygating scheme in liaison with Neighbourhood Services.</p> <p>Review of Renewal Area approach to be undertaken in 2009/10.</p>

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<b>Quality Homes</b>						
<p>To tackle below quality standards within the Private Sector Housing stock.</p>	<p>The key objective is to maximise the proportion of decent housing in the private sector, prioritising those households / areas / property types with vulnerable people.</p> <p>The House Condition Survey 2005 has shown that significant improvements have been made and it points to the need to target the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• worst tenure (private rented)</li> <li>• vulnerable (especially elderly)</li> <li>• concentration of poor housing (generally pre 1919).</li> </ul>	<p>Mainstream monies.</p>	<p>To fully change the Council's Assistance Policy to reflect changes in legislation and in our approach. This needs to consider simplifying the system and increase the proportions of loans.</p> <p>Continue to use existing and new enforcement powers to reinforce action with regard to complaints about private landlords.</p>	<p>For 80% of vulnerable households to live in a decent home.</p>	<p>Anees Mank</p>	<p>Review of Assistance Policy undertaken. Proposals to be presented to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in Summer 2009.</p> <p>Recommendations are to move to a targeted interest free loan approach.</p> <p>Specific proposals regarding landlords of empty homes.</p>

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<b>Quality Homes (continued)</b>						
<p>Reduce the number of long term empty homes.</p> <p>The number of empty homes remains a problem, with only a small reduction occurring in recent years.</p> <p>More empty homes need to be returned to use to prevent area decline and increase the supply of housing.</p>	<p>We have used a comprehensive approach to deal with long term empty homes involving a prioritised system targeting the worst problems. This includes giving advice and the use of enforcement powers. We have also used Accredited Landlord partners to buy empty homes and return them to use.</p> <p>Greater priority will be given to homes that have been empty the longest or are giving rise to neighbour nuisance or are situated in vulnerable areas.</p>	<p>Mainstream monies and private sector monies.</p>	<p>To consider the ending of discretionary relief for long term empty homes.</p> <p>To introduce an empty home improvement loan to help bring empty homes back in to use.</p> <p>To use enforcement powers, such as compulsory purchase, enforced sale, Empty Dwelling Management Orders and Selective Licensing, as appropriate.</p> <p>To look to establish a wide ranging empty homes strategy.</p>	<p>To reduce the number long term empty homes to 1.8%.</p>	<p>Anees Mank</p>	<p>Report considered by Cabinet and decision made not to end discretionary relief.</p> <p>Empty home improvement loans to be proposed within the review of the Assistance Policy.</p> <p>Continue targeted enforcement action on difficult empty homes via compulsory purchase.</p> <p>Draft empty homes strategy due to be consulted upon in May / June 2009.</p> <p>Discussions with Council Tax have been made on joint working within the new strategy.</p>

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<p>Too many houses are cold due to poor heating, insulation or Fuel poverty.</p> <p>Excess winter deaths are a consequence.</p> <p>As fuel prices are rising Fuel Poverty will increase unless continued progress is made in this area.</p>	<p>The main objective is to improve the Energy Efficiency within the private sector and targeting homes with a poor rating (SAP&lt;40).</p> <p>Good progress has been achieved via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Council's Assistance Policy</li> <li>• signposting / targeting households for energy advice</li> <li>• improved training e.g. staff being energy advisers.</li> </ul> <p>However, this area needs continued priority for key vulnerable groups, especially within the private rented sector and concentrations of poor property.</p>	<p>Mainstream monies and private sector monies.</p>	<p>To continue and expand the work with the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre Greater Manchester and other partners.</p> <p>To look to establish an AWARM scheme to increase impact on fuel poverty.</p>	<p>To reduce the number of homes with poor Energy Efficiency to 3%.</p> <p>To achieve the Home Energy Conservation Act target of 22.8% by 2011.</p>	<p>Anees Mank</p>	<p>Good co-operation with the advice centre with evidence of very high take up of Warm Front grants in Wigan.</p> <p>With the help and co-operation of health and adult service partners a local AWARM scheme implemented.</p> <p>Discussion / publicity with landlords via landlords forum.</p>

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<b>Quality Homes (continued)</b>						
Ensure works to existing stock are environmentally sustainable.	<p>The key objective is to minimise the effect on the environment of the existing housing stock.</p> <p>This is being achieved via ensuring materials are procured from sustainable sources within the Council's Assistance Programmes and that improvements in the construction / maintenance within the works are completed.</p>	Mainstream monies.	Continue existing good practice and participate in future innovations in this area.	To remain at the forefront of best practice on environmental sustainability.	Anees Mank	Specifications within all assistance policies reviewed regularly.