

Guildford Borough Council

Housing Strategy

Interim Statement 2011

## Foreword

**Councillor Sarah Creedy**

**Lead Councillor for Housing and Social Care**



I am very pleased to introduce the Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2011 for the borough. This statement builds on the work done by the Council and its partners since the 2005 Housing Strategy was published, and outlines how we will continue to provide opportunity and choice for people wanting to live in the borough.

We are in a period of considerable uncertainty around both government policy and the economy, therefore rather than produce a further five-year strategy it seems sensible to publish this as an interim statement which will be updated at the end of the financial year 2011-12. Further consultation planned for November will contribute to an update of this statement and to the formulation of a tenancy strategy, once more detail is available on the Government's plans for affordable housing.

The interim statement outlines the sites identified as priorities for affordable housing development in the borough, via the Surrey Local Investment Plan (LIP). The LIP can be viewed at: <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/local-investment-planning>

This statement includes our plans for the provision of new affordable housing, improving the condition of existing homes, providing housing for people with special needs, and preventing homelessness.

Appendices include a summary of some of the main changes proposed by the Government and an Empty Homes Strategy, which is an important part of our plans to improve housing supply.

I would like to thank all the residents, housing providers and other interested parties who gave valuable input to the consultation for this strategy statement.

I look forward to working with our residents and our partners in the implementation of this strategy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Creedy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Creedy, Lead Councillor for Housing and Social Care, March 2011

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Background

### 1. Introduction

This statement outlines how the Council has assessed the housing needs of the local population across all tenures, and how the Council and its partners intend to meet these needs.

It contains plans to increase the supply of affordable housing, improve existing housing, and support vulnerable people. It also considers financial inclusion, and the contribution of housing to the social and economic well-being of residents.

This statement replaces the 2005 Housing Strategy. At the time of writing, there is uncertainty around some of the key drivers of housing provision in the Borough; in particular the new Government's approach to the planning system, the Council's review of its land holdings and the funding options that will be available for affordable housing development. This interim statement is based on the best available information, and will be updated as more information becomes available.

### 2. The three themes of this strategy

The strategy is based around three main themes:

Increasing Supply

Improving Existing Housing

Social and Economic Well-being

The strategy has been influenced by feedback from questionnaires, and meetings with stakeholders, members, parish councillors and residents to ensure that it reflects local housing needs and contributes to the priorities identified in the Sustainable Communities Strategy, in particular:

#### **Sustainable Communities Strategy**

Key objective (14) increasing the availability of affordable housing

Key objective (6) protecting the countryside from inappropriate development, whilst delivering the affordable housing required in rural communities.

Key objective (9) – supporting more elderly and vulnerable people to live independently

### 3. Achievements since the 2005 Housing Strategy

Housing Supply

The Council has successfully delivered 589 new affordable homes since 2005, meeting its aim to provide an average of 100 units per year.

**Figure 1: Provision of new homes**

Time Period	Number of units delivered	Average per year over time period
April 2005 to April 2008	442	147
April 2008 to April 2010	147	73
Total since 2005 Housing Strategy	589	117

Over 3000 households have been able to move into suitable homes of various tenures. The introduction of choice based lettings in March 2006 has given housing applicants greater flexibility in finding homes across the borough.

**Figure 2: Access to accommodation**

Re-lets and Sales	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	TOTAL
Shared ownership	77	69	23	47	36	252
Council homes let	397	325	331	305	290	1648
RSL homes let	108	87	113	102	130	540
Homes 4U let <sup>1</sup>	126	100	85	144	168	623
<b>Total</b>						<b>3063</b>

### ***Homelessness Prevention***

The Housing Solutions: Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007-2012 was published in March 2007. This built upon the success of the previous strategy. The action plan has been updated for the period 2010-2012 and can be viewed here: <http://www.guildford.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2802>

The proactive and successful approach taken to prevent homelessness has meant that the number of households that the Council accepted as homeless has remained very low, ranging between none and five between 2005/6 and 2009/10, although the number of applications has increased gradually over this period. This has meant that the number of households placed in temporary accommodation has reduced significantly.

<sup>1</sup> Homes 4U is a service provided by the Council to assist applicants to access private rented housing, and includes the provision of rent deposit bonds, and in certain cases a loan to cover rent in advance.

Although homelessness numbers may have gone down the need for advice and assistance from those at possible risk of homelessness has remained high. The “Housing Options” approach adopted in 2005 has resulted in significant numbers of households being able to find a suitable housing or being enabled to remain in their present home for longer. Almost 1500 households were prevented from becoming homeless during the period April 2006 to the end of March 2010.

**Figure 3: Homelessness Applications**

<b>Homeless Applications &amp; Temporary Accommodation</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Homeless Applications</b>	<b>Homeless Acceptances</b>	<b>Households in Temporary accommodation as at 31 March</b>
<b>2005/06</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2006/07</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2007/08</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2008/09</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2009/10</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

**Figure 4: Homelessness Prevention**

<b>Homelessness Prevented</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Housing Options Cases</b>	<b>Homeless Prevented</b>
<b>2005/06<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>2006/07</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>379</b>
<b>2007/08</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>2008/09</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>2009/10</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>425</b>

#### **4. Investment in the Council’s housing stock**

The Council owns and manages over 5100 socially rented homes across the Borough. These properties account for 9% of the total residential stock and provide homes for some of the most vulnerable in the local community.

<sup>2</sup> Full year records were only collected from 2006/7.

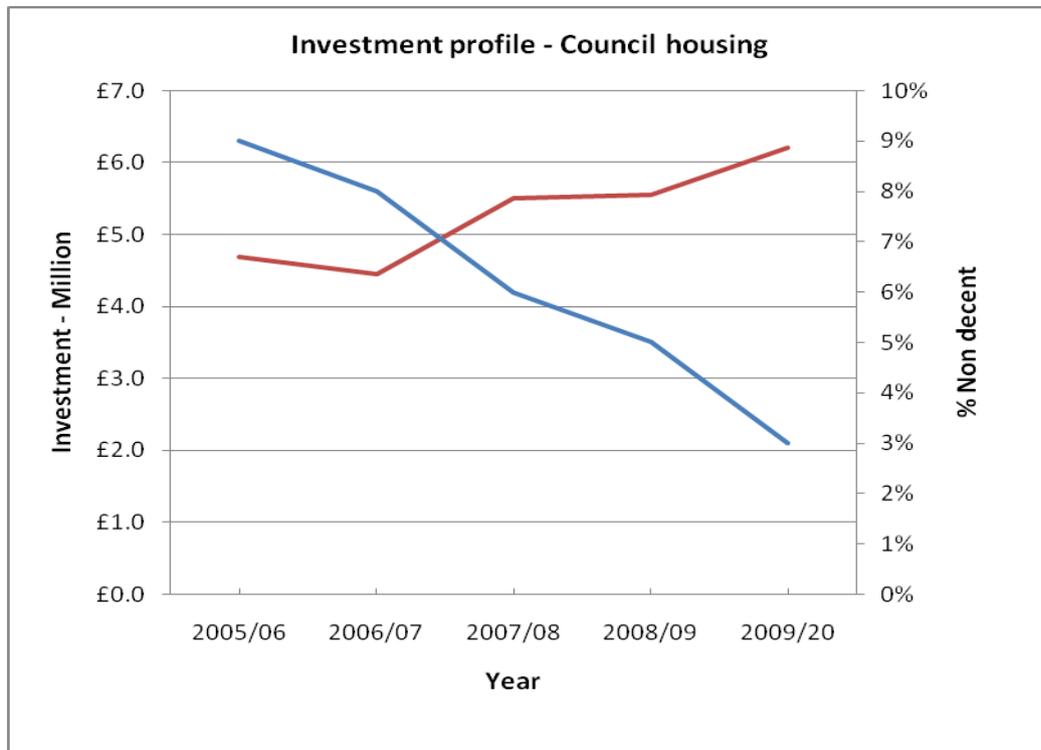
Not only for the benefit of our tenants but also to safeguard a valuable asset the Council, through its Housing Revenue Account (HRA), has prioritised investment in the maintenance of its properties. Since 2005 over £26 Million has been spent on repairs and improvements. This represents an average investment of just under £5000/dwelling over this period.

Investment has been targeted to:

- ★ Reduce the number of properties failing to meet the Decent Homes standard – a minimum standard that all socially rented homes must achieve.
- ★ Improve properties to the Guildford Standard – for example to double glaze every home by 2014.
- ★ Contain expenditure on responsive repairs by timely interventions through the planned investment programme.
- ★ Address other tenant investment priorities not covered by the Decent Homes standard – for example adaptations for disabled households and communal services such as lifts.

The outcome has been a reduction in the number of homes failing to meet the decent homes standard and an 82% satisfaction rating from tenants on the general condition of their property. The chart below reflects the impact of past investment on the decent homes indicator.

**Figure 5: Investment in Council Housing**



<b>KEY:</b> Red (increasing) line	Level of investment
Blue (decreasing) line	Percentage of Borough Council housing stock that does not meet the Decent Homes Standard

## 5. Private Sector Housing

The main activity in the private sector has been directed at improving housing standards or the adaptation of homes to make them suitable for disabled persons. The current policy provides a range of discretionary and mandatory assistance to private owners, including owner occupiers and landlords as well as private and social tenants.

The table below indicates the number of properties that have benefited from the Council's comprehensive private sector renewal policy. The increase in activity in 2009/10 and the current year reflects the success of the Council's participation in the Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership.

**Figure 6: Measures undertaken via the SHIP Partnership**

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11 (projected)
	<b>Number of properties</b>			
<b>House Renovation Grants</b>	32	40	52	50
<b>Solar Loans</b>	2	1	2	8
<b>Warmth for 1000 Insulation measures<sup>3</sup></b>	0	0	377	180
<b>Equity Loans</b>	0	2	40	6
<b>Disabled Facilities Grants</b>	83	69	84	80

<sup>3</sup> Cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and solid wall insulation

## 6. Overview of the Borough

The population of Guildford Borough is higher than any other district in Surrey, with an estimated population of 135,700. The population is predicted to rise by 12 percent to 151,500 by 2026. The Borough is the second largest district in the county in terms of area, covering approximately 104 square miles. The two principal urban areas are the town of Guildford (containing roughly half of the Borough's population) and the area of Ash and Tongham in the west of the Borough.

Outside of the urban areas, most of the Borough is designated as green belt. The southern part lies within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Borough also contains special protection areas, special areas of conservation, sites of special scientific interest and non-statutory designations of sites of nature conservation importance and local nature reserves. The need for new housing development and associated infrastructure is a particularly sensitive issue for local people, with preservation of the high quality natural landscape, including the green belt, being a high priority. These concerns must be balanced with development needs, including the need to provide affordable housing and local employment in rural areas to maintain balanced and sustainable communities.

Guildford is an affluent Borough, and house prices are high. This, combined with a shortage of affordable housing, makes the area unaffordable for many people and puts a strain on the economy as it makes it difficult for businesses to find and retain lower paid workers, key workers, young people and migrant workers.

Unemployment levels are low and have remained relatively stable in recent years. The unemployment rate in the Borough in September 2009 was 2% based on benefit claimants receiving Job Seekers Allowance, compared to 2.9% across the South East and 4% across the UK.

Despite the general prosperity, there are pockets of deprivation with concentrations of people on low incomes, particularly in Westborough, which is in the most deprived national quartile<sup>4</sup> (with 27 percent of residents in receipt of means tested benefits and many residents with no or low qualifications. Other areas in the borough that are amongst the most deprived in Surrey are located in Stoke, Ash Wharf, Friary and St Nicolas and Worplesdon.

The Guildford Borough community is not very ethnically diverse, with 93% of residents describing themselves as white in 2006. This proportion is higher than for Surrey (92%) and England (87%). The largest ethnic group in the Borough is Indian with 1.1% of the population followed by Chinese (1.0%). There are no significant concentrations of ethnic minority groups, although there is a sizeable traveller community, particularly in the Ash area.

Guildford has the highest level of immigration from EU nationals and the accession states of all the Surrey Authorities, with Polish migrants forming the largest group. It is not yet clear to what extent this will impact on the Borough in the future but there is an identified demand for social housing from some of these workers as many are in low paid employment.

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<sup>4</sup> according to the Office for National Statistics' "Indices of multiple deprivation"),

The high cost of housing in Guildford Borough is apparent in both the owner-occupied and private rented sectors. House prices are high; almost 70% above the average for England and Wales and well above the average for the South East. For the period April to June 2010, average house prices, based on information from the Land Registry Service, were as follows:

**Figure 7: Average house prices (based on period April to June 2010)**

Area	Average House Price
England	£224,064
South East	£271,966
Guildford	£357,779

Despite falls in house prices in 2008/09, house prices remain at more than ten times average annual earnings, therefore the housing market remains accessible only to households with either large existing equity or very high incomes. Renting a one-bedroom flat costs around £700 per month and a two-bedroom property in excess of £900. Cheaper properties are difficult to find as Guildford's large student population means that demand for private rented sector properties usually outstrips supply, although the situation is becoming more fluid in the current economic downturn.

## **7. The need for affordable housing**

The importance of affordable housing to the local community was emphasised in the 2008 Residents' Survey. Of all Borough Council services, only affordable housing received a negative satisfaction score (51% dissatisfaction) and residents identified it as a key spending priority. Changes to household formation, including a large increase in single person households through elderly people living longer, separation and divorce and young people living alone, will result in household numbers rising at a faster rate than population growth. The substantial increase in the older population over the next 20 years will require a significant increase in home support for the most frail and vulnerable to enable them to continue living independent lives. New housing developments will also need to take account of this trend by providing appropriate levels of accommodation.

### **Housing and the economy**

Housing is fundamental to a thriving economy – it is essential not only to provide homes locally to house the existing workforce and reduce the congestion and pollution that arises from commuting, but to provide the environment where the future workforce can develop and flourish. The effect of decent housing on health and education is an important factor in a strong economy.

The Guildford Economic Study 2009 identified a shortage of affordable housing to buy and to rent as the principal driver for increased levels of commuting in and out of the Borough, resulting in severe traffic congestion.

During the Council’s consultation with local businesses many of them stated they were unable to recruit appropriately trained staff.

The Economic Study provided the basis for the Guildford Economic Strategy, which includes objectives to promote sustainable growth and business practices within the borough, and to support the vitality of rural areas.

The Council’s Economic Strategy has identified the ‘Top Ten’ issues in the borough, one of which is the provision of affordable housing. The Economic Study identified that businesses are (even during the recession) struggling to find staff who can afford to live here and in rural areas local families are struggling to stay in the area due to the lack of affordable housing.

## 8. Rural communities

The Surrey Farm study 2008 uncovered the difficulties faced by Surrey farmers and the pressures facing the rural communities in our area. High house prices and cost of living makes finding farm workers very difficult.

Guildford Borough Council supports rural housing projects in the rural villages to help ease the problem of local families and rural workers not being able to stay in the area due to the high cost of homes in the Borough.

## 9. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for West Surrey was completed in 2009, and covers the Guildford, Waverley and Woking local authority areas.

The SHMA can be viewed at <http://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/3990/Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment>

The study identified a need for 1,194 new affordable homes per annum in order to meet the current backlog, plus newly arising need, over five years.

**Figure 8: Net annual need for affordable housing**

Element	Number
Backlog need (annual)	324
Backlog supply (annual)	158
Net backlog need (annual)	166
Future need (annual)	1,442
Future supply (annual)	414
Net future need (annual)	1,028
<b>TOTAL NET ANNUAL NEED</b>	<b>1,194</b>

Element	Number
Total gross annual need	1,766
Total gross annual supply	572
<b>TOTAL NET ANNUAL NEED</b>	<b>1,194</b>

## 10. SHMA Update 2010

The SHMA is updated annually with information on the housing market, housing need and demand, affordability of rents and house prices.

The latest update was carried out between April and July 2010 and has provided a range of information which can be used to inform the shape of future housing services and provision.

The following table sets out the weekly costs of a mortgage or rent payable for different types and sizes of accommodation. In respect of new build provision the main difference since 2008 has been a reduction in interest rates. Whilst this has benefited those who already have tracker mortgages, first time buyers have to provide far higher deposits in order to access the market.

**Figure 9: Weekly housing costs across tenure**

GUILDFORD AVERAGE WEEKLY COST @ 1 APRIL 2010				
ALL POSTCODES	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED
NEWBUILD 2008	£307.00	£448.00	£573.00	£ 869.00
NEWBUILD 2010	£110.25	£228.19	£304.01	£377.72
RESALE (ENTRY LEVEL) 2008	£246.00	£347.00	£434.00	£643.00
RESALE (ENTRY LEVEL) 2010	£106.32	£154.14	£196.26	£274.84
PRIVATE RENTED 2008	£160.00	£219.00	£273.00	£369.00
PRIVATE RENTED 2010	£187.00	£236.00	£299.00	£390.00
INTERMEDIATE HOUSING 2008	£117.00	£152.00	£184.00	£237.00
INTERMEDIATE HOUSING 2010	£117.33	£140.17	£158.16	£-
SOCIAL RENT 2008	£74.00	£ 85.00	£94.00	£105.00
SOCIAL RENT 2010	£80.55	£97.91	£109.38	£121.58

A summary of the SHMA update can be viewed at:  
<http://www.guildford.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=8000&p=0>

## The Housing Register

There were currently 3,790 households on the housing register in Guildford Borough as at 30 September 2010 of which 673 households are on the transfer register (i.e. already in social housing but in need of a more suitable property).

The Housing Register is divided into five bands according to housing need. 2,300 households are in the top three priority bands. All such households have a substantive local connection with the Borough through residence, employment or family connections.

The table below shows the change in the number of households on the housing register since the 2005 housing strategy.

**Figure 10: The number of households on the housing register**

Date	Housing applicants	Transfer applicants <sup>5</sup>	Total Housing Needs Register applicants	% Increase	% increase from March 2005	% increase from March 2007
Mar-05	2247	623	2870	10.5		
Mar-06	2455	650	3105	8.2		
Mar-07	2802	720	3522	13.4		
Mar-08	2898	708	3606	2.4		
Mar-09	3053	733	3786	5		
Mar-10	3100	706	3806	0.53	32.61	8.06
Sep-10	3117	673	3790	-0.42	32.06	7.61

In total, the number of households on the register has increased by 32% since the 2005 housing strategy.

The number of households on the housing register has remained static over the past 18 months. This may be partly because people are less interested in applying once they become aware of how few properties are available. With only around 400 vacancies in the social housing stock per year, applicants must look at all options when considering their housing situation.

## 11. Effects of recession

### *Supply of private housing*

<sup>5</sup> Existing tenants in social housing needing a transfer to a more suitable property

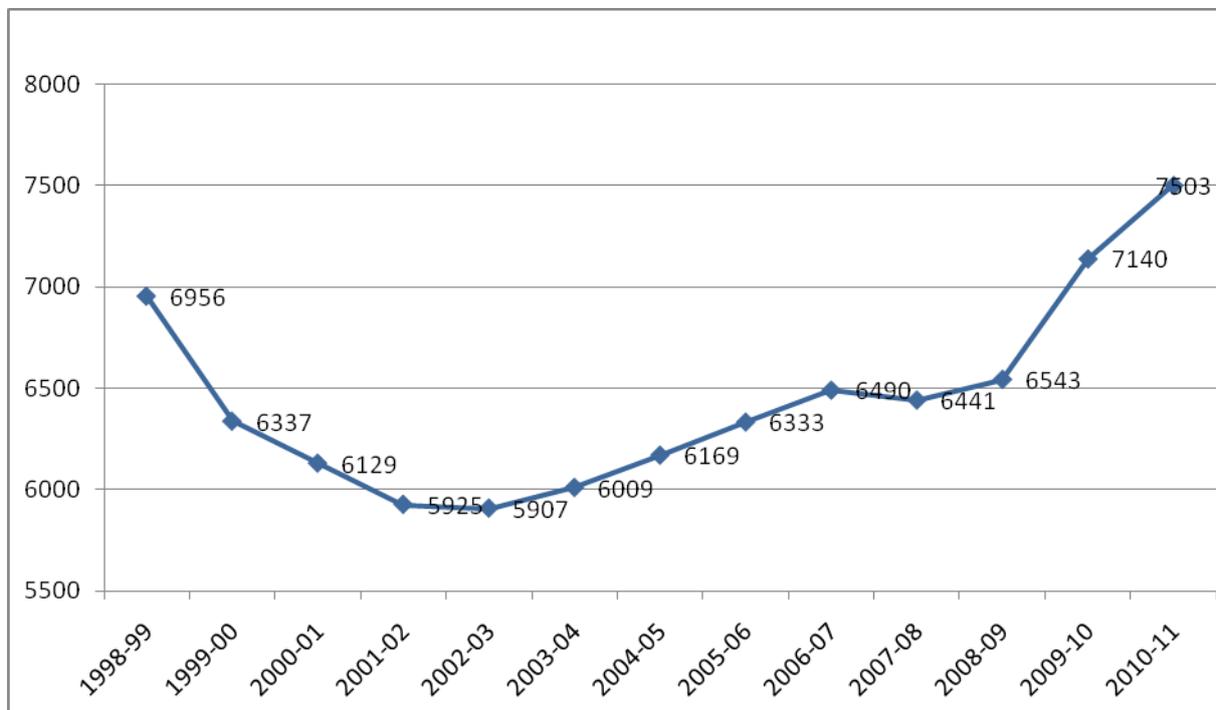
One significant effect of the recession is the impact on private housing supply. Throughout the South East the supply of new build housing completions slowed as property developers put their sites on hold, in some cases those sites that were already underway.

There is currently very little housing development taking place on privately owned sites in the Borough. Prior to the recession a number of additional affordable housing units were achieved on “windfall” private sites due to the planning policy requirement to provide a percentage of such homes on larger sites. Such windfall provision has now virtually dried up which will result in the Council facing a shortfall in meeting its affordable housing target to April 2012.

In addition there is concern that the recession has had an impact on the number of available private rented properties. Initially the number of properties available actually increased as people unable to sell their properties due to the lack of prospective purchasers and depressed property valuations and owners decided to let them instead.

However many of these properties are now occupied by those who would formerly have chosen to buy a property at this stage in their lives but who are now unable to secure a mortgage, and have to rent privately instead of buying.

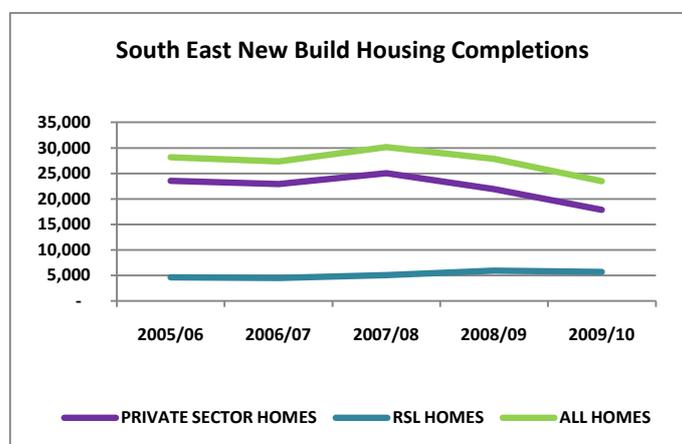
**Figure 11 The annual number of households in receipt of Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit**



The graph above shows the impact of growing affordability problems, followed by the credit crunch and recession. Between 2008 and 2010 there was a sharp increase of nearly 15% in

housing benefit applications. The total benefit bill for 2009/10 was 22% higher than 2007/08, at £35.7 million.

**Figure 12: Housing completions**



## 12. Mortgage Possession

During 2009/10 mortgage possession court proceedings and associated evictions reduced from the previous year. 8% of owner-occupied homes repossessed in Surrey were in Guildford.

**Figure 13 Repossessions**

HOUSEHOLD REPOSSESSIONS APRIL 2009 - MARCH 2010				
Source: MINISTRY OF JUSTICE APRIL 2010	Total	% Change in total since 2008	Per 1,000 households	% of Surrey possessions
<b>Mortgage possession claims issued</b>				
SURREY	1090	-35	2.42	
GUILDFORD	90	-44	1.67	8
<b>Mortgage possession orders issued</b>				
SURREY	850	-25	1.88	
GUILDFORD	65	-32	1.20	8

### *Evictions from private rented homes*

10% of evictions across Surrey occurred in Guildford Borough.

**Figure 14: Evictions from rented properties**

<b>HOUSEHOLD REPOSSESSIONS APRIL 2009 - MARCH 2010</b>				
<b>Source: MINISTRY OF JUSTICE APRIL 2010</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Change in total since 2008</b>	<b>Per 1,000 households</b>	<b>% of Surrey possessions</b>
<b>Landlord possession claims issued</b>				
<b>SURREY</b>	<b>1560</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.46</b>	
<b>GUILDFORD</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Landlord possession orders issued</b>				
<b>SURREY</b>	<b>1065</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2.36</b>	
<b>GUILDFORD</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>10</b>

The CAB offices in Guildford and Ash received a total of 134 enquiries during 2009/10 that specifically concerned rent or mortgage difficulties. The table below indicates the split between tenures.

**Figure 15: CAB enquiries 2009/10**

<b>Arrears (Council)</b>	<b>Arrears (PR)</b>	<b>OTH</b>	<b>Arrears (HA)</b>	<b>Mortgage</b>	<b>Total 2009/10</b>
36	30	25	25	18	134

**13.**

## **14. National and local policies**

### **National priorities for housing**

The new Government affirmed its commitment to build 150,000 new affordable homes as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The detail of how this is to be delivered is still to be confirmed.

Whilst national policy is developed, the Council is reviewing its position in terms of the local housing numbers.

The local affordable housing Key Delivery Target of 400 homes between 2008 and 2012 remains, and it is anticipated that the affordable housing target will remain at this level beyond 2012.

At present, however, the Borough has no formal target for the overall number of new homes (private and affordable) to be delivered each year. In the interim period, until an overall local housing number has been established, the Council continues to handle proposals for new homes in accordance with the development plan, understanding its multiple responsibilities

to plan for new housing, including affordable housing, and to protect the environment and character of our town, villages and countryside. The localism agenda will also impact on the Council and any future opportunities for the borough will also need to be considered.

A *Local Investment Plan* has been developed by Surrey local authorities and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The plan is an investment strategy tailored to the needs of the local area, based on identified priorities, and will be the main conduit for government funding for housing and infrastructure. The plan is explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of this document.

## **Local Strategies**

### ***Guildford Sustainable Communities Strategy***

The strategy was published in 2008 and sets out how the Council and its partners intend to enhance the long-term economic, social and environmental well-being of the Borough. It aims to show how the quality of life of residents will be improved, including for the disadvantaged and vulnerable.

The Sustainable Communities Strategy can be viewed here:

<http://www.guildford.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C793C0F6-2AF5-401C-B0A9-A652EA283177/0/GuildfordBoroughSustainableCommunityStrategy.pdf>

It sets out a 'Vision for Guildford' which is for the Borough to be 'An attractive, sustainable and prosperous Borough in which people fulfil their potential and the disadvantaged and vulnerable receive the support they need'.

The Sustainable Communities Strategy is being delivered through the Guildford **Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**. The LSP is a partnership bringing together the public, business, voluntary, community and faith sectors to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of Guildford Borough.

The LSP feeds into the Surrey Strategic Partnership (SSP) which seeks to deliver mutually agreed priorities across the County.

The Council has four key strategic priorities:

- **Excellence and Value for money**  
Providing efficient, cost-effective and relevant quality public services.
- **Sustainable Local Environment**  
Preserving and enhancing a sustainable environment, both rural and urban, within Guildford Borough.
- **Safe and Vibrant Community**  
Ensuring our diverse community can live in safety and with dignity.
- **Dynamic economy**  
Encouraging a vibrant business and knowledge based local economy.

These priorities provide the basis for the Council's decisions in respect of the use of its resources and of managing competing needs within the Borough.

### ***Sustainable Communities Strategy Delivery Plan***

The Delivery Plan, approved by the LSP includes aims for housing, including a co-ordinated approach by partners concerning the release of land, and identifying the needs of local communities. There is a specific focus on rural housing.

The Council has recently completed a Strategic Property Review, which includes a detailed assessment of all non-housing assets and the rationale for the continuing ownership of those assets. Where assets no longer meet the Council's objectives, options for disposal are being considered, including the potential for conversion to residential use. The County Council and other public bodies have also undertaken a review of their land and asset holdings. This will contribute to the aim of the Sustainable Communities Delivery Plan to co-ordinate the release of land.

### ***Guildford Borough Economic Strategy***

The Economic Strategy is currently being completed, and is addressed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this document. It has been prepared in partnership with business groups in the Borough, and aims to maintain Guildford's position as one of the top-performing non-metropolitan boroughs in the UK by supporting a well balanced, sustainable and successful economy that provides a high quality of life for our residents and workers.

### ***HRA Business Plan***

The Council's ongoing plan for the overall management and maintenance of its homes and estates prioritises the importance of meeting housing standards and making best use of the housing stock. The proposed reform of the housing finance subsidy system is planned to take effect from April 2012. This presents potential opportunities for Council's to build new homes on its own land, however this and other issues will require further consideration of the benefits and viability.

### ***Homelessness Prevention Strategy***

The homelessness prevention strategy provides a detailed analysis of housing need and local trends and issues. Its action plan will complement that of this strategy.

### ***Later Life Strategy***

The Council has recently carried out a series of reviews into the care services provided to elderly and vulnerable residents.

The Later Life Strategy sets a framework for the provision of services to support older people living independently.

### ***'Hub and spoke' provision***

It is proposed that future services for older people will be provided by using centres in existing sheltered housing or day centres in the west, centre and east of the borough. These

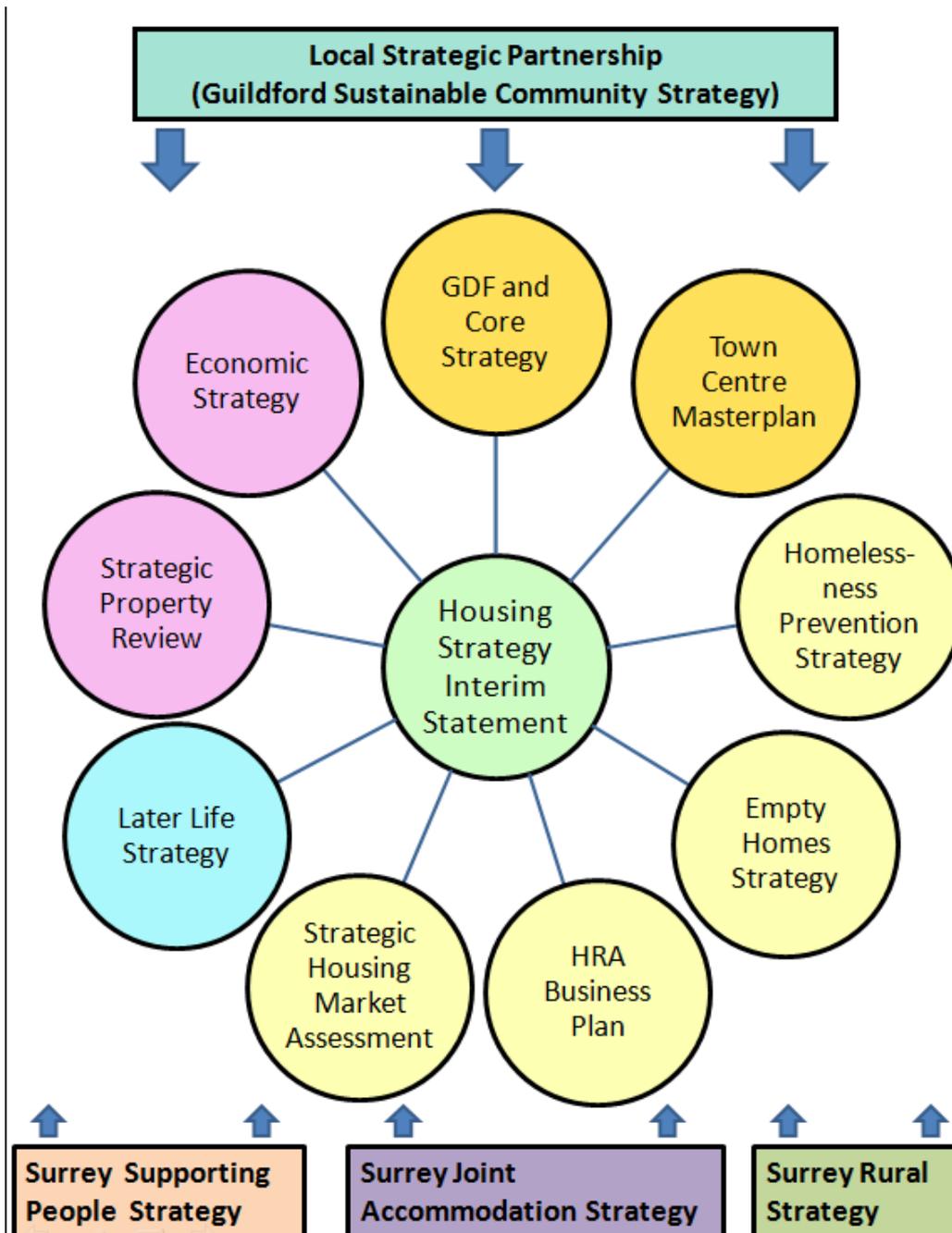
will provide the hubs for services in partnership with those from Surrey County Council, the NHS and local faith and voluntary organisations.

### ***Surrey County Council Accommodation Strategy***

The County Council is currently producing an accommodation strategy concerning the different client groups that require specialist housing and support through adult social care. This will help inform the priorities for its future funding of housing related support services. This has been developed in conjunction with the Boroughs and Districts, together with other statutory service providers including health trusts, and probation.

There is also a complementary strategy being developed that concerns children and young people.

Figure 16: Related strategies



## 15. Partnerships

### Housing Association Partners

The Council works in partnership with a number of housing associations originally selected through the Guildford Homes Partnership:

- A2Dominion Housing Group
- Downland Housing Association (Affinity Sutton Group)
- Greenoak Housing Association

- English Rural Housing Association
- Home Group
- Mount Green Housing Association
- Pavilion Housing Association (First Wessex Group)
- Rosebery Housing Association
- Rosemary Simmons Memorial Housing Association
- Thames Valley Housing Association
- Windsor Housing (Radian)

The Council intends to continue with this successful partnership, but will regularly review partnership arrangements in light of emerging policy on the delivery and procurement of affordable housing.

In addition to the above, the Council will also work with special needs associations as appropriate to the client group involved, for example:

- Surrey Community Development Trust
- Riverside (English Churches Housing Group)
- Stonham (part of Home Group)
- Sunset Homes
- YMCA

## **16. Working with other Local Authorities**

Housing markets, and housing issues, are not confined to local authority or county boundaries. The Council works closely with neighbouring local authorities, in particular with Rushmoor, Hart and Waverley via the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme, and with local authorities in the Blackwater Valley.

Some groups cover the whole county, such as the Surrey Enabling Officers' group which shares information and best practice on housing development, and the Surrey Chief Housing Officers' Association which covers the wide range of housing issues.

In 2008 the Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership was formed to improve the level of decency in private homes. The partnership was formed of eight local authorities<sup>6</sup> in Surrey and North Hampshire with three primary aims:

- To improve energy efficiency standards and to reduce fuel poverty (Warmth for 1000).
- To introduce a home loan scheme.
- To raise awareness and reduce the number of long term empty homes.

The partnership secured over £800,000 from the Regional Housing Board over a three year period in addition to other funds levered in from the private sector and has been successful in its aims to make homes decent. The partnership is scheduled to end on the 31 March

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<sup>6</sup> Spelthorne, Elmbridge, Guildford, Woking, Waverley, Runnymede, Hart, and Rushmoor Councils

2011 but discussions have begun to look at extending the arrangements for a further three years.

## **17. Comprehensive Area Assessment Inspection 2009**

Although the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) has now been abolished, the Council is still acting on the findings of the Audit Commission Surrey CAA report published on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

Surrey councils were praised for overall delivery of housing and affordable homes, however rural housing was identified as a cause for concern, with supply failing to keep pace with needs. The number of people on housing registers across Surrey, as in Guildford, has increased over the past five years.

Private sector renewal and assistance for owner-occupiers were specifically identified as key issues which lacked a robust approach. The report referred to the lack of information available about the condition of the housing stock, which makes it difficult to target grant and loan allocations. It also identified dealing with Empty Homes as an area which lacked co-ordination across the County.

Since the CAA report, a full housing condition survey has been completed for the Borough.

The Council is already working with the other Surrey local authorities to establish a county-wide action plan – partnership working with other councils will also help to reduce costs in these budget-stretched times, for example by sharing staff resources across the County.

## **18. Consultation**

The Council has carried out consultation with organisations and individuals with an interest in housing to seek their views regarding Guildford's approach to future housing provision. A summary of the responses is included at Appendix 1

Consultation has also taken place via other means:-

- Equalities consultation was undertaken via the HomeRun newsletter which goes out to all tenants. An issue was devoted to equalities and diversity, and tenants were invited to get involved. The level of response was good and a consultation group of tenants who are from the various equality strands has been set up. The group will take part in consultation as part of equality impact assessments.
- A new quarterly stakeholders' newsletter, Housing Solutions, updates our partners about developments across homelessness prevention, housing advices and development, as well as seeking feedback on specific areas of our service.

# Chapter 2

## Increasing Supply

### **Key Issues**

There is a lack of housing to meet the needs of the local community – in particular affordable housing, both to rent and to buy.

It is particularly difficult to find an affordable home in rural areas.

There are significant constraints on housing development in the borough, including the Green Belt, a Special Protection Area for birds and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The existing housing stock is not used to its full potential – there are properties within the Borough that have been empty for some time, and many properties are under-occupied.

It is difficult to identify sufficient land for housing development in existing built-up areas.

There is less funding available for subsidised housing due to pressure on the nation's finances.

### **Sustainable Communities Strategy Objectives**

Key objective (14) more affordable housing will be available

Key objective (6) the Guildford Development Framework will have protected the countryside from inappropriate development, whilst delivering the affordable housing required in rural communities.

### **We aim to:**

Enable new affordable homes to be built.

Increase the provision of rural housing.

Review funding sources and investigate new ways of providing affordable homes.

Review options and methods to increase the delivery of affordable housing.

Bring empty properties back into use, reducing the number of long-term empty properties.

Make better use of existing housing.

## 19. The Affordable Housing Development Programme

The need for affordable housing in Guildford is very high as shown through the SMHA.

Key to meeting housing need in the Borough is a clear programme which identifies suitable housing sites and takes into account how the available resources can be used to delivery of more affordable homes in the most cost effective way.

### The Local Investment Plan (LIP)

Future government funding for affordable housing development and the infrastructure necessary for housing development is expected to be based on a Local Investment Plan, co-ordinated by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

An interim investment plan for Surrey has been submitted to the HCA. The LIP includes the main priority sites in Guildford Borough for the next five years, listed below:

**Figure 17: Local Investment Plan schemes**

<b>SURREY LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN - SCHEMES IN GUILDFORD BOROUGH</b>				
<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>Number of private housing units</b>	<b>Number of affordable housing units</b>	<b>Estimated Start Date</b>	<b>Expected Completion Date</b>
White Hart Court, Ripley	10	32	2011	2013
Bright Hill, Guildford	39	21	2012/2013	2014
Lakeside Close, Ash	0	30	2011/2012	2013
New Road, Gomshall	TBC (est. 20+)	20	2011/2012	2013
Bellerby Theatre, Guildford	TBC (est. 20)	15	TBC	TBC
Miscellaneous Rural	0	20	2011	2015
Woodbridge Road	13	7	2011/12	2012
Kaye Court	0	17	2011/12	2012
Supported Housing	0	10	2011	2015
Guildford Park Car Park	90	30	2013	2014
Slyfield Area Regeneration Project	700	300	2016 onwards	-

As well as strategic sites, provision has been made in the plan for shared investment across the county for small rural schemes, and for supported housing. The LIP also looks ahead to future sites therefore the Slyfield Area Regeneration Project has also been included.

### Medium Term sites

A number of privately owned sites have been identified as being suitable for housing development – however the current economic climate has meant these sites are on hold

because landowners are either unable to secure the necessary finance to develop them, or are waiting for market conditions to improve.

The Council is reviewing its land holdings and is examining the potential of sites in its ownership to deliver affordable housing as well as investigating the potential to combine or exchange land with other organisations to achieve mutual aims including housing development. This links in with work across the County examining public sector estates.

### **Long Term sites**

The Slyfield Single Area Regeneration Project (SARP) involves a large area of land in the north of the town, which is mainly owned by the Borough Council and Thames Water. The County Council also owns some of the land.

The current uses of the land include a sewage treatment plant, industrial units, and the household recycling centre.

The site is expected to deliver over 1,000 homes, of which several hundred will be affordable housing. Work recently began on a master plan for the area which will include the necessary infrastructure requirements.

Due to the scale of the project and the timing of funding for some major changes including a new sewage treatment plant, development of the site is not expected to begin until 2016/17 at the earliest.

### ***Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)***

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) requires local authorities to set out policies and strategies for delivering housing, including the identification of broad locations that will enable delivery of sufficient housing to meet the borough's housing target for at least 15 years. In order to achieve this, PPS3 requires a SHLAA to be prepared. This must identify sufficient specific sites that are proven to be "suitable, available and viable" on which to deliver housing for the next 5 years. Where possible, sites for the following 10 years should be identified. The SHLAA must be updated and monitored annually through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to ensure that a 5-year supply of deliverable sites is maintained.

Whilst work on the SHLAA continues, an interim land assessment has been published listing sites that may come forward for housing development in the short term. The Interim Guildford Housing Land Assessment can be viewed here:

<http://www.guildford.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3992>

### ***Redevelopment of Airey Housing***

In the late 1940s the Council built over 100 Airey houses, mostly in rural areas. These properties feature pre reinforced concrete (PRC) frames supporting the roof, walls and floor. The external walls are clad with concrete panels, fixed by wire to the concrete columns. The construction of these houses contributes to poor thermal insulation and they were designated as defective dwellings within the Housing Act 1985. Although there have been no instances of serious failure within the borough over the last 20 years there has been an

ongoing programme of selective development to remove these properties and replace them with new build housing association properties. Because most Airey houses have a considerable amount of land surrounding them redevelopment usually achieves a two for one ratio.

The new properties have much improved thermal efficiency resulting in lower running costs for the tenants.

All but 18 of the houses have already been replaced and the final area which is currently under consideration is New Road Gomshall where the Council has 9 Airey houses still in its ownership. Before and during the development there will be extensive consultation with tenants and residents to ensure that the final properties meet the needs of the local community. Redevelopment on the few remaining properties is not considered viable because they are not grouped together, and do not have sufficient surrounding land.

### ***Other housing to be replaced***

The Council is also working to replace or improve the remaining small number of council properties around the borough that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard. These include the mobile homes at Lakeside Close. Plans are being drawn up to replace the Lakeside Close homes with new housing that will include measures to reduce the risk of flood damage.

Rosemary Simmons Housing Association intends to replace outdated bedsit accommodation at Kaye Court, Bellfields with a mixture of modern flats and family accommodation.

The age profile and needs of the Borough's older population has changed (and continues to change). Over the past decade, the Council has decommissioned some sheltered housing schemes which no longer met the needs and aspirations of older residents.

Victoria Court is due to close in early 2011 which will leave the Council with six remaining sheltered schemes its ownership. All of the schemes now meet current standards although Tarragon Court which comprises mainly self contained bedsit accommodation and has only had limited refurbishment may not continue to do so in the longer term. The future of this scheme will therefore be reviewed within the next five years.

The Council will also continue to work with other sheltered housing providers in the Borough to identify the need to upgrade and/or decommission their schemes in the future.

## **20. Affordable Housing Tenures**

### **Properties for social rent**

Social rented housing is rented housing owned and managed by the Council and housing associations, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime, as agreed with the Homes and Communities Agency as a condition of grant.

### **Intermediate Tenures**

## ***Low Cost Home Ownership***

The Council currently owns 270 shared ownership properties itself with leaseholders owning shares of between 30 and 70 per cent.

HomeBuy is a Government driven initiative that helps eligible individuals and families find homes that meet their current needs. Guildford works with Catalyst Housing Group which is the Government appointed HomeBuy Agent for Surrey to maximize the number of affordable home ownership options available for local residents. There are a number of different scheme types that are offered under the HomeBuy initiative:

- ***HomeBuy Direct***

A shared-equity scheme designed to help first time buyers have 100% ownership of their property. The buyer buys a new home, on a designated HomeBuy Direct development, with assistance from the Government and the house builder in the form of two equal equity loans.

The equity Loans are up to 30% of the purchase price leaving the applicant to raise 70% by way of a mortgage plus a deposit, if available.

The equity loans are interest free for the first five years. After that, there is a fee of 1.75%, rising annually by the Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 1%.

- ***NewBuild HomeBuy***

This scheme offers brand new high quality homes available on a 'Part-buy/Part-rent' basis (also known as Shared Ownership). Under this initiative, eligible individuals are able to become home owners by buying a share of a newly built property (from as low as 25%) and pay a subsidised rent on the portion they don't own.

From time to time 'part-buy/part-rent' properties will become available as a result of existing owners moving further up the property ladder. These are known as 'Re-sale' properties.

- ***Rent to HomeBuy***

Under this scheme, applicants are able to rent a newly built home provided by a Housing Association at a rate that is normally 80% of the current market rate.

Depending on the development the individual has the option to convert the rental agreement into shared ownership (part-buy/part-rent) after a period of 3 years or 5 years. The rental period is designed to provide an opportunity to save for a deposit to put towards buying a share in their home.

Details of all available HomeBuy properties in the Guildford area are advertised through Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme.

## ***Intermediate Rent and Rent to Buy***

Intermediate rent offers new build properties at 80% (or less) of current market rents and is available through a number of Housing Associations. In most cases the initial period is for six months and time frames are reviewed regularly.

Current conditions require new tenants of intermediate rental properties to enter the tenancy with the intention of purchasing at a later date, at which point they may have to vacate the property if they choose not to buy. This has reduced the popularity of intermediate rental properties. The current funding regime also means that housing association partners find it significantly less viable to provide intermediate rental properties compared to shared ownership properties. The initial outlay is the same, and the former do not generate an immediate capital receipt.

However the policy and funding situation is rapidly changing, and the Government is asking providers to look more closely at 'intermediate' solutions.

The Government has recently put forward the concept of "affordable rented" housing based on 80% of market rents. This is proposed as an option for new build and some future re-lets. At present guidance on these proposals has not yet been produced. This is likely to create some uncertainty in respect to negotiations about the affordable housing element on housing sites, therefore the Council will need to consider its approach to this form of tenure and the relative proportions of social rented, affordable rented and shared ownership provision on such sites.

## **21. Planning Policy**

In May 2010, the Secretary of State announced the Government's intention to rapidly abolish all Regional Strategies. In July 2010, the Secretary of State announced in a Parliamentary Statement the revocation of Regional Strategies with immediate effect. This left Local Planning Authorities to establish their level of housing supply (including Gypsy and Traveller sites) without a regional framework. The accompanying Communities and Local Government letter to Chief Planning Officers advised that the housing targets set out in the Regional Strategy Housing could be retained or a target could be set, based on reliable evidence, capable of being defended at independent examination. The requirement to identify a deliverable 5-year housing supply will remain, as well the need to identify broad areas for 15 years supply from the plan's adoption. The intention is to formally propose the abolition of Regional Strategies through the Localism and Decentralisation Bill.

An application for judicial review of the Secretary of State's decision by a house-builder was successful in November 2010. Its outcome was to quash the July decision to revoke Regional Strategies. The Secretary of State has decided not to appeal this decision.

The Regional Strategy (for Guildford Borough, the South East Plan, May 2009), as it stood on 5 July 2010, therefore still forms part of the development plan, until legislation formally repeals this. The Government's intention remains to abolish Regional Strategies, through the Localism Act, however this unlikely to be before mid-2011. The Secretary of State has made clear that the proposed abolition of Regional Strategy is a material consideration that should be taken into account in planning decisions where relevant.

Guildford is in a fairly unique position as in May 2010 it won its legal challenge to selected policies of the South East Plan relating to its regionally imposed housing number, which required the Council to carry out a green belt review to the north east of Guildford with a view to releasing land there for housing. Guildford therefore currently has no regionally-imposed housing target.

Whilst there is a certain degree of uncertainty in this transitional period, in accordance with the CLG advice provided in July 2010, the Council continues to prepare the Core Strategy (the central, over-arching document in the Local Development Framework) which will replace much of the 2003 Local Plan. It will identify a “Vision” for the borough, and a housing target for the 15 years following its adoption, including broad areas for housing delivery. [Click here to view the draft Core Strategy.](#)

Councils continue to be required by Planning Policy Statement 3 “Housing” to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing. Planning Policy Statements continue to apply until they are replaced by a single National Planning Framework, currently in preparation.

As required, we are still preparing our Core Strategy, although due to the need to establish the level of new housing provision in the borough, to replace the quashed regionally-imposed target, our timetable for its preparation and adoption has extended. Other documents of the Guildford Development Framework are being progressed, including a Town Centre Masterplan and other Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

The Government’s Decentralisation and Localism Bill may include more detail of local housing targets, and other aspects that may impact on housing delivery, including the proposed “Community Right to Build” through Community Land Trusts and “New Homes Bonus” incentive scheme.

## **22. Wheelchair standard housing**

[Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society](#) states that all new housing with public funding will be built to Lifetime Homes standard by 2011. In short, from this date all housing funded through the Homes and Communities agency from that date will achieve Lifetime Homes standard.

There is currently (September 2010) no planning policy requirement for residential developments to achieve Lifetime Home Standards (LHS) in the Borough. However, the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) awards developments that achieve LHS standards with credits which will assist developers in achieving the Council’s CSH requirement.

All new build residential developments must comply with Building Regulation Approved [Document M \(Access to and use of Buildings\)](#), 2006.

### ***The Core Strategy***

The Core Strategy is the overarching document for the GDF. The Further Options draft 2009 and is based around the three main themes:

#### **1) Managing sustainable growth**

- Ensuring working environments will be responsive to the needs and working practices of the future.
- Nurturing and diversifying the rural economy
- Supporting the land use requirements of educational establishments.
- Providing housing whilst sensitively protecting the character of both our rural and urban environments.
- Maintaining a vibrant town centre.
- Incorporating green *travel plans* into future developments to reduce CO2 emissions and vehicle congestion

## 2) Place and community

- Meeting housing needs for all sections of the community - accommodating and adapting to all stages of life / ages, disabilities, lifestyles – through the right range of dwelling size and type.
- Providing a greater amount and choice of *affordable housing*, particularly in rural areas, and making best use will be made of under-utilised developed areas.
- Safeguarding the Borough's heritage and character whilst accommodating the new development essential to maintain the borough's position in the heart of Surrey.

## 3) Environmental protection and enhancement

- Reducing energy use and the need to travel through the sustainable location of all new development and sustainable construction, to high environmental standards including mitigation of flooding and drought.

More detail on the Core Strategy can be found at

<http://www.guildford.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3976>

### Planning Obligations: Section 106 Agreements

Details of developer contributions to affordable housing provision in the borough, as well as other infrastructure secured through planning obligations or conditions, are set out in our [Planning Contributions SPD](#). The details in this SPD amplify saved Guildford Borough Local Plan (2003) Policies, specifically policies G6, H11 and H12. The Local Plan will be replaced in due course by the Guildford Development Framework Core Strategy.

We require the following Section 106 affordable housing contributions from new housing developments:

**Rural settlements (under 3000 population):** All sites of 10 or more dwellings and/or 0.4ha or more in size must include 35% affordable housing.

**All other sites:** All sites of 15 or more dwellings and/or 0.5ha in size must include 35% affordable housing.

**Tenure:** Starting point of 60% rent and 40% other affordable tenures. To be agreed with Housing Advice Services.

**Type/size:** According to housing needs as identified by Housing Advice Services.

Following the Comprehensive Spending Review, the funding opportunities and policy framework for affordable housing is changing. The Council has therefore published a position statement, included in Appendix 2, which will be amended if necessary to reflect changes in Government policy and legislation.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

[The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010](#) came into force in April 2010. The legislation amends the definition of infrastructure in the 2008 Planning Act by excluding affordable housing. The CIL regulations empower local authorities to charge a CIL tariff on almost all developments involving new build and extensions, residential and non-residential, based upon a cost per square metre to be paid to fund infrastructure in the local and wider area. The infrastructure to be funded should be outlined in a Charging Schedule, a list of required infrastructure.

Affordable housing is exempt from the definition of infrastructure, and will continue to be delivered by developer contributions secured through S106 planning obligations. However the cost of the CIL to developers in some instances will impact on their ability to contribute to the affordable housing stock, particularly as the CIL will be non-negotiable. The Coalition Government proposes to introduce a new tariff system in place of the CIL, with its proposals will be outlined in its Decentralisation and Localism Bill expected in November 2010. Early indications appear that it would be very similar to the CIL, although with ring-fencing of CIL funds for the identified infrastructure.

## **23. Rural Housing**

House prices in rural areas of the Borough are substantially above the national average whilst those working in rural areas earn significantly less than their urban counterparts. Failure to create better opportunities for people who live in small rural communities to find quality work and affordable housing can result in rural areas becoming commuter dormitories, exclusive enclaves of the wealthy and retired, at the expense of fewer local jobs, declining local services and loss of community life.

Newly built rural affordable housing contributes to Objective 5 of the Economic Strategy: Supporting the vitality of rural areas, and is a key part of the [Surrey Rural Strategy](#).

The Council aims to maintain the vitality of villages in the borough via planning policy and the development of affordable housing where it is most needed.

In order to assist in maintaining a supply of small rural sites for rural affordable housing for local needs, suitable sites for rural housing will be considered for allocation through the Site Allocations Development Plan Documents, part of the Local Development Framework. This will provide greater certainty.

The target for rural housing agreed with Planning is 100 between 2008/09 and 2012/13.

<b>CASE STUDY: White Hart Court, Ripley</b>
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This site has been tendered to our partner housing associations via a competitive process. A2Dominion Housing has been appointed as the development partner and a contract is being negotiated. A redundant sheltered housing scheme will be replaced by at least 40 homes, including at least 30 affordable homes. A2Dominion aims to achieve planning permission for the site in early 2011, and to complete the construction in the financial year 2012/13.

### **Exception sites**

#### **Local Plan Policy H12 “Affordable Housing for Local Needs in Rural Areas”**

As an exception to other Local Plan policies, affordable housing for local needs will be permitted on sites within or adjoining identified rural settlement boundaries (and in very special circumstances sites not adjoining may be allowed), provided all the following criteria are complied with:

- the housing would meet a genuine local need, both initially and on subsequent change of occupant
- the site does not exceed 0.4ha
- the development would take full account of environmental considerations
- the services and infrastructure are adequate

### **Rural Housing Needs Surveys**

Whilst the Council’s housing register gives an indication of housing need, many people who live in rural areas believe that affordable housing will never be built in rural areas and so do not join the housing register. Rural housing needs surveys of all local households give a more accurate picture of the need and demand for housing and can also help in consultations with parish councils and in encouraging landowners to come forward with sites.

Surrey Community Action employs a Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) who provides support and advice to Parish Councils and rural communities on how they can get affordable housing that meets the needs of local people. The Council contributes towards the funding of this service.

The RHE is currently assisting the Council to carry out Rural Housing Needs Surveys over whole borough. This is as a result of priorities and actions identified via the Local Strategic Partnership.

### **Parish Plans / Community Action Plans**

Parish Plans (PP’s), now also referred to as Community Action Plans are prepared by Parish Councils in consultation with local residents, businesses and landowners. Many of these have been supported by Surrey Community Action.

Send PP was approved by Send Parish Council in April 2007. Progress on actions is being reported to Parish Council meetings every April. Pirbright Community Action Plan was

completed in spring 2007. West Horsley's Parish Plan "West Horsley Tomorrow" was formally adopted in 2008. The Ripley Community Plan was completed in spring 2008.

Housing Needs Surveys are undertaken separately from these Plans, although the desire for a survey may be referred to in the Plan.

### **Self-build housing and the Community Right to Build**

The Community Right to Build is included in the Government's Localism Bill, and aims to give more control over housing development to villages and small towns.

The full detail of this policy has not yet been confirmed, but it is proposed that developments which gain 75% support in a referendum of people in the local area will not have to gain planning permission.

Officers will be investigating the potential within the planning system for land to be used by local residents for self-build projects in the Borough.

## **24. Gypsies and Travellers**

The Housing Act 2004 requires local authorities to carry out a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA).

### **The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)**

In 2006 Guildford, Surrey Heath and Waverley local authorities jointly commissioned a survey to obtain detailed information on the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers across the three districts. The survey can be viewed on the Guildford Borough website: [West Surrey Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment](#).

The main findings from the GTAA were the need for 30 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and 15 Travelling Showpeople plots within Guildford between 2006 and 2011. There are currently 12 Travelling Showpeople pitches within Guildford Borough with temporary planning permission, which expired in December 2008, and the data takes this need into account. The GTAA found no evidence for further dedicated transit pitches to be provided in West Surrey in the next 5 years.

### **Identifying and allocating suitable Gypsy and Traveller sites**

Work is currently underway to replace the Guildford Borough Local Plan with a Local Development Framework. As part of this work, a Site Allocations Development Plan Document will identify land for all types of future development, including identifying future Gypsy and Traveller sites.

### **Enforcement**

Private landowners, local authorities and the police all have powers to deal with unauthorised encampments on land not owned by Gypsies and Travellers. The Council can issue enforcement notices, and ultimately apply for a court injunction, to prevent someone beginning or continuing unauthorised development on land they own.

## **Recent Government Guidance**

The Communities and Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles has recently announced the Government's intention to abolish Circular 01/06 'Planning for Gypsy and Caravan Sites' and Circular 04/07 'Planning for Travelling Showpeople' and replace them with light touch guidance outlining Councils' statutory duties. Government also intends to strengthen the powers available to councils to more effectively tackle unauthorised development in the new Localism Bill which is expected to gain Royal Assent in November 2011. In the interim, the Chief Planner has issued guidance outlining that local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in Development Plan Documents. GTAAs form a good starting point for review of provision; however, local authorities are not bound by them.

The Government has announced incentives through the New Homes Bonus scheme (see Appendix 3) to deliver new housing; this includes authorised traveller sites. Councils will get financial benefits for building authorised sites where they are needed, ensuring that all types of authorised residential developments are treated equally. In addition, tenancy rights for travellers in authorised local authority traveller sites will commence under Section 318 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.

## **25. Constraints on Housing Supply**

### **Protection of land from development**

Although the need for affordable housing in the borough is very high there are many constraints on development; in particular the Green Belt designation covering 89% of the land with the authority and policies concerning its protection.

Nearly two thirds of the Borough is also affected by an EU directive on endangered species protecting the habitat of certain ground nesting birds. Within a 400m zone of the "special protection area", no new housing is permitted. Housing developments in the remainder of the affected land require payment by developers to mitigate any impact on the protected land by providing or improving alternative green open space accessible to the public. This affects the cost and viability of schemes.

The mitigation strategy and mitigation sums required can be viewed here:

<http://www.guildford.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4026>

Prior to the mitigation strategy being introduced there were significant delays affecting a number of housing developments. Shortly afterwards the recession hit which has had an impact on the potential number of affordable units that could otherwise have been delivered through windfall sites.

### **Competing priorities for use of land**

There are also competing priorities for land use highlighted in the economic strategy, for example the need to maintain an adequate supply of land for industrial and commercial use. This drastically reduces opportunities to build new housing.

The Council's Economic Strategy seeks to promote sustainable growth and business practices within the borough, and to support the vitality of rural areas. However there is a tension between the need for housing, and the desire to preserve local services, for example, bed and breakfast/hotel accommodation in town and rural pubs in villages.

The Employment Land Review is predicted to show that the Borough has a shortage commercial and office space. Land for housing therefore competes with the need for commercial development – an issue that is being debated during the preparation of the Guildford Development Framework.

This is also an issue in respect to potential housing development in the town centre. The Town Centre Development Study, produced in 2010 by Cushman and Wakefield, provides a commercial assessment of the potential options for the land within the Council's ownership in central Guildford. This builds on the work of the Town Centre Action plan and makes recommendations for development that will sustain the town centre's vitality and viability. The study identifies the importance of achieving a range of uses for the Council's land in the town, which includes housing.

A balance will therefore need to be achieved in terms of land use to meet both the objectives of this strategy and the economic strategy.

## **Funding**

Nearly all newly built affordable housing in the Borough is owned and managed by our housing associations, and has been provided either as a proportion of a private development via Section 106 planning obligations or directly as whole site development by housing associations working in partnership with the Council.

Most of this housing has been funded in part by the Housing Corporation (now the HCA) through grants towards affordable housing. Since 2005, £17 million of grant has been allocated to the Borough, of which £14.6m funded the development of new homes, and £2.4 million funded schemes such as Homebuy which provided loans to purchase properties on the open market.

The majority of future central government funding will be channelled via the Local Investment Plan, as mentioned in section 1 above.

Under the current funding regime, any 'Registered Provider' of social housing can apply for HCA grant. This includes private developers, some of whom have subsidiaries which provide and/or manage social housing. However few private developers wish to manage social housing themselves, so if they apply for grant it is likely to be with the intention of transferring ownership and/or management of the units to a housing association.

The Council is reviewing new funding options, for example the possibility of borrowing against future income from the increased council tax or business rates resulting from new properties (known as Tax Increment Financing).

## **Council funding for affordable housing development**

The provision of affordable housing is a high priority in Guildford. The Council has a track record of releasing its own land for provision of such housing at discounted cost.

The Council has also provided support to housing associations to bring forward affordable housing on private sector development sites. Funds have been used in cases where more affordable housing is provided than would normally be delivered (for example via planning policies).

The following table shows the amount received since 2005 through the sale of council-owned land, and from Right to Buy sales of council properties, and the amount spent by the Council on enabling affordable housing including feasibility, site preparation and grants to housing associations.

**Figure 18 Capital Receipts**

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Gross capital receipts</b>	3,952,103	2,485,411	2,514,703	1,167,335	1,466,959
<b>Pooled<sup>7</sup></b>	(1,223,750)	(1,310,094)	(1,485,492)	(642,766)	(868,897)
<b>Net capital receipts</b>	2,728,353	1,175,317	1,029,211	524,569	598,062
<b>Expenditure on facilitation of affordable housing</b>	788,714	194,608	143,110	913,179	251,141

The level of receipts from Right to Buy sales has dropped in recent years, as fewer homes are being purchased from the Council. Reasons for this include a reduction in the discount offered to tenants on the purchase of their home, difficulties in obtaining a mortgage without a large deposit, and the pressure on the housing stock meaning that those remaining in or being allocated council housing are mainly those whose earnings are in the lowest quartile for the Borough and are unable to afford a mortgage.

The Council has made provision in the budget of £3m for enabling affordable housing between 2010 and 2014, funded from capital receipts received during previous years.

Due to the uncertainty around grant funding from the HCA, and economic factors including the downturn in the housing market, there has been increasing pressure on the Council's

<sup>7</sup> The Council keeps only 25% of Right to Buy receipts, with the remainder being pooled, i.e. returned to central government.

resources in this area. At the time of writing, the entire budget is already committed to ensuring delivery of affordable housing schemes between 2010 and 2013 and in the absence of any other sources of funding it is not certain whether the Council will be able to continue to enable affordable housing in this way beyond April 2013.

In 2009 the former Government announced a move back towards the direct provision of housing by local authorities, however so far the funding that has been made available has not applied to the potential schemes in the Borough.

The current Government has announced that it intends to continue with plans to change the housing finance regime for local councils, and has announced that these changes will take place in April 2012. This will necessitate the Council taking on a debt of £179m, which equates to £34,000 per council home) – this will be serviced by the Council being allowed to keep the rental receipts generated by the housing. It was hoped that the regulations requiring local councils to return 75% of capital receipts from sales of housing to central government would be removed, however this option has now been postponed for at least five years.

In conjunction with these changes Councils will have the ability build housing directly and to borrow money from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) however it is too early to say if it would be viable for the Council to be able to build housing again directly. The Council will continue to review new funding opportunities as they arise.

It is acknowledged that, in common with all areas of the public sector, budgets for housing are likely to be reduced in coming years. Consequently the Council and its partners are seeking new models of provision that will ensure delivery if and when funding is reduced. Around the country, many housing associations and local authorities are partnering with private developers in joint ventures to deliver both market and affordable housing.

## **26. Empty Properties**

Alongside the need to provide new affordable homes it is essential that the Council takes a pro-active stance in respect to bringing empty homes back into use.

The estimated number of properties vacant for more than 6 months at the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 was 628 of which 90% are in the private sector. This estimate of the overall number of properties is fluid and individual properties can move in and out of occupation over the course of a year.

Properties become and remain empty for a number of reasons, including:

- Properties left empty because the owner has moved into residential care
- Owners speculating on capital values
- Executors dealing with probate of a deceased owner
- Properties undergoing renovation
- Land subject to possible redevelopment
- The high cost of renovation in older long term empty properties

- Lack of knowledge by owners about options

Bringing empty properties back into use helps to meet the demand for homes, which in turn helps to reduce building new developments on greenfield sites. It also encourages economic vitality and discourages crime and vandalism, and is more sustainable in its use of resources than the construction of new homes. A dynamic approach by the Council in tackling empty properties can have a positive impact on the number of empty properties. A new, comprehensive strategy on dealing with empty properties is attached as Appendix 4.

Currently the emphasis is directed towards

- The investigation of complaints about empty properties
- Improving information on empty properties
- Promoting a new web site which has been established through the Surrey and Hants Improvement Partnership to provide information on empty homes. The site can be viewed at [www.everyhomecounts.info](http://www.everyhomecounts.info)
- Offering limited grant assistance to owners where nomination rights to put forward future occupiers can be secured
- Help with letting the property (including provision of rent deposit bonds for prospective tenants)
- Appropriate use of housing related powers such as Empty Dwelling Management Orders( EDMO)

An EDMO allows the Council to take over management of the property and let it for up to seven years, with the rental income being used to pay for renovation and management. There are some restrictions on the use of EDMOs and their application would only be successful where the Council has in place a robust empty homes policy.

The Government have recently announced a commitment to tackle empty homes and this may result in new initiatives or funding becoming available to provide further impetus and support.

## **27. Allocation of housing**

Effective use of existing social rented housing is a key aspect of meeting local housing need and needs to be to be considered in the context future housing supply and making best use of the available stock.

### **Under-occupation and overcrowding**

A significant number of homes in the Borough are under-occupied. In the case of under-occupied homes in the Council's stock, cash incentives are offered to encourage people to move to a smaller property, thereby freeing up a property for a family waiting for a larger home. In addition, higher priority on the joint housing needs register is given to people who are under-occupying and wish to move to a smaller home.

The amount of housing benefit deducted for non-dependants (i.e. adults living in a household who are not family members or joint tenants) is soon to be increased, for the first time in nearly ten years. This may have an effect on homelessness and on under-occupation/overcrowding, because it may make people reluctant to have adult children living at home.

Tackling issues such as overcrowding and under occupation are essential aspects in designing housing allocations schemes.

### **Choice Based Lettings (CBL)**

All Council and housing association homes for rent or low cost sale are now advertised in a similar manner to that of private homes. This was a fundamental change in the way in which social housing is let and gives people an active role in choosing where they want to live.

Each week, the available properties are advertised on the Council's website, and applicants on the housing register can 'bid for' (in other words express an interest in) the properties. Properties are then allocated to the 'bidder' with the highest priority.

The allocations scheme prioritises households in one of 5 bands A to E in date order within each band, rather than on points. This is a simpler system for people to understand yet is still able to reflect appropriate levels of priority and cumulative needs. Feedback on the number of housing applicants expressing interest in a particular property, which band they were in and how long they had been on the Housing Register is provided through the Guildford Homechoice website and newsletter. This gives people better appreciation of the limited availability of social rented homes and the relative demand for them, so helps them consider their future housing options more realistically.

Guildford's CBL scheme is called Homechoice. Full details can be viewed at [www.guildfordhomechoice.org.uk](http://www.guildfordhomechoice.org.uk)

### **Sub-Regional CBL Partnership**

In partnership with neighbouring Councils of Waverley, Rushmoor and Hart, the Council operates a sub-regional CBL scheme known as HomeSelecta. Under this scheme each council makes 10% of its lettings and nominations available to housing applicants from each of the partner authorities. This offers further choice and flexibility to those in housing need or facing homelessness.

CBL has been successful in helping people move on from temporary accommodation, hostels and supported housing and has increased choice for such households. The scheme is being monitored to ensure that such households and others are not being disadvantaged by the scheme and that if necessary support to use the scheme is available.

### **Allocations scheme review**

The four authorities included in the sub-regional partnership introduced a common allocation policy for lettings when the scheme started. This operated along side the "home" authority allocation scheme. At the time Homeselecta commenced both Rushmoor and Hart had a points based allocation scheme and Waverley had introduced a banding scheme,

which was based on Guildford's scheme. Each authority also had different household size criteria for letting different types of property which they retained.

The partnership is currently reviewing its allocations policy to ensure it is standardised across the different local authorities. The new policy will be a banding scheme similar to that presently in place but will also include a common policy about the size and type of accommodation that different households will be eligible for. The intention is to align it more closely with the eligibility criteria for housing benefit in the private rented sector. This will ensure that households needing the largest homes will have better access to such accommodation. The revised banding scheme continues to give a high priority to moving households that under occupy their homes.

### **Mutual Exchanges**

It is also important to facilitate opportunities for Council and Housing association tenants to be able to "swap" their homes.

In 2009 the Council joined Homeswapper which allows our tenants to use the Homeswapper website. This allows tenants who wish to exchange properties to register their details and to see the details of other tenants within the borough who wish to exchange, as well as tenants from outside the borough who wish to move here.

All the main partner housing associations operating in the Borough are part of Homeswapper, which covers the whole of the UK and has over 137,000 members covering 1,483 participating landlords. Feedback from tenants has been positive and there has been a considerable interest in the scheme and more applications to exchange have been received.

### **Social Housing Fraud**

Although there is limited evidence of social housing fraud in terms of unauthorised sub-letting, it is important to continue to be proactive in addressing such issues. The Council follows current best practice to ensure that effective action is taken where appropriate.

# Chapter 3

## Improving Existing Housing

### Key Issues

The condition of some of the housing stock in the Borough varies remarkably between the public and private sectors. The private rented sector has higher levels of non decency than other tenures.

Energy efficiency and the reduction of carbon emissions are becoming increasingly important.

Inefficient, hard to heat homes have a detrimental effect on health.

Private owners are principally responsible for the maintenance of their properties but some targeted financial support is required for low income households.

### We aim to:

Improve conditions and reduce category one hazards and non-decency.

Encourage a vibrant private rented sector.

Implement a student accreditation scheme in conjunction with Surrey University.

Reduce carbon emissions and increase take up of renewable energy solutions in the residential sector.

## 28. Strategic approach

The Council has a statutory responsibility to consider housing conditions across all sectors in the Borough and to use this knowledge to form an evidence base on which to build strategies and inform investment decisions. This information is used to develop local policies and priorities. Normally such information is obtained from periodic surveys carried out every 5 years. The results of the most recent survey have been produced and included in the review of this strategy.

## 29. Private Sector Housing

### The House Condition Survey

The most recent Private Sector House Condition Survey was undertaken in 2009, and involved 750 individual surveys of all types of housing in the borough excluding local authority owned housing. The full report can be accessed here: [PSHC Survey](#)

Compared to the housing stock across the South East, a higher proportion of the housing stock in the Borough was built before 1919 with a lower proportion in the immediate post war era. In other age bands the proportions are broadly comparable.

The stock has significantly higher proportions of detached houses and bungalows than the rest of the South East and lower proportions of terraced houses.

The table below taken from the House Condition Survey shows the number of properties of each tenure in the Borough.

**Figure 19: Tenure split as identified by House Condition Sample Survey**

Tenure	Guildford 2009 ESTIMATED		English House Condition Survey 2006
	Count	Percentage	
Owner occupied	39,910	73%	70%
Private rented	8,080	15%	12%
Housing Association	1,600	3%	9%
Local Authority	5,160	9%	9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54,750</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

These figures are scaled up from a sample survey and are therefore an estimate. More accurate information on housing association stock held by the Council indicates that there are currently 2,212 housing association properties in the Borough (i.e. nearer 4% than 3% of the total housing stock).

The survey concluded that the proportion of private housing in the Borough has increased in recent years. In particular the share of private housing for rent appears to have increased. This is significant although not surprising, as there has been an increase in buy to let properties and some owners unable or unwilling to sell their properties may have opted to let them instead in the recession.

### **30. The Decent Homes Standard in the private sector**

It is Government policy that everyone should have the opportunity of living in a “decent home”. The Decent Homes Standard contains four broad criteria that a property should:

- A - be above the legal minimum standard for housing, and
- B - be in a reasonable state of repair, and
- C - have reasonably modern facilities (such as kitchens and bathrooms) and services, and
- D - provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and efficient heating).

If a dwelling fails any one of these criteria it is considered to be “non decent”.

It should be noted that this standard now sets a much higher threshold than previous “fitness” standards; in particular the standard in respect to thermal comfort is different.

The following table shows the estimated amount of non decent private sector homes in the Borough.

**Figure 20: Non-decent private sector homes**

<b>Guildford Private Sector Non Decent</b>	<b>Guildford % Private Sector Non Decent</b>	<b>England % Non Decent (English House Condition Survey 2007)</b>
16,000	32.3%	35.8%

The Private Sector House Condition Report (February 2010) shows that Guildford’s private sector housing stock has a lower level of non decency than that found nationally, with the rate being higher for only one of the four indicators (lacking modern facilities) than for national comparators.

Taken from a basket of condition indicators (non decency, hazards, disrepair and thermal comfort failure), Guildford Town has the highest proportion of properties which fall below standards for one or more of: decency, hazards, disrepair and thermal comfort. This is not necessarily surprising given the age, type and tenure mix of the properties in the town.

The legal minimum standard is defined as a category 1 hazard. A detailed explanation of these hazards is set out below.

**Category 1 hazards**

Under the Housing Act 2004 the assessment of the condition of properties changed from the Fitness Standard to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS is a prescribed method of assessing individual hazards, rather than a general standard to give a judgment of fit or unfit.

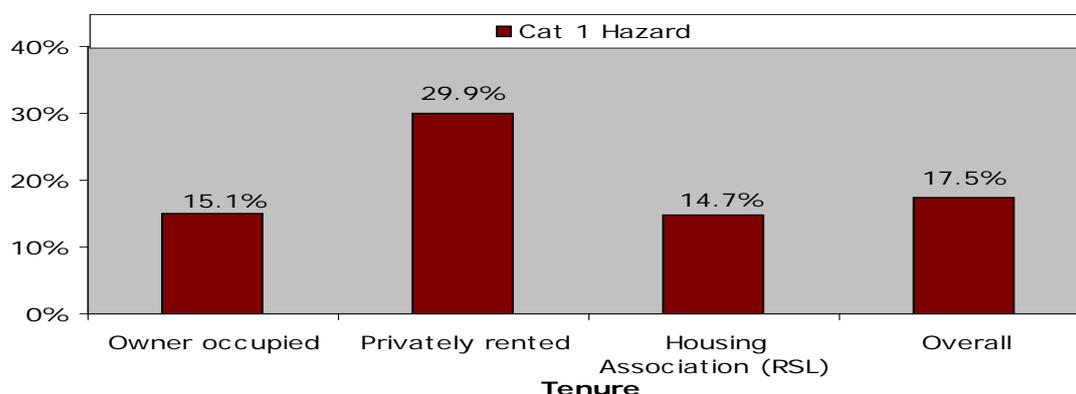
The HHSRS system deals with a much broader range of issues than the previous fitness standard. It covers a total of 29 hazards in four main groups:

- *Physiological Requirements* (e.g. damp & mould growth, excess cold, asbestos, carbon monoxide, radon, etc)
- *Psychological Requirements* (crowding and space, entry by intruders, lighting, noise)
- *Protection Against Infection* (domestic hygiene, food safety, personal hygiene, water supply)
- *Protection Against Accidents* (e.g. falls on the level, on stairs and steps and between levels, electrical hazards, fire, collision, etc).

Local authorities are required to take action where a Category 1 hazard has been identified.

The following table shows the estimated level of Category 1 Hazards in each sector.

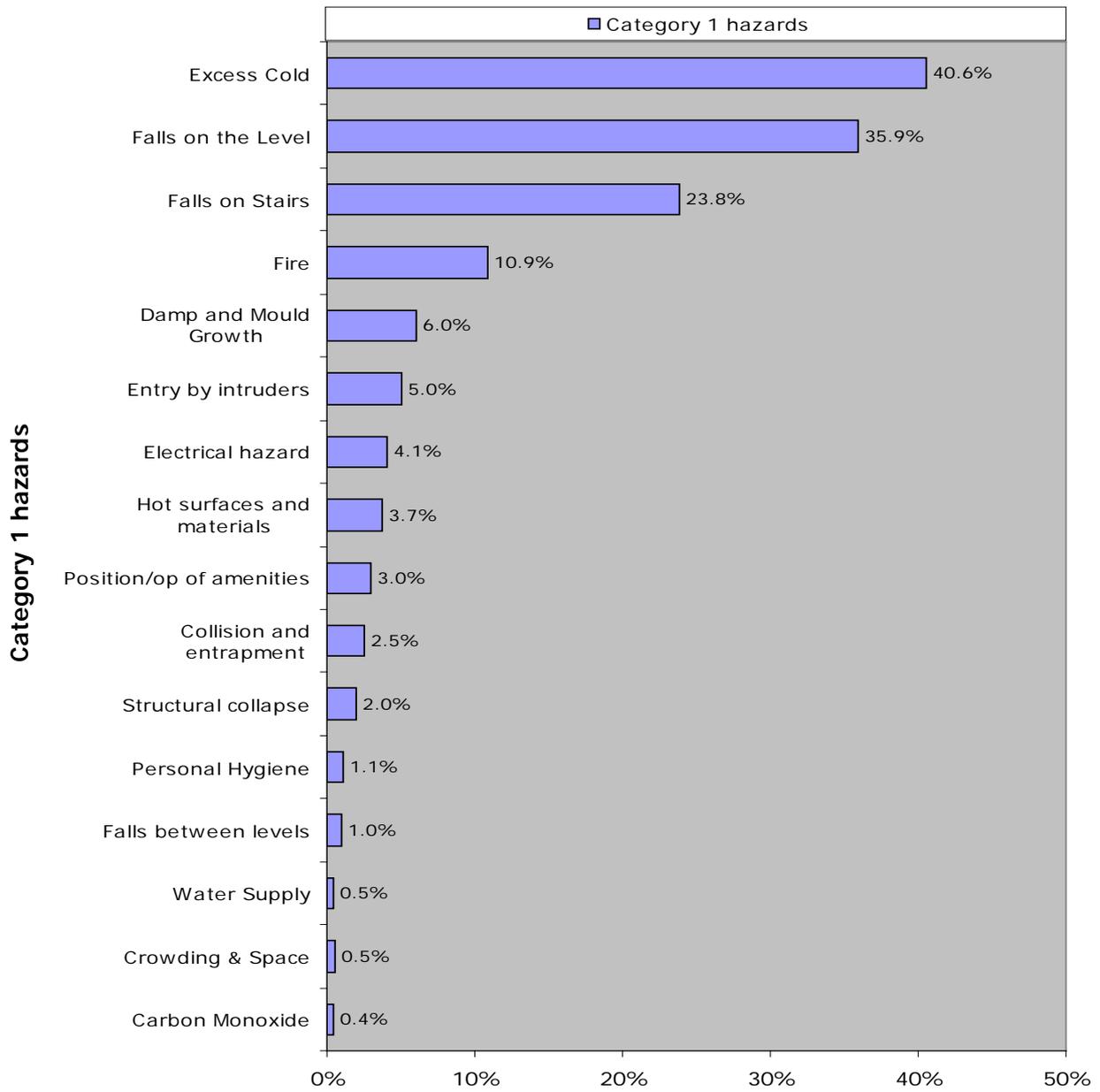
**Figure 21: Category 1 Hazards**



## Reasons for Category 1 Hazards

The following graph provides a breakdown of the proportions with a Category 1 hazard by type and ranked highest to lowest.

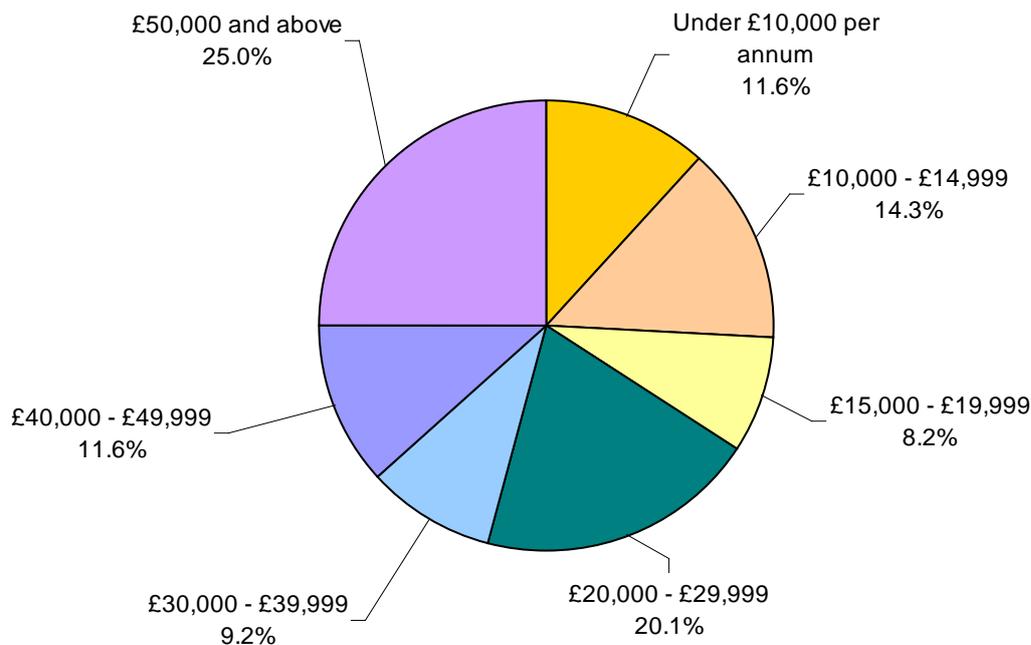
**Figure 22: Hazards by type**



## 31. Income

Residents were asked about the income of the head of household and, where appropriate, the partner of the head of household. Responses were combined to give a gross household income and the results of these are given below.

**Figure 23: Household income**



The figures in the chart indicate that the proportion of households with an income of less than £15,000 is 25.9% which is at the same level as the national average of 26.0%, although the proportion with an income less than £10,000 is appreciably less (11.6%, compared with 14.0%). The proportion of households with an income above £40,000 is significantly higher (36.6% compared with 28.0%). The difference is even more notable when looking at household incomes above £50,000 (25.0% compared with 18.0%). Nonetheless, the proportion of households within Guildford with an income of less than £15,000 will potentially make affordability a significant issue affecting repair and improvement in the private sector dwelling stock.

## 32. Energy efficiency ratings

The Government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is a way of assessing the energy efficiency of dwellings. The SAP scale runs from 1 to 100, where 100 represents zero energy cost.

The average SAP rating in Guildford for private sector dwellings is 51. This compares to an average SAP rating of 50 nationally, based on the findings of the English House Condition Survey 2007.

The table below indicates the range of energy efficiency values across the housing stock. To make real inroads in to cutting carbon emissions, properties need to be moved into the higher bands.

**Figure 24: Energy efficiency of the housing stock**

EPC SAP Range Banded	Owner occupied	Privately rented	Housing Association (RSL)	Whole Stock	EHCS 2007
<b>Band A (92-100)</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Band B (81-91)</b>	0.2%	0.0%	2.4%	0.2%	0.1%
<b>Band C (69-80)</b>	6.1%	9.5%	32.3%	7.5%	4.4%
<b>Band D (55-68)</b>	31.1%	28.0%	50.1%	31.2%	26.7%
<b>Band E (39-54)</b>	48.0%	42.5%	10.4%	45.9%	44.0%
<b>Band F (21-38)</b>	13.0%	18.6%	4.8%	13.6%	20.0%
<b>Band G (1-20)</b>	1.6%	1.4%	0.0%	1.5%	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The House Condition Survey revealed additional information about energy efficiency in the Borough:

The cost to remedy the 5,000 owner occupied dwellings in fuel poverty (i.e. spending more than 10% of income on heating) is £10.2 million.

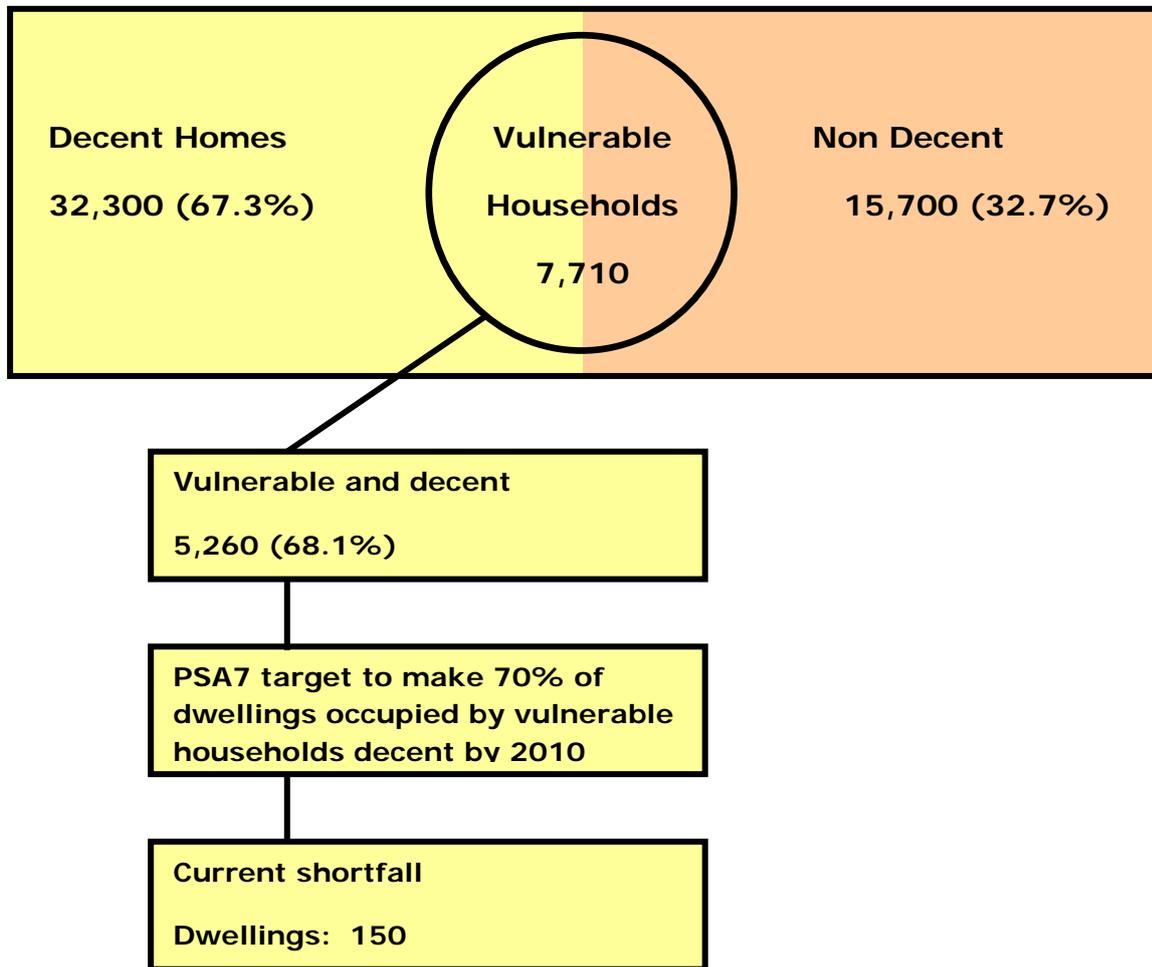
The less energy efficient dwellings are older dwellings (pre 1919); converted flats and privately rented dwellings.

Improving energy efficiency will contribute towards a range of Guildford's corporate priorities

The level of excess cold hazards is an issue given the numbers of older residents in Guildford

One of the historical national indicators for conditions in the private sector is PSA 7. This has ceased to be a national indicator in 2008 but has continued to be the most reliable performance indicator of improvement in housing conditions. The target is to make 70% of dwellings occupied by vulnerable households decent by 2010. The table below identifies the estimated shortfall.

**Figure 25: Vulnerable Households in non-decent housing**



The evidence from the House Condition Survey provides an up to date and accurate assessment of housing conditions in the private sector. It identifies the physical conditions and socio economic characteristics of the properties and people.

The report supports the policies that the Council has adopted to target resources towards improving housing conditions for owners on lower incomes. It highlights lower than average conditions in the private rented sector and this is addressed later in this interim strategy. There were no concentrations of poor housing; rather a pepper-potting of non decency to reflect such matters as age of property, tenure and household income. Current policies and resources are considered to be in place to address the main issues arising from the survey and focus on individual properties rather than area renewal. This is particularly relevant for disabled adaptations which are discussed in more detail below and present more of an environmental barrier to independence.

### **33. Home Improvement Assistance**

The major element of the Council's housing assistance programme is directed towards disabled adaptations which are mandatory grants.

Information on the potential need for adapted dwellings was obtained from the survey.

Costs are estimated averages for each of the elements listed below. Since grants are means-tested the table has been adjusted to reflect this.

**Figure 26: Cost of adaptations for the disabled**

<b>Adaptations</b>	<b>Adaptations<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>Adaptations Cost</b>	<b>Cost after means testing</b>
Re-designed bath	1,315	£6,575,000	£3,210,000
Extension	346	£3,457,000	£1,638,000
Curved stair lift/lift	338	£2,364,000	£98,000
Straight stair lift	408	£1,225,000	£743,000
Redesigned WC	466	£1,165,000	£527,000
Door answering	331	£992,000	£610,000
Ramps	327	£818,000	£128,000
Emergency alarms	673	£673,000	£473,000
Grab/hand rails	1,006	£503,000	£264,000
Redesigned kitchen	18	£109,000	£54,000
Other	144	£72,000	£12,000
Hoists	18	£36,000	£0
Wider doors	15	£18,000	£9,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,915</b>	<b>£18,007,000</b>	<b>£7,766,000</b>

The total cost of all adaptations that could potentially be fitted to benefit residents with a disability is just over £18 million. When means testing has been applied this total reduces to just under £7.7 million and the majority of the potential cost is for redesigned bathrooms/WCs, extensions and stair lifts.

In the Council's Housing Capital programme the budget for adaptations has been set at £480,000. The Government provided a specific grant of £240,000 in 2010/11 but this contribution to the budget has been reducing year on year with the Council having to make up the difference from capital receipts.

<sup>8</sup> Figures are for numbers of adaptations, some dwellings may need multiple adaptations Source: 2009 House Condition Survey

Overall Disabled Facilities Grant funding has been increased by the CLG in the last two years following a government review, but there will be continuing pressure on budgets due to increasing need levels and the rise in applications from families with disabled children (DFGs for disabled children are no longer means tested). The Borough has also taken a larger share of the cost of adapting RSL properties for disabled people with only a marginal increase in funding. It is proposed that CLG grant for DFGs will rise with inflation.

County-wide there is general belief that the delivery of adaptations could be greatly improved. In response to some of the concerns around inequality, response times, procurement and empowerment a review has been established with involvement of all major stakeholders.

The project will look at a whole-systems approach and will investigate:

- How assessments for adaptations are carried out;
- How adaptations are delivered and monitored;
- Most importantly, involve the recipient of the service and any carers from start to finish;
- The personalisation agenda (i.e. giving more choice to customers in how their services are delivered).

If successful it may suggest a new way for people across the Surrey area to access occupational therapy assessments, advice and information, funding for adaptations, including disabled facility grants and support for vulnerable people to arrange adaptations to their homes.

### **34. Discretionary Assistance**

The Council is obliged to have in place policies which address the exercising of any of the powers provided by Article 4 of the Regulatory Reform Order 2003. Essentially this requires the Council to consider and if necessary implement policies to assist owners and occupiers in the private sector. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants are complimented by a range of grants and loans which form the Council's discretionary scheme of assistance. The scheme was introduced in July 2003 and whilst there have been reviews of the policy it has not changed significantly and continues to target those meeting the Council's priorities.

The Council provides a variety of grants and loans to deal with serious hazard, non decency and installation of renewable technology. The full eligibility criteria are set out in the policy. [CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE HOME IMPROVEMENT POLICY](#)

Limited help is given to landlords to improve conditions for the tenants who are generally going to benefit from safer or warmer homes and lower fuel costs.

The Council offers interest free loans to install solar heating or renewable energy sources in residential properties. Full details of the Borough's home improvement policy can be viewed here: [HOUSING GRANTS](#)

***Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership***

A consortium of 8 local authorities in Surrey and North East Hampshire collectively bid successfully for Regional Housing Board funds for private sector renewal. A total of approximately £800,000 was awarded over a three year project from 2008 to 2011.

The **Warmth for 1000** scheme and **Home Trust Loan** scheme are two of the schemes which operate across the consortia. The Warmth for 1000 scheme is an energy efficiency scheme to improve insulation in houses. It offers solutions for 'easy to treat' problems, e.g. loft and cavity wall insulation, and for 'hard to treat' problems, e.g. work to mobile homes and solid wall houses. Since the scheme started over 500 properties have benefited from insulation measures. This equates to a saving of almost 400 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The Home Trust Loan scheme is another of the projects in the SHIP scheme and provides a subsidised loan for essential improvements and repairs. The loan is offered through a third party provider, South Coast Money Line, a community based finance institution based in Portsmouth. The initial rate of applications to the scheme has been about 20 per year in Guildford, although this is expected to increase as the scheme becomes better known, and as funding for other schemes becomes more stretched. Some unsecured loans have been issued by South Coast Money Line to top up the Warmth for 1000 scheme.

The SHIP project is due to end in March 2011 however the partnership members are evaluating the project and looking at ways to fund its continuation in the absence of any further funding from the Government.

### ***Renewable technology loans***

The Council offers interest free loans to install solar heating, electric or other forms of renewable energy in residential properties. The loan is interest free and repaid over 5 years. The maximum loan per measure is £3000. The recent introduction of feed-in tariffs has boosted take up of solar electric schemes and is providing more sustainable homes.

### ***Home Improvement Agency***

The Borough Council has an established in-house Home Improvement Agency and a handyperson service which help to support the repair, improvement or adaptation of the homes of elderly and vulnerable people. The expectation of older people is also increasing, particularly around the choice of support they receive, and the desire for independence at home.

## **35. The private rented sector**

The survey identified that the proportion of rented properties has increased and now represents almost over 15% of private homes and nearly 8000 dwellings. At this size the private rented sector makes a valuable contribution to meeting the housing needs of the Borough. The popularity of the Borough as a commuter town, the many student establishments and the investment potential of the area contribute to the vibrant private rented sector.

There are some 26% <sup>9</sup> of households in the private sector on lower incomes with 17% claiming local housing allowance (housing benefit) in June 2010. The Council has made considerable use of private rented housing to prevent homelessness through its Homes 4U rent deposit guarantee scheme. There are currently 330 households living in private rented homes that have been helped through this scheme.

The Council seeks to encourage the provision of well managed properties through regular dialogue with landlords and landlord associations.

Intervention in respect to private rented housing is limited to HMO licensing, housing complaints, including those relating to hazards and fitness and administering grants.

### **36. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

The House Condition Survey found an estimated 90 higher risk HMOs (shared houses, bedsits, etc of three or more storeys with five or more tenants forming two or more households) which now fall under the mandatory licensing regime introduced by the Housing Act 2004.

The total number of HMOs which fall outside the licensing control is estimated to be 1290

The distribution of rented properties and particularly shared houses can have a detrimental impact on the urban areas of the town. Concentrations of shared houses can change the nature of the area and in particular cause nuisance, particularly in relation to noise.

The increase in numbers of HMOs may be monitored through registrations recorded by HMO licensing (for those falling within its remit), the University Accreditation Scheme, and also potentially through complaints to environmental health regarding noise disturbance. Demand for on-street parking is also sometimes a stated concern of the public in relation to HMO proliferation. "Parking stress", the ratio of parking permits given out to on-street parking space is also regularly monitored.

Changes between small HMOs (of 3-6 unrelated people, inclusive) no longer need planning permission. However the adoption of an article 4 direction to control the development of shared houses in the Borough can be exercised. Further reference to article 4 has been made in Chapter 4. In effect if shared housing was having a detrimental impact on the character of the neighbourhood a direction requiring a change of use could be applied to all or part of the Borough.

#### **Inspection and fire precautions**

Officers from the Council's Private Sector Housing team inspect Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to ensure that there are adequate means of escape from fire, that they are in satisfactory condition and that they are properly managed. Grants are available for fire precautions in HMOs.

#### **Licensing**

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<sup>9</sup> Income below £15,000 per year

Licensing of HMOs is mandatory. A landlord who lets a property must have a license if all the following apply:

- It is an HMO
- It is three storeys or more (includes basements and attics)
- It is occupied by five or more people.
- Some occupants share an amenity I.e. kitchen/bathroom

Where an HMO does not meet the Council's HMO standards or the property is found to be in serious disrepair, enforcement action will be considered.

More information on HMOs, licensing, and the grants available can be viewed on the [Private Sector Housing page](#) of the Council's website.

### **37. Student accommodation and shared housing**

Guildford is home to a wide variety of further education, including the Guildford School of Acting Conservatoire, the College of Law, the Academy of Contemporary Music, and the College of Further and Higher Education. This puts pressure on the housing stock due to the increased demand from students.

The Council has been working in partnership with Surrey University to establish an accreditation scheme. This scheme is expected to raise the standards in student housing, encourage more responsive behaviour and give greater reassurance to new students.

The demand for shared accommodation by the university is likely to remain at current levels of 1000 bed spaces.

It is intended that a pilot accreditation scheme can be adopted by the end of this year and that a full roll out can follow on from this in 2011. Although the scheme had initially been discussed with other student establishment it is only the University who were keen to take the project forward. If the scheme proves to be successful it may be extended to cover other student establishments, for example the Academy of Music.

### **38. Council housing stock**

#### **Guildford Borough Council Housing Stock**

Looking ahead the need for a significant investment programme for its own properties will remain. The vast majority of its properties are now over 60 years old and as key components such as roofs continue to age there will be a need to balance investment decisions against tenants own aspirations.

The reform of the HRA planned for 2012 will give the Council and its tenants greater freedom to make decisions but will bring with it financial pressures that may limit this freedom in the short term.

The new regulatory framework places tenants very much at the heart of decision making and it is important in times of economic stress they have the opportunity to be involved when difficult choices have to be made.

Against this background the need to improve the energy efficiency of all residential properties including those the Council owns itself will grow. Work to do so will form a significant element of the investment programme over the life of this strategy. It is hoped that as the Government introduces new financial measures, such as the Green Deal, there will be opportunities to draw in additional funding to support energy efficiency related measures.

The Council will aim to maintain investment at 2010 levels, if possible, though much depends on how the Government implements the reform of the HRA Account and its wider rents and welfare reform policies.

During the life of the strategy, investment will be targeted to:

- Counter the natural decline in stock condition and prevent properties falling into non-decency because of aged components in poor condition for example.
- Increase the energy efficiency of the stock as measured by the average SAP rating
- Respond to the needs and aspirations of tenants as expressed by an updated Guildford standard to be agreed before 2014, informed by an updated stock condition survey.

A further investment strand will be the improvement of the physical environment on some of our estates. Neighbourhoods are an important factor in improving overall quality of life. There can be a complex inter-relationship between the built environment and how people feel and develop as a community.

It will be important to tie together decisions on stock investment with initiatives to build stronger communities and those designed to make the best use of the stock. At times these can conflict. Government initiatives on welfare reform and security of tenure increasing need to be relevant factors in our future investment decisions.

### ***Council Shared Ownership Homes***

The Council has a small portfolio of homes developed specifically for shared ownership. Under the existing leases the repair responsibilities fall to the owner rather than the Council.

Recently the Council has bought back some shared ownership and put them into its rental stock. This has highlighted that some properties are not been properly maintained by the owners and are in a poor state of repair as a result. Many of the properties sold under the Councils shared ownership scheme are over 20 years old and therefore at a stage where some major building components may need upgrading or renewing such as boilers, electrical systems etc.

Given that shared ownership was intended for households on lower incomes, there is a concern that the condition of these homes might continue to deteriorate. A range of options including general advice and equity swaps will need to be considered to protect the asset and avoid families possibly losing their home.

## **39. Housing Association Social Rented Housing**

The House Condition Survey included housing association properties however the numbers sampled was quite small for a sector which represents only 3% or 4% of the total housing

stock. The survey identified that there were approximately 1600 RSL properties but the true figure is nearer to 2200.

The survey revealed that RSL properties are in better condition than the general private sector stock with fewer numbers of category 1 hazards and non decent homes.

There is limited information available at present about the condition of homes in the housing association sector. This sector is quite diverse including a number of small unregistered charitable housing providers including almshouses, to large national providers. The age of the main stock includes homes built from the 1950's to date. The decent homes standard applies to all registered providers therefore progress will be being made towards meeting this target. Energy efficiency measures will also be a priority but it is recognised that retrofitting existing homes is expensive.

It is also probable that Housing Associations providing shared ownership homes may also find there are issues of disrepair in such properties.

Better information needs to be gathered about housing association stock and their plans to improve their homes.

#### **40. Sustainability and Energy Efficiency**

A key priority of the Council and of this interim strategy is to reduce carbon emissions and increase take up of renewable energy solutions in the residential sector.

The Council has a commitment to deliver a programme of renewable energy projects, for example, a biomass boiler is currently under construction at the Council offices at Millmead, and will provide a cheaper and more sustainable means of heating the building. The success of this scheme could provide a blueprint for future community heating projects on housing developments.

The Slyfield redevelopment also presents opportunities for energy saving – officers are investigating the possibility of anaerobic digestion, and Community Heat and Power being included in the masterplan.

NI186 – reducing CO<sub>2</sub> per capita from the Borough – is one of the Council's priorities and is also one of the targets agreed through the Surrey Strategic Partnership. The council works with local community groups, schools and charities to raise awareness of climate change and to identify and enable groups to reduce their own carbon footprint and improve energy efficiency.

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from residential properties are a major component of the Borough's overall footprint and therefore by improving the energy performance of our existing housing stock we will make a significant contribution to achieving our NI186 priorities.

##### **New properties – the Code for Sustainable Homes**

The Council requires residential developments of 1 or more gross units to achieve as a minimum Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 and to generate at least 10% of their total

energy requirements on site using renewable technologies<sup>10</sup>. However, Planning Service are currently producing a Sustainable Design and Construction SPD which is likely to require new developments to achieve as a minimum Level 4 of the Code and set revised requirements for on-site low and zero carbon technologies.

It is important to note that at the time of writing (November 2010) the HCA is considering how to harmonise the standards and commitments made by the Agencies that it amalgamated (notably English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation). The HCA intend to, subject to a cost-benefit analysis, and confirm the timetable for building affordable housing (funded through the [National Affordable Housing Programme](#)) to higher levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes in due course.

The Government announced as part of the Spending Review that it is setting up a Green Investment Bank with £1 billion of funding, which it is hoped will provide funding for further improvements to energy efficiency in the Borough.

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<sup>10</sup> [GBC Sustainable Development and Construction Checklist](#)

# Chapter 4

## Social and Economic Well-being

### Key Issues

Guildford is a wealthy borough; however there are pockets of deprivation. Westborough ward has been identified as one of the four most deprived in Surrey.

The credit crunch and recession are contributing to increased housing need in the Borough.

Many households need help to prevent them becoming homeless. Rough sleeping is an issue within the borough. There is a high social and financial cost if homelessness and rough sleeping are not prevented.

Different client groups need to access housing and support that specific to their needs.

Unemployment levels are low in the borough but those in social housing are more likely to be “workless” than the general population.

The long-term health problems and low educational attainment that are associated with poor quality housing increase the likelihood of a person being unemployed.

The proportion of older people in the Borough is set to increase, requiring changes in the services we provide and the way they are delivered.

The availability of the right type of housing, including affordable housing, in inclusive neighbourhoods, is vital in attracting and retaining a skills base that will encourage inward investment.

The vitality of rural areas is adversely affected by a lack of affordable housing for local people.

Reductions in public sector funding will have an impact in the borough as various measures are taken to reduce the national deficit. Welfare benefit changes including those affecting housing benefit will need to be carefully managed.

### Sustainable Communities Strategy Objective

Key objective (9) more elderly and vulnerable people will be supported to live independently.

Key objective (12) low levels of unemployment will have been maintained.

Key objective (13) more businesses will be based in the Borough.

Key objective (14) more affordable housing will be available.

## **Guildford Economic Strategy Objectives**

Objective 4. Promote sustainable growth and business practices within the borough

Objective 5. Support the vitality of the rural areas

## **Guildford Homelessness Prevention strategy action plans**

Housing advice, awareness and housing options

Private rented housing

Support and social exclusion

Strategic partnerships and performance management

### **We aim to:**

Support and promote local initiatives and strategies to address social and financial inclusion.

Meet the housing needs of the most vulnerable households ensuring that the requirements of people with special needs are considered on all new housing developments

Improve understanding of how housing is linked to the economy and take account of needs of local businesses.

Use planning policy to deliver affordable housing in rural areas.

Contribute to the action plan for the Westborough area.

Prevent Homelessness and rough sleeping

## **41. Context**

Guildford is a very affluent Borough but many households in the area are on low incomes and housing costs make up a significant proportion of their expenditure. There are also a number of pockets of deprivation within the authority area and there are various inequalities in the life chances and opportunities of the people living in those communities, as many have lower educational attainment, more limited independent living skills and poorer health with reduced life expectancy. Those households living in poorer housing, including the social housing sector are more likely to not be economically active and be more socially isolated or excluded.

Given the current economic climate the Borough will be affected by the various Government proposals to reduce the financial deficit. Although the government has outlined its proposals for welfare reform and other changes in public expenditure, these proposals will take effect over a period of time and the detail of the changes, particularly in respect to some aspects of welfare reform are at a very early stage of development. It will be necessary to respond to the challenges presented by these changes and to pro-actively manage the emerging

situation. It is therefore vital that the housing strategy is “joined up” with other strategies in seeking to address these issues.

## **42. Financial Inclusion**

The impact of the recession has seen many people get into financial difficulties, with an increase in those in debt, including mortgage and rent arrears. Some are also facing loss of their jobs, and homes. Financial pressures also impact on relationships and can result in family breakdown and poor health.

### ***Citizens’ Advice***

The Citizens’ Advice Bureau (CAB) has offices in Guildford and Ash and provides advice on housing, benefits, and other issues that have an impact on homelessness. The CAB plays a crucial role in working with the Housing Advice Centre and has contributed to our high success rate in preventing homelessness. CAB offers a range of services and advice in respect to consumer issues, employment, housing, benefits, and financial advice. Their core funding is provided by the Council.

### ***Money Advice***

Both CAB’s provide an excellent money advice service which is facing increasing demand in the current climate. The Council currently funds a dedicated money adviser, located at Ash CAB, who takes referrals primarily from the Housing Advice Service and focuses on preventing homelessness by enabling customers to manage their finances and prioritise their spending.

Ash CAB has recently appointed a part time independent living advisor which will compliment their money advice role.

Given the proposed changes to benefits and in particular housing benefit from April 2011 CAB expect to see increasing demand for its advice services.

### ***Tenancy Support***

The Council currently provides floating housing support to tenants in both the Council and private rented sector, through its HomeSTEP and Homefirst teams. This service is funded through Surrey County Council Supporting People<sup>11</sup> (SP) programme. Currently the service has capacity to assist 65 households at any one time and support can be offered for a few weeks up to 2 years. Every service user has an individually tailored support plan with a focus on sustaining their tenancy and this includes managing finances access training and education, thus improving their skills and confidence and increasing their employability.

The County Council is in the process of re-commissioning the floating support service with a view to new contracts being in place from April 2011. Funding for floating housing support

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<sup>11</sup> The Supporting People (SP) Programme was introduced by the Government in 2003, drawing together a number of different funding streams that provided “housing related support” to a wide range of adults. The Programme is funded nationally but administered locally by Surrey County Council.

has been reduced by some 40% across the County as part of the re-commissioning process in anticipation of future reductions in SP expenditure, although in the new West Surrey<sup>12</sup> contract area, the reduction has only been 29%. The Council decided to withdraw from directly delivering this service and not to tender for the future contract but will continue to work very closely with the new support provider.

The value of the SP programme in reducing the need for more costly public sector interventions as a result of homelessness, hospital admissions, substance misuse, offending and other types of anti-social behaviour is recognised nationally and the Government has recently confirmed ongoing commitment to the SP programme. It has announced that £6bn will be provided over the new spending review period which is more than originally expected. Although the amount available to Surrey is yet to be announced, it is hoped that there might be some scope for additional funding towards floating housing support services in due course.

### **43. Worklessness**

“Worklessness” is an increasingly important issue to address nationally and locally. The focus of the proposed welfare reforms is to remove disincentives for those on benefits to take up work.

People living in the social housing sector have a higher prevalence of “worklessness” through unemployment, disability or are of retirement age. In Guildford some 60% of Council tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit. Two thirds of Council tenants in receipt of housing benefit receive have their entire rent paid by benefit. A high proportion of these are over 65, however some younger people are not working. About half of Housing Association sector are in receipt of Housing Benefit so are on low incomes. The profile of Housing Association tenants in the Borough is not known at present, but it is accepted that many of employment age are not in work. Only 17% of private sector tenants are in receipt of housing benefit some two thirds of which are not in employment.

The proposed welfare reforms seek to remove disincentives to work. The proposal to introduce a “universal credit” to replace existing benefits is currently planned to be introduced from April 2013, but in the meantime a number of changes to housing benefits from April 2011 will affect many households in the private and social rented sector.

The Council has carried out an initial impact assessment in respect to the changes proposed and is considering how best to help and advice people affected. It is intended to develop a co-ordinated approach with the Council’s other statutory, community, and business partners, to improve access to work experience, education and training opportunities for those in need of future employment and to help people find jobs. A summary of the proposed Housing Benefit and welfare changes is included in Appendix 5.

### **44. Deprivation**

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<sup>12</sup> The West Surrey contract area comprises Guildford, Waverley, Surrey Heath and Woking.

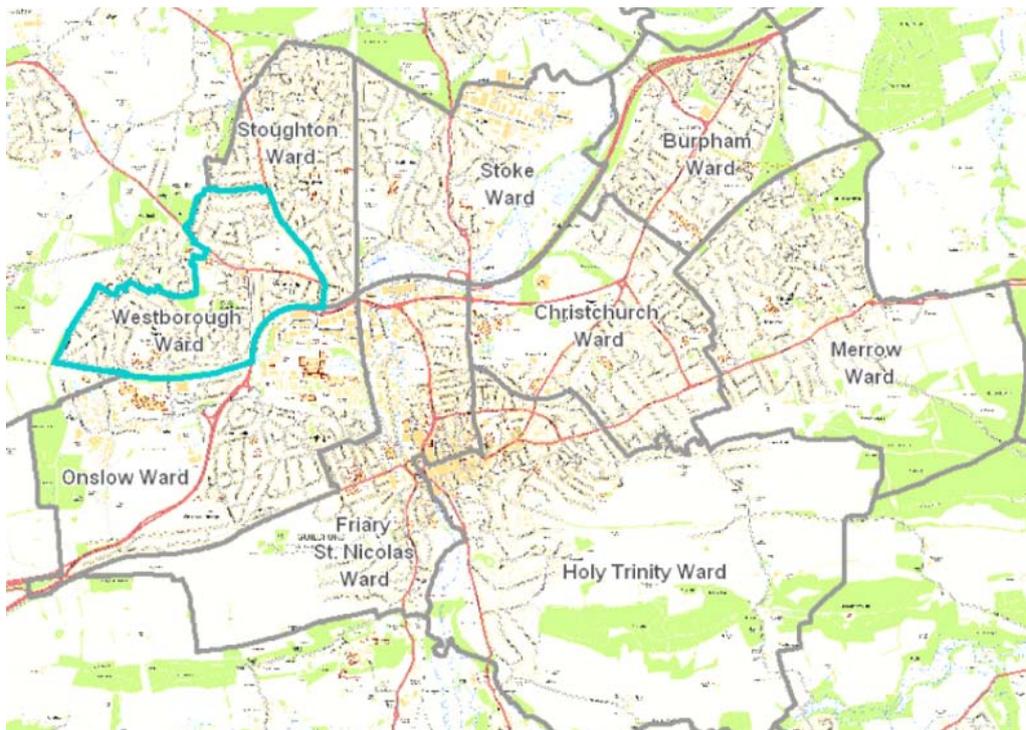
## Westborough – priority area

Although the Borough as a whole is affluent, there are pockets of deprivation. In particular, the area of Westborough has been identified as being one of the most deprived in Surrey<sup>13</sup>. It is also the ward with the highest number of people who are not in education, employment or training (known as NEETs). There are significant health inequalities and many of the community have multiple disadvantages compared to the wider community.

Although there has been recognition of the needs with Westborough and much has been done to tackle the economic, social and health issues in the area, Westborough has been identified as a “priority place” by Surrey Strategic partnership and through the LSP multi agency commitment has been given to invest in that community and to deliver improvements by 2020. In order to achieve this, the LSP has drafted a strategy for Westborough which can be viewed at <http://www.guildford.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=5499&p=0>

Westborough has the highest proportion of socially rented homes in the Borough, at 35% of the stock therefore consideration is being given to the introduction of a Local Lettings Plan in respect of housing allocations in the area to help ensure that there is a mixed and balanced community so that workless households are not concentrated in one street or locality with the ward.

**Figure 27: Westborough ward location map**



<sup>13</sup> Based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007, which provides a measure of deprivation based on factors such as income, employment, health, education, housing and crime.

## 45. Child Poverty

The Child Poverty Act 2010 places a duty on Surrey County Council its partners to put in place a joint child poverty strategy by April 2011 and have regard to child poverty duties when preparing or revising the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The Act places a 'duty to cooperate' to tackle child poverty upon other specified local partners including the key statutory agencies. A number of other partners can be brought into local cooperation, including amongst others voluntary community and faith sector organisations and housing.

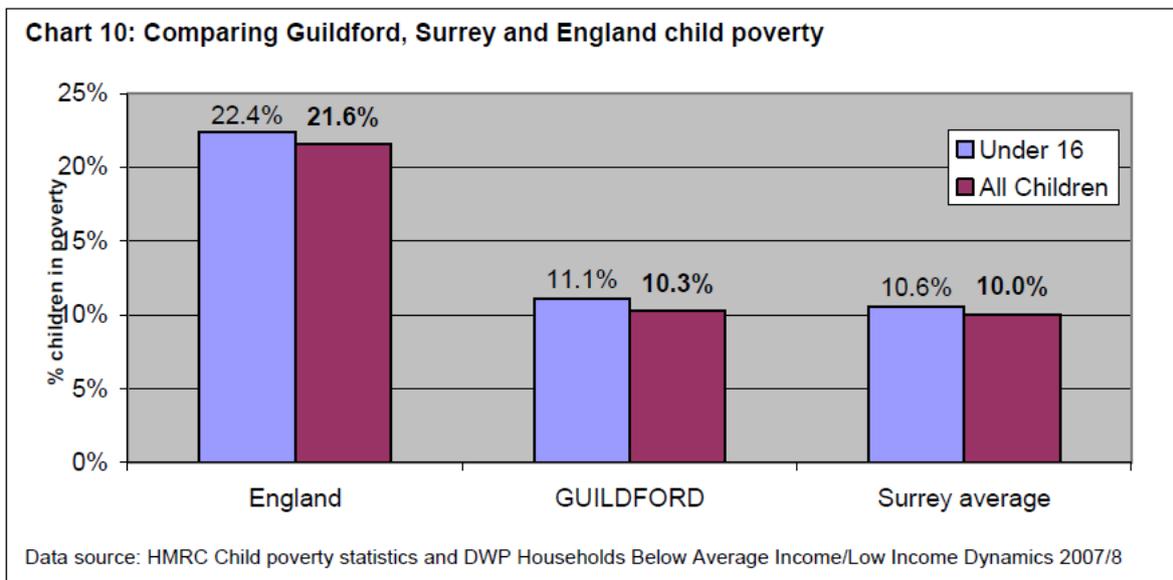
The Government defines child poverty as 'the proportion of children aged 0-19 living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or in receipt of tax credit where their reported income is less than 60% of median income' (*National Indicator 116*)

Other measurements that have been used to assess child poverty in Surrey are:

- The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) – covers children aged 0-16 years
- Free school meals eligibility

The proportion of children and young people living in poverty in Guildford is slightly higher than the County average. 10.3% of the Guildford total child population and 11.1% of all Under-16s are living in poverty<sup>14</sup>. These percentages are slightly below the countywide averages for Surrey and well below those for England.

**Figure 28: Child poverty**



<sup>14</sup> HMRC (2007) *Child Poverty Statistics* available at [http://www.hmrc.go.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child\\_poverty.htm](http://www.hmrc.go.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child_poverty.htm)

Based on these figures in 2007, there were approximately 23,300 children and young people (aged 0-19) living in low-income households in Surrey. In 2007, some 10% of the 0-19 population. This number is likely to have increased due to the recession. Overall statistics hide the extent of need within localised areas of deprivation that exist throughout the county.

Using these indices in 10 wards in Surrey with the highest child poverty ranged from 28.2% and 21.3% of the 0-19 population. Two of these wards are in Guildford, Westborough and Stoke which are estimated to have 27.1% and 26.3% of children and young people living in poverty respectively, with Ash Wharf just outside the top 10 with 20%. There are also high concentrations in areas of Ash Vale and Worplesdon (13, and 11.1%)

A draft child poverty needs assessment has just been published by the County Council, which will be used to develop the Child poverty strategy and relevant links made with this and other relevant Council Strategies to ensure a joined up approach.

## **46. Planning for future economic trends**

The Guildford Economic Strategy outlines how higher oil prices and changes in climate may mean it is more important for people (in particular those who work for the emergency services, teachers and council workers) to live closer to their work – long distance commutes may not be practical or affordable. We therefore need to make sure our local businesses can house their workers in affordable local housing.

### **Key Workers**

Some housing in the borough has been specifically developed for key workers, in order to aid recruitment to essential public sector services such as the NHS and police.

Funding for this type of housing ended in 2008, and there are no plans at the moment to provide housing targeted at specific groups of workers. Consultation responses indicate that people in the borough are broadly supportive of this, as they consider that there are many jobs which are 'key' to the local economy but are not within the public sector. The Council therefore aims to provide a range of housing including homes for those on low incomes in all sectors.

However some properties which were grant funded for key workers before 2008 are subject to legal agreements meaning that employees of particular organisations will have greater priority when these properties become vacant.

### **Rural economy**

The need for affordable homes in rural areas is essential to maintain an effective rural economy. Access to employment in villages and rural areas is a key criterion in the allocation of new affordable homes developed in these areas. This will remain a priority to ensure the future viability of rural areas.

## **47. Homelessness Prevention**

The Council has a comprehensive homelessness prevention strategy which builds on work done since 2003. The Council has received a substantial grant from Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) to help prevent homelessness since 2002.

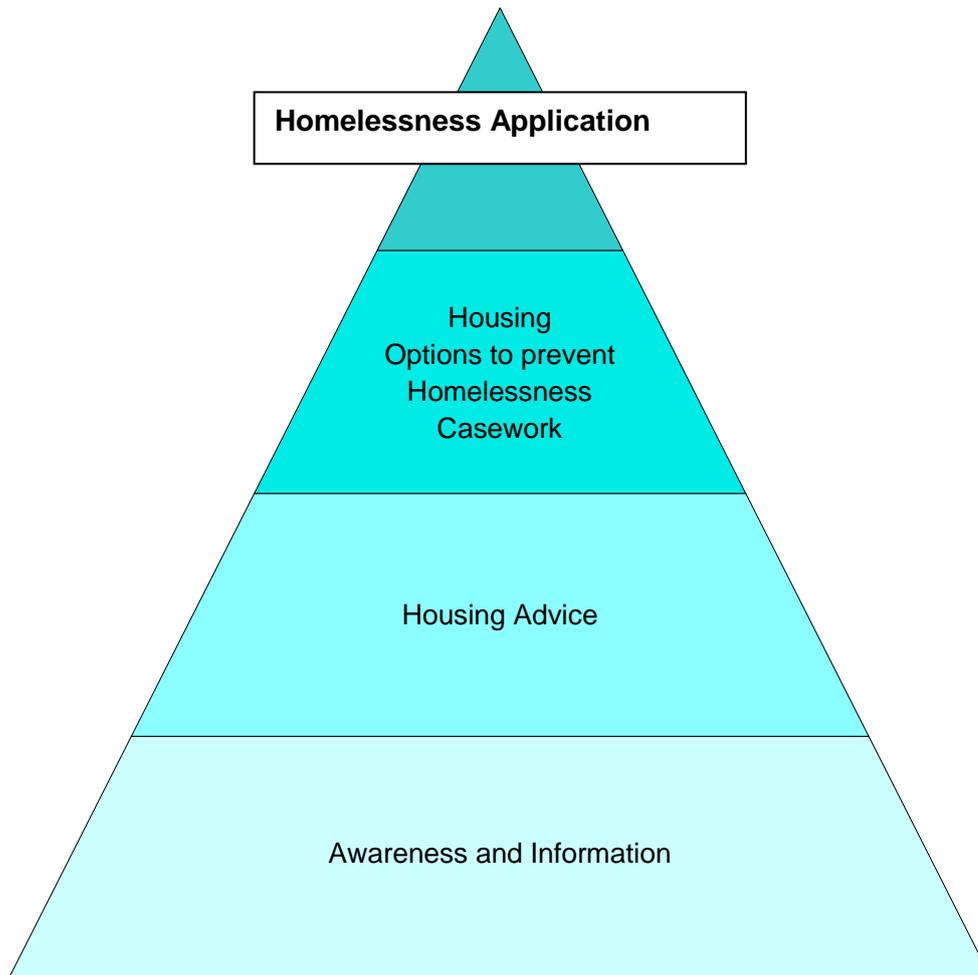
An updated action plan April 2010-12 is now in place which aims to maintain low levels of homelessness and a proactive approach to prevention. The Borough's approach is also very inclusive with significant joint work involving partners across the statutory and voluntary sector. In the current economic climate preventing homelessness will continue to be challenging but the recent government decision to fund the homelessness prevention grant for a further 4 years will enable the Council to continue to deliver some key services and to respond to some future challenges.

The Council seeks to deliver services using current models of best practice together with the most effective use of our resources.

There are four stages to our approach to homelessness, which can be considered in tiers:

- Increasing awareness and information about housing and the risk of homelessness among the wider community (tier 1)
- Providing general or specific housing advice for those with housing needs to prevent homelessness (tier 2)
- Offering a range of housing options, direct support and intervention for those facing homelessness (tier 3)
- Providing a safety net for those who do become homeless (tier 4)

**Figure 29: Homelessness Prevention**



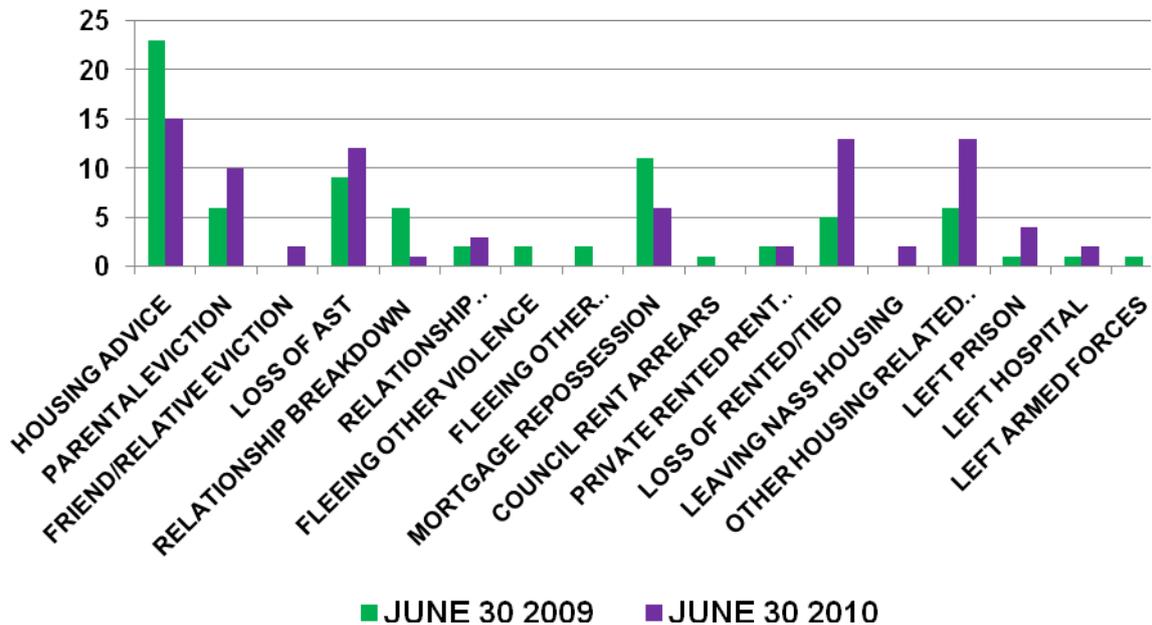
A significant proportion of the Council's work is providing advice about people's housing options - particularly to those facing homelessness due to the three most common reasons nationally;

- Eviction by family or friends
- Relationship breakdown
- Loss of private rented housing (particularly when short term tenancies come to a an end)

The case work does however cover a wide range of areas and issues.

**Figure 30: Reasons customers have contacted the Housing Advice Centre**

## HOUSING OPTIONS CASES - REASON FOR APPROACH



### Mortgage Rescue

Although there has been considerable concern about mortgage repossessions due to the recession, to date there has been very little impact from repossessions in the Borough so far. Lenders and the courts follow the pre-action protocol regarding repossession and all cases have so far been dealt with without recourse to the Government's mortgage rescue scheme, although the decision by the Government to continue the scheme is welcomed.

The Council has intervened in two cases involving Council-owned shared ownership properties, which have been resolved by the Council repurchasing part of the leaseholder's share in the property, enabling them to remain in their home and reduce their outgoings.

### The Private Rented Sector

Use of the private rented sector plays a vital role in preventing homelessness, and the Council has developed a positive relationship with local landlords and lettings agencies.

A landlords' forum organised with Waverley and Woking councils. In addition, the latest information on government policy and other items of interest to private landlords is published on our website: <http://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/2712/Information-for-landlords>

### Homes 4U

Housing Advice Services has operated the rent deposit bond scheme Homes 4U for a number of years. The scheme offers clients a rent deposit bond to assist in accessing suitable private rented accommodation and in specific cases, a loan to cover the first

month's rent in advance. At the end of the tenancy an independent inventory is carried out and the landlord may make a claim against the bond for dilapidations or rent arrears once evidence has been provided. Any claims made against a Homes 4U deposit must be repaid in full by the applicant before they can be re-housed by the Council.

Some landlords use lettings agents to find tenants, normally paying between 10 - 17.5% plus VAT for the period of the letting. Homes 4U offers a tenant finding service to landlords, which avoids the use of a letting agency and enables people on low incomes/ benefits to access properties in the private sector

The Council currently has over 330 successful placements in the private sector. This is not reflected in our housing register statistics as currently these tenants' applications continue on our register with their original priority.

### **Supported Housing and Hostels**

The Council is fortunate to have some excellent hostels and supported housing projects for people with special needs in the Borough. These services continue to provide our main source of help for single people and have an essential role to play in sustaining reduced levels of homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Council works very closely with the hostels and supported housing services and there has been some very positive work to improve local practice across agencies. This has included development of a protocol to help reconnect people without a local connection to their home areas and work is being done to reduce exclusions, evictions and abandonments.

### **Support for families**

A2Dominion Housing Association has recently completed the renovation and extension of its supported housing for young mothers at Arundel House. The **Arundel House** project involves converting 11 bedsits into eleven 1-bed flats and two 2-bed flats. In addition to the separate facilities within the flats, there are communal facilities where tenants can learn life skills. This accommodation is specifically for teenage parents and young families in need of support.

### **Use of temporary accommodation**

Use of temporary accommodation has been minimal in the Borough since 2007. At the end of September 2010 there were 10 households in temporary accommodation. The Council has been successful in sustaining a minimal use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households. The original Government target setting a maximum length of stay of 6 weeks in bed & breakfast for families with children was met in 2004 and has been sustained. However in an emergency, bed and breakfast accommodation is the only option.

The Council's success in preventing homelessness lead to a review of the need for designated temporary accommodation in 2005 , following which 4 blocks of flats that had been used for temporary accommodation were leased to Rosebery Housing Association. This has proved very successful as the Council retains nomination rights to the vacancies and uses such housing as a further resource to house those at risk of homelessness. The leases are currently being renewed so this arrangement will continue for a further 5 years.

## **48. Single Homelessness**

Single people under 60 make up 44% of all housing applicants. Many of these are adult children who are unable to afford to leave home, together with those that find themselves homeless as a result of relationship breakdowns. It is estimated that there are many more single people that are not registered with the Council for housing.

If single people become homeless the vast majority will not be in priority need and the range of housing options for them is more restricted than for other groups as there is competing demand for the available private sector accommodation. Much of the shared housing is taken up by students or targeted at people in employment. Single people under 25 are only entitled to housing benefits on the basis of the "shared room rate", and the Government intends to increase this to those under 35 from April 2012 as part of the housing benefit changes. Furthermore many one bedroom flats are above local housing allowance rates so outside the remit of those on low incomes or benefits. The town centre hostels are therefore often the only option for many single people who become homeless, unless they have family or friends that can put them up, which often leads to "sofa surfing".

## **49. Rough Sleeping**

The Council has had a strategy to address rough sleeping since 1998, and has directly commissioned services as part of that strategy funded through the Council's homelessness prevention grant. In 2008 additional funding was secured from Surrey Supporting People and the service was re-tendered and Stonham took over the contract to deliver the current service from April 2009. At the time it was only possible to award the contract for 2 years as funding from both CLG and SP was only guaranteed to that date. It is now intended to extend the contract from April 2011, although at the time of writing it is not known if SP will continue to make a contribution.

The Homeless Outreach and Support Team (HOST) provides a range of services, including early intervention to contact and assess rough sleepers, resettlement work to place people into appropriate accommodation, tenancy sustainment work to assist former rough sleepers to maintain their homes, preventing a return to entrenched street sleeping, and support to enable them to find an alternative lifestyle to the streets. The team works closely with the Number Five night shelter and Guildford Action Drop in Centre to link with any new rough sleepers or single homeless people in the area. There are also close links with the Police and other partnership agencies.

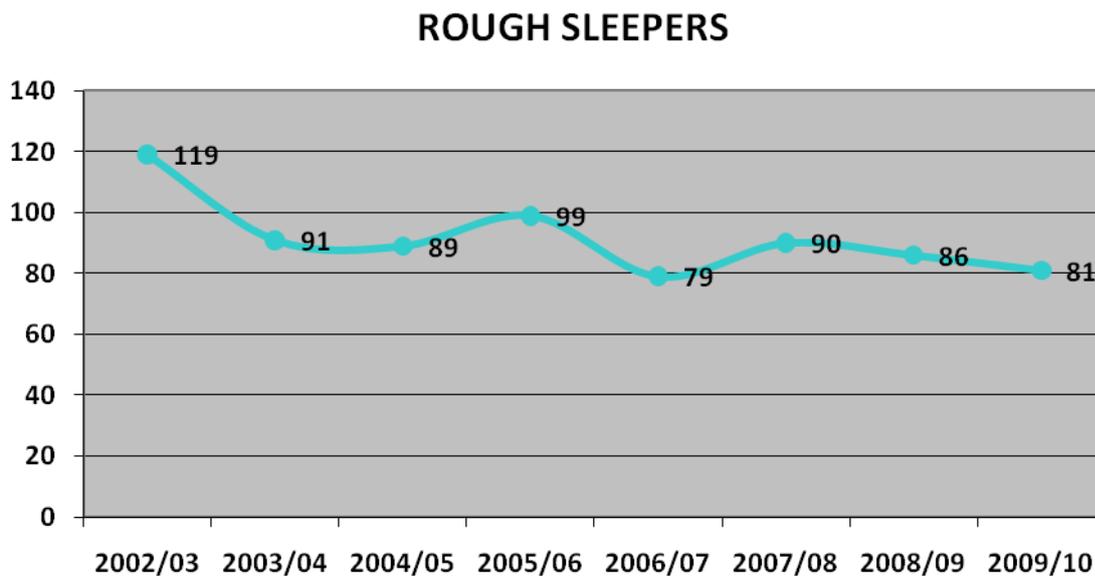
HOST also enables rough sleepers with no connection with Guildford to move back to their home area.

The local target agreed with the CLG is to maintain an average of no more than two people sleeping rough at any one time over the course of the year. This target was achieved in 2002 and was being successfully maintained until early 2008. It then unfortunately increased to 6 at 31 March 2010, and on 30 June 2010 there were 7 individuals rough sleeping in the Borough. The most recent check, at the end of October 2010, identified 6 people sleeping rough.

The increase can in part be attributed to the economic down turn. In addition there have been a number of service users in the borough with no recourse to public funds that have proved difficult to resettle or reconnect to their home areas.

During 2008/09 HOST contacted 181 service users, 86 of which had regularly rough slept during the year with the remaining 95 being considered at risk of rough sleeping. However during 2009/10 HOST contacted 227 service users of which 81 had rough slept during the year, with 146 being at risk of rough sleeping. This is an increase of 20% in the number of service users considered at risk of rough sleeping, it is likely that this trend will continue during 2010/11.

**Figure 31: Rough Sleeping in Guildford**



During 2009/10 the profile of service users has continued to change from the older entrenched rough sleepers who generally had long histories of rough sleeping, to a younger client group who often present with multiple support needs such as:

- alcohol misuse (including binge drinking)
- poly drug misuse
- mental health issues (including personality disorder diagnoses)
- learning disabilities (often ineligible for statutory support)
- history of offending (including anti-social behaviour/prolific offending)
- debt (including former housing debt)
- NEET( not in education, employment or training)
- immigration issues

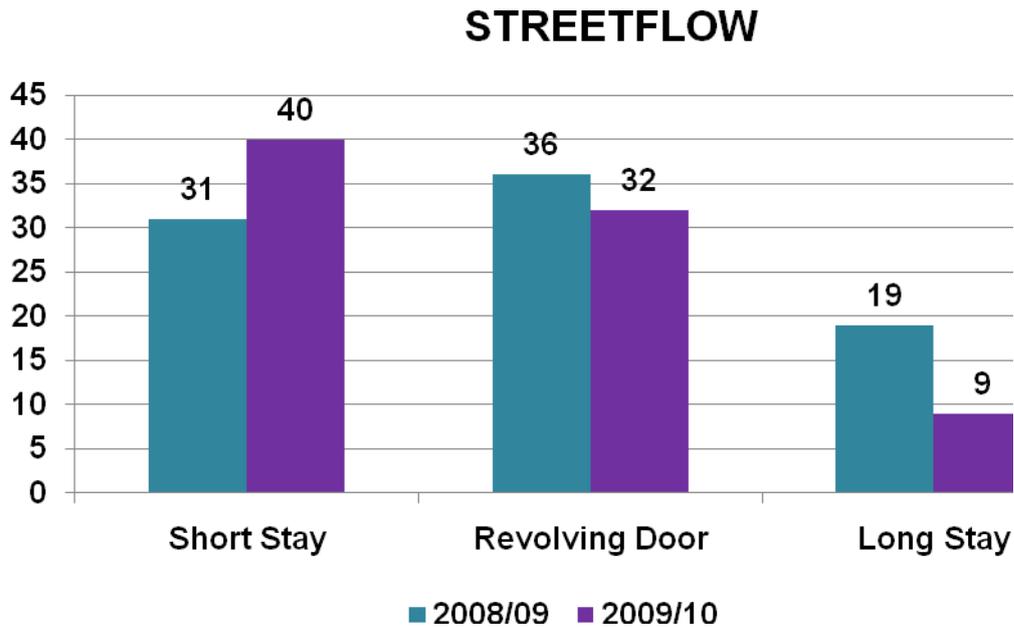
With effect from 2008/09 Guildford began monitoring rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to determine the area's Streetflow profile. Streetflow defines service users by how long they have been a rough sleeper:

- Short stay service users - may only sleep rough for a day or two before finding accommodation

- Repeat or revolving door service users - generally have a pattern of engagement with services for periods followed by periods of rough sleeping or homelessness before they re-engage with services
- Long stay service users - have a long history of rough sleeping, usually 3+ years and rarely engage with services.

This monitoring should allow agencies working to prevent and resolve rough sleeping in Guildford to more effectively target their services.

**Figure 32**



The Government has reinforced its commitment to tackling rough sleeping and has introduced new guidance on street counts and street “needs audits”. The narrow definition of rough sleeping has been widened, and all local authorities are required to provide numbers of those sleeping rough in its area twice a year in June and December.

The Council has extensive monitoring arrangements in place which complies with this guidance.

## **50. Other Vulnerable Groups**

Many people fall within a “vulnerable” group for the purposes of housing. Some of the groups seen as requiring special consideration in terms of their housing are identified below. This is not necessarily exhaustive and other groups may also be identified from time to time.

### **Mental Health**

Mental health problems are a common factor among those who become homeless. The need for specialist support in this area is recognised by mental health service providers and Supporting People. There are a number of supported housing schemes for those with mental health issues in the borough including some directly managed by the council

The Council works closely with the Community Mental Health Team to target support services where they are most needed. The Team also has a designated social worker to work with single homelessness people with mental health problems.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Recent studies of clients using services for drug users (SAdAS Omni Outreach Service and West Surrey Health Promotion Outreach Service) found that 49% of service users have accommodation difficulties.

Very few supported housing providers will accept people who are still using drugs or alcohol whether they are in treatment services or not. There is a greater level of provision for those addressing alcohol issues than drugs.

A specialist floating housing support service is currently provided by SAdAS, which can help substance misusers maintain their tenancy. SAdAS also offer a range of other services for drug and alcohol users requiring general outreach, for offenders and young people with substance misuse problems.

### **Offenders**

Offenders are at high risk of homelessness. Sex offenders and other dangerous offenders are subject to Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Housing Officers take an active role in these arrangements.

Officers also attend the Prolific and other Priority Offenders Management Panel, (PPOMP) which includes the police, probation and drug services.

There is a close link between offending and substance misuse and SAdAS also provide a floating housing support service for offenders. This service together with that for people with complex needs will be subject to future re-commissioning from April 2012 and it is expected that the Surrey Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) will be considering including the re-commissioning some of their front line support services jointly with SP.

### **Young People**

Young people aged 16 and 17 are increasingly presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness in Guildford. In 2009/10 the Council dealt with 68 young people aged below 18.

Many young people have complex needs including issues with substance misuse and anti-social behaviour and offending.

Most offenders under the age of 18 are not homeless or at risk of homelessness as most are of school age. The risk of homelessness increases when they reach 16 and 17. The focus of Surrey Youth Justice Service (formally the Youth Offending Team) is to prevent offending behaviour and they offer a multi-agency approach which includes a designated housing lead officer to seek to address this issue.

Guildford is better placed than most Surrey authorities in that there is a range of hostels and supported housing services that provide accommodation for this client group, nevertheless

there is far greater need than the current services can meet. This is an issue county-wide and there has been considerable joint work with Surrey County Council Children's Services to address the issue. A joint protocol has been agreed and a Young Person's Housing Strategy that covers boroughs and districts across Surrey is being developed.

The Surrey Young People's Housing Strategy, aims to:

- Prevent young people becoming homeless
- Provide emergency accommodation to young people at risk of becoming homeless
- Provide housing access options to young people
- Provide supported housing to vulnerable young people
- Develop independent living skills
- Address underlying causes of homelessness for young people leaving the family home
- Establish Policy and Standards across Surrey

### **Residents with disabilities**

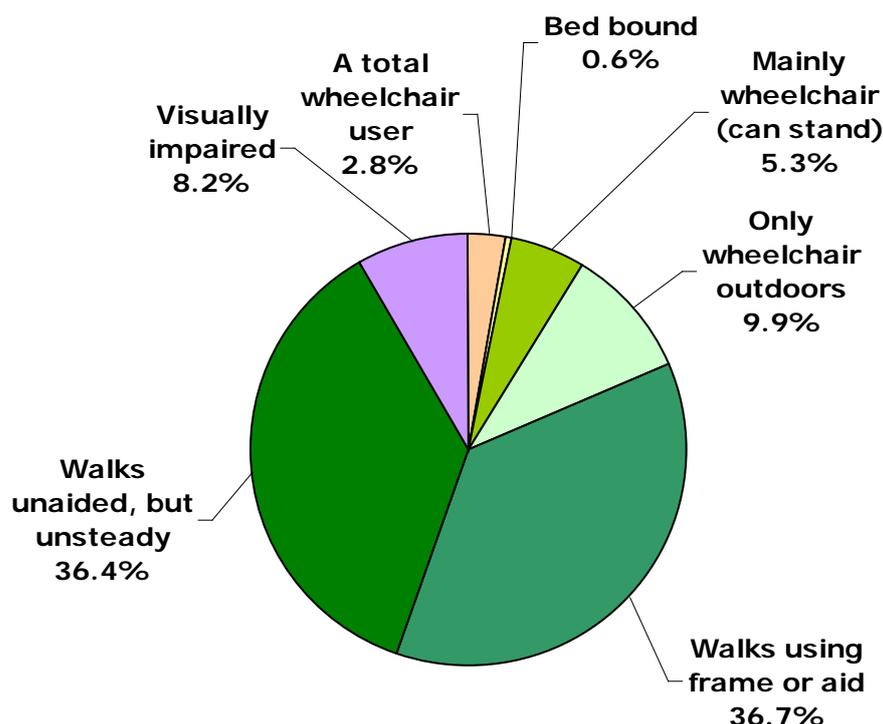
As part of the 2009 House Condition Survey, residents were asked if any member of the household suffers from a long term illness or disability. It is estimated from the results of this question that 3,000 (6.2%) occupied dwellings have at least one resident with a long term illness or disability. Residents were further asked to choose the condition that best described their disability and the following chart illustrates the results of this.

At 6.2%, the proportion of households with a disabled resident is lower than generally encountered in House Condition Surveys. The definition used is very broad and it can be seen from the graph that 73.1% of people who responded stated that their disability was either walking using a frame or walking unaided, but unsteadily. The vast majority of these residents are frail elderly, but do represent people who are likely to have specific housing needs.

There is currently no planning policy requirement for residential developments to achieve Lifetime Home Standards (LHS) in the Borough. However, development of Lifetime Homes helps developers to meet the Council's requirement for the Code for Sustainable Homes.

Although a specific proportion of wheelchair housing is not required, housing officers negotiating the mix of affordable housing on new developments aim to include adapted properties wherever possible, and liaise with Occupational Therapists to ensure that the homes built meet the identified needs.

**Figure 25: Residents with disabilities by type**



*Source: 2009 House Condition Survey*

In order to address the specific housing needs of residents with a disability, the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) by local authorities remains mandatory. The potential requirement for adaptations for disabled occupiers and the potential DFG demand are discussed in more detail below.

## **51. Disabled Facilities Grants**

### **Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants**

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants are available to assist with adaptations to a dwelling to meet the needs of a disabled occupant. They are available to owners and tenants in the private sector and tenants of social housing. All applicants are subject to a test of financial resources to determine the level of contribution they have to make towards the cost of work. The types of work include stair lifts, level access showers, ramps and the provision of ground floor bathrooms and toilets. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants are extended to cover the occupants of mobile homes. The demand for adaptations continues to increase year by year and is unlikely to be matched by a similar increase in capital resources. The Council is considering the opportunities to manage this demand. Greater recycling and better procurement offer some solutions but other measures such as consistency in the assessment of individuals, and personalisation (in other words giving more choice to customers on how the money available to help them is spent) will also help. Equally when demand exceeds resources, applications will be prioritised.

### **Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants**

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants are not normally available but will be considered, as exceptions to policy, on their merits.

### **Register of Adapted Properties**

Discussions have taken place with some of the Surrey authorities, however this is at a very early stage, and the evidence shows that most people are understandably reluctant to move away from their local area and support network. The sub-regional Choice Based Lettings system is used to advertise adapted homes and give those on the housing register the opportunity to apply for suitably adapted properties in neighbouring boroughs.

### **Renovation Grants and Works**

Grants are available for renovations and for minor works. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Improving Existing Housing.

### **Repairs**

The care and repair team work towards enabling residents to remain in their homes and live as independently as possible.

The Council also operates a handy person scheme to complete minor repair works for residents

## **52. Learning disability**

A number of additional supported living projects have been developed in the Borough since 2005. Opportunities for future developments will continue to be explored with the County Council where there is clear evidence of need.

A joint database was established with Surrey County Council to track the housing needs of people with a learning disability. This is used to work in conjunction with housing associations to identify suitable properties and where necessary make provision on new housing developments.

## **53. Older Persons**

The proportion of older persons in the Borough is forecast to increase significantly over the next 20 years.

### **The Later Life Strategy**

The Later Life Strategy outlines how the Council plans to provide support for the growing proportion of older people in the Borough over the next 20 years.

The strategy outlines plans to help older residents stay active and live independently in the community for as long as possible. Priorities also include helping to provide them with a stronger voice and maintain social inclusion.

As part of the strategy it is intended that services for older people will be delivered from three main centres in existing sheltered housing or day centres in the west, centre and east of the borough. These will provide the 'hub' for services provided in the community.

### **Extra Care and Sheltered Housing**

Sheltered housing is specially designed rented accommodation provided by the council, for older people who would like to remain independent, but prefer the added security that sheltered housing offers.

The sheltered housing service works closely with local health and care providers to ensure its housing accommodation meets the needs of as many people as possible.

There are two Extra Care housing schemes in the Borough: Dray Court and Japonica Court. These cater for older people with higher support needs than those in sheltered housing, allowing them to receive the care they need whilst retaining their independence. An on-site social care team who are able to provide care and welfare support for up to 24 hours a day where necessary.

Surrey County Council fund the support provided in these schemes through the SP budget. The funding available for this support will reduce from April 2011 and the service is being restructured to take account of these changes.

## **54. Domestic Abuse**

Relationship breakdown is a common cause of homelessness and domestic violence and abuse accounts for over half of such cases nationally.

The Council works closely with the Guildford and Waverley Domestic Abuse Outreach Service which is part funded by the Guildford Community Safety Partnership.

The Council provides a "Sanctuary Scheme" in conjunction with the police and fire service which can assist in cases where the perpetrator does not reside with the victim. This involves carrying out a range of security measures to make it safe for the victim to remain where they live. This is not appropriate in all instances only where a careful assessment is carried out in conjunction with the police and other agencies.

The Council also participates in the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) to share information about households where there is a domestic abuse and to help manage the risks jointly.

## **55. Surrey Joint Accommodation Strategy**

The Joint Accommodation Strategy being prepared by Surrey County Council along with the Surrey local authorities, referred to in chapter 1 above will map housing, care and support needs for vulnerable adults in each borough and district, and agreeing local priorities and local Action Plans to meet demand.

Its focus is on housing for people with care and support needs.

One specific challenge that has become clear is the tension between the objective of giving people personal choice in their care provision; supporting people in the community, and the cost of delivering services in this way – at a time when budgets are reducing.

## **56. Gypsies and Travellers**

Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show people are defined as distinct racial groups. As well as planning case law which covers the consideration of their needs, including European Court of Human Rights determinations on the rights of travellers, the right of Gypsies and Travellers to a nomadic style of life is guaranteed by the Housing Act 2004. Details on the Council's approach to planning and enforcement of Gypsy and Traveller sites are included in Theme 1 of this strategy statement.

The issue of unauthorised encampments on privately owned or council land arises from time to time across the borough. Enforcement action to address the issue can be a very prolonged and complex process, often involving challenges through the courts. Where such action is taken the Council may become involved if the households involved become homeless.

Homeless guidance indicates that Gypsies and Travellers may have a "cultural" aversion to traditional "bricks and mortar" accommodation and steps should be taken where possible to secure suitable alternative pitches for them to move to.

There are only two authorised Gypsies and Traveller sites in the Borough which are owned by the County Council but managed by the Borough. There is a significant waiting list for pitches and the lack of provision may involve place Gypsies and Travellers and their families in private sector housing resulting in difficulties in settling.

There is a need to consider the long term options to address the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in terms of both planning and housing policy.

# **Chapter 5**

## **Conclusion**

### **57. Monitoring of the Housing Strategy Interim Statement**

The aims identified in the strategy statement and the actions listed in Appendices 6, 7 and 8 will be monitored via the Council's Housing Working Party, consisting of officers from Housing Services, Planning Services, Legal Services and Financial Services.

Members, housing providers and other interested parties will be regularly consulted.

It is intended to conduct a full review of the strategy statement and action plans in early 2012, when the Government's Localism and Decentralisation Bill will have come into force and there will be more clarity on housing and planning policy.

# LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Consultation on the Housing Strategy
Appendix 2	Affordable Housing Position Statement
Appendix 3	Implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review, and Funding Options
Appendix 4	Empty Property Strategy
Appendix 5	Housing Benefit and Welfare Reform Proposals
Appendix 6	Action Plan 1 - Improving Supply
Appendix 7	Action Plan 2 - Improving Existing Housing
Appendix 8	Action Plan 3 - Social and Economic Well-being
Appendix 9	List of other relevant strategies
Appendix 10	Key Contacts
Appendix 11	Glossary

## Appendix 1

## Consultation on the Housing Strategy

Consultation consisted of a Housing Forum event held in December 2009, followed by questionnaires distributed to organisations and individuals with an interest in housing in the Borough.

Those attending the Housing Forum included representatives from private and public sector housing organisations, the voluntary sector, councillors, and tenants.

Questionnaire responses were mainly from either housing association staff or borough councillors.

Below is a summary of the points raised in Housing Forum workshops and in subsequent questionnaires and comments.

It should be noted that since the consultation began, there have been significant changes in the political and economic situation.

### **What models of affordable housing should we be providing?**

All respondents were in favour of mixed tenure schemes with a choice of home ownership options and tenancy options.

There were some concerns about the usefulness of intermediate rental properties – in part because of difficulties in obtaining funding for these properties.

Many respondents indicated that the proportion of rented and shared ownership provided on developments in recent years was about right.

There is some demand for larger units of shared ownership (the majority that have been built are 1 or 2 bed properties, with very few being 3 bed properties). However there are concerns over affordability of larger units – in certain parts of the borough even a small share in a large property could still be out of reach of most potential purchasers. If GBC is to encourage the provision of large properties for shared ownership, it should ensure that the shares available (combined with the rent) make them truly affordable.

“High quality design and space standards are important.”

“A broad range of unit types is required to accommodate all types of family households.”

“Housing standards must be maintained.”

### **Should we be encouraging home ownership?**

One respondent considered that delivery was of prime importance in the current climate, so anything that is financially viable should be considered.

Home ownership should be offered on the basis of equity share as well as shared ownership.

“GBC should investigate whether it can run its own scheme to replace the government scheme which is drawing to a close.”

### **How might the Council encourage a good quality private rented sector to grow in the Borough?**

Regulation. Providing support regarding health and safety, energy conservation, deposit bonds.

“GBC should identify opportunities within its own stock where this could be provided.”

“Can RSL partners provide this as an additional tenure?”

“The Council should concentrate on affordable housing, and leave private rented to the market.”

“A good housing benefit service and rent deposit guarantees will help.”

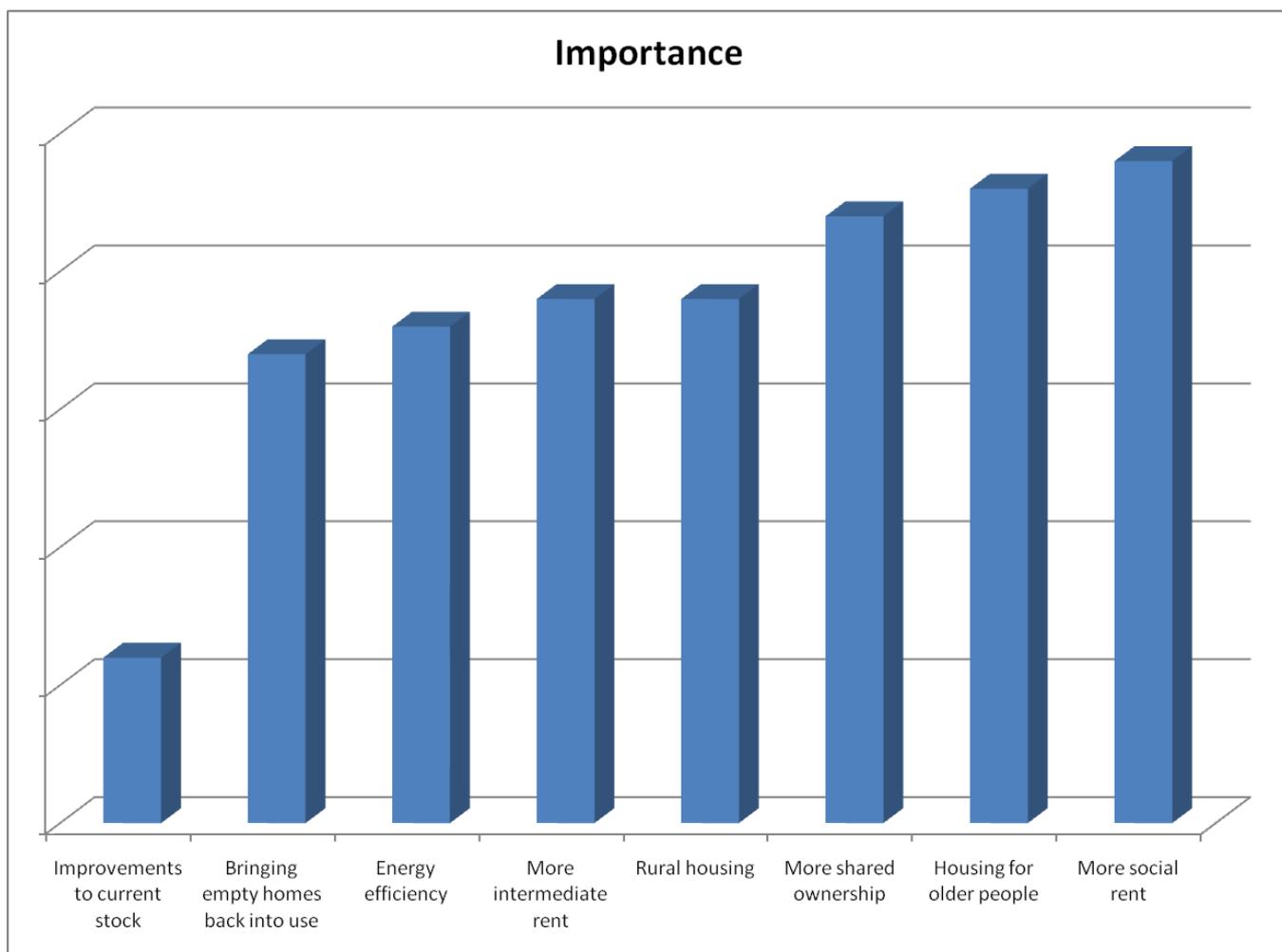
“It may be worth distinguishing between small landlords and institutional landlords and asking their views.”

“Ensure that the private sector is aware of the level of need and the level of affordability within these groups. HMOs and shared houses are not an ideal solution but are an important ‘starting point’ for young people and single professionals moving to the area.”

“Offer landlords a guarantee that will encourage private landlords to take applicants from the LA housing register. In other boroughs the guarantee covers void cost (rent and repairs), any court costs and any other reasonable costs.”

### **Rate the importance of the following issues in the borough**

The following graph shows the relative importance respondents placed on various issues:



**Comments:**

“Shared ownership could be provided as joint ventures between the Council, RSLs and employers.”

“Social rent is the best current method to maintain quality standards and to allocate according to need.”

“The stock is already at a high standard.”

“There are too many empty homes and the available legislation is not being used enough to deal with them.”

“Housing for older people is a growing sector and should be given a high priority.”

“The needs of some groups are best met through service provision, not necessarily through ‘bricks and mortar’.”

“Providing housing in the borough is becoming a difficult task. To move things forward there needs to be a complete working together philosophy between all agencies and local authority departments. Grant allocation is questionable in today’s climate and there is a need for private and affordable providers to look at other ways of providing housing.”

**Which actions would have the biggest impact on meeting housing need in the borough?**

“Quota sites are invariably the quickest and easiest mechanism for delivery. Both on-site provision, off-site provision and commuted sum payments should all be considered to assist in the delivery of schemes.”

“Encourage shared ownership.”

“The Council should release more development land.”

“The consistent corporate approach to delivering new projects is already in place and makes delivering homes in the borough a positive experience. Some authorities are more fragmented and so schemes struggle more.”

“Make sure that at least 30% of all new development is affordable housing. Make land available at low cost but with strings attached. For example places like Swindon in the 1980s.”

“Release of infill sites by the local authority.”

“How are RSLs and private developers going to be able to do this with lack of land opportunities and a more recent addition – SPA charges?”

“Availability of land to provide affordable housing... encourage developers and landowners to provide a percentage of housing below market value i.e. at 75%, and have a cascade of different tenure mix.”

**Special Needs Accommodation**

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Should there be a target for special needs accommodation as a percentage of all development over the strategy period?	62%	38%	0%
Should there be a percentage target for each site?	29%	71%	0%
Should there be a percentage target for large sites only?	44%	22%	34%

**Which actions would have the biggest effect on reducing homelessness?**

“There should be incentives to move into smaller dwellings for those who are under-occupying.” *[NB There are currently financial incentives, however these are not very*

*effective, and other incentives need to be provided – primarily providing the type of accommodation in the right locations that people want to move into”.*

“Revitalising empty properties and own assets to meet homeless provision both on a short term and long term basis.”

“Preventative work – work with local schools and other academic institutions so that young people are more aware of what is and is not available.”

“Driving forward the Local Investment Plan with the HCA and providing more housing.”

“HMO type accommodation can help – people living there may need to remain on the housing list, albeit with a lower priority.”

“Launch a fraud initiative to uncover subletting.”

Respondents requested further use of Local Lettings Plans to achieve sustainable communities and prevent transfer requests, abandonment and eviction.

“A private developer forum to discuss the development opportunities they hold and how the local authority (housing/planners) and RSLs can help to remove road blocks to bring these sites forward.”

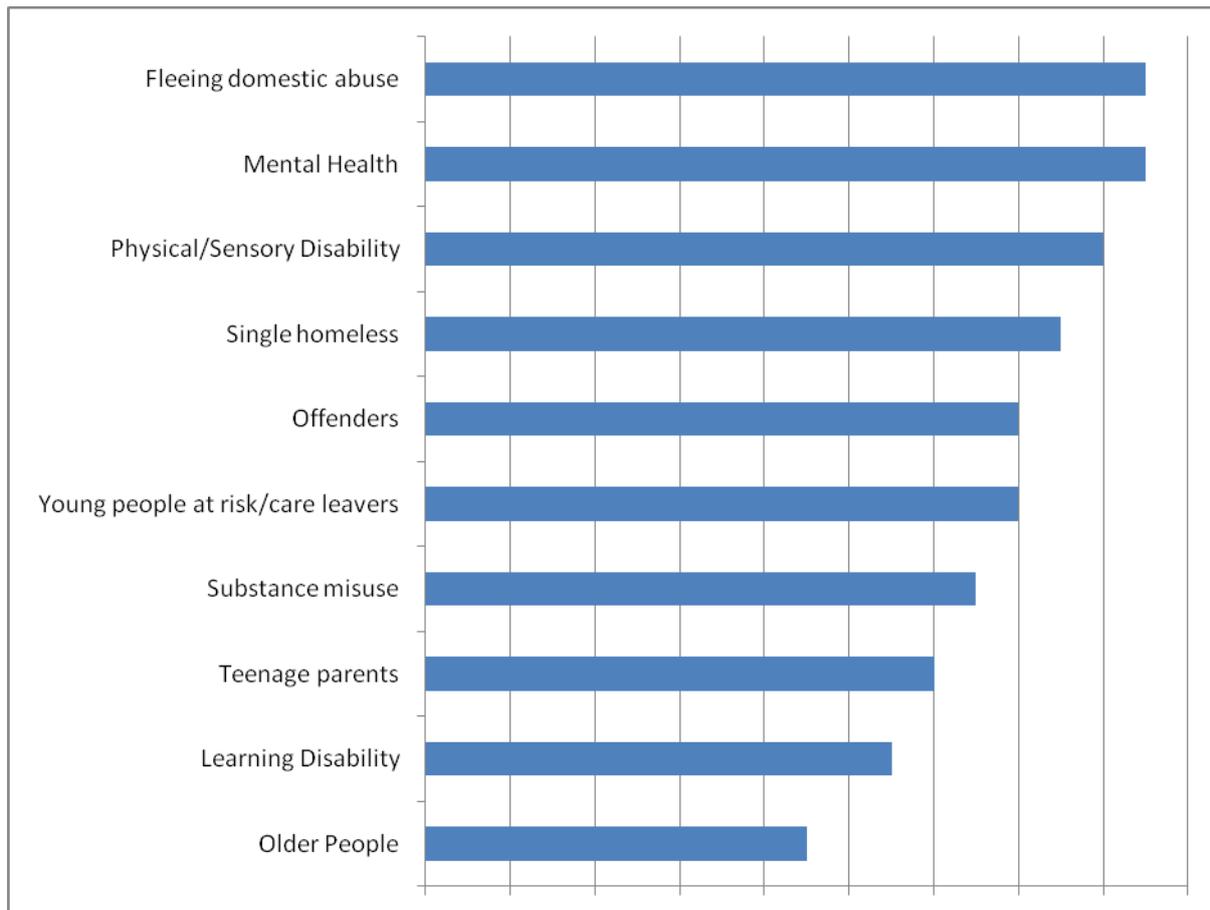
### **Gypsies and Travellers**

“A dedicated officer is needed to deal with this – one who is good at negotiation and consultation.”

“Gypsy and Traveller sites must be identified and agreed in principle via a planning process. Officers then need to work with residents and the travelling community to facilitate understanding, dispel NIMBYism and seek to forge common ground whereby the communities can reside peacefully side by side.”

“Need a dedicated specialist provider with sites scattered across the Borough.”

**How would you prioritise the client groups listed below?**



**Increasing Supply**

“Need better, more detailed market research into the type of products that people need/aspire to and model ways of producing it. If people don’t see a potential solution they won’t bother to ask, and as a consequence the lack of demand/need will continue to be concealed.”

“Can GBC provide help with deposits at low interest for first time buyers? This would help to bridge the gap left by Open Market Homebuy.”

“Need to identify sites for Gypsies and Travellers”

“Gypsies and Travellers are among the most socially excluded in the borough. There are varying needs amongst Gypsies and Travellers, with some being settled and others living a nomadic lifestyle.”

Concern was expressed about identifying small traveller sites, as these can quickly grow to an unmanageable size.

It was generally agreed that Open Market Homebuy was popular, and there is nothing currently available to meet that demand.

“Intermediate rent is more viable for town centre sites.”

“Committed sums/S106 payments should be used to gap fund potential sites for increased proportions of affordable housing.”

“Does policy allow for affordable housing requirements to be expressed as habitable rooms rather than unit numbers, to allow a trade off between numbers of homes and home sizes?”

“This is not appropriate for every site – a flexible approach is required. This must be done without compromising the overall provision. *[Note: GBC draft policy does allow size and type (houses or flats) of affordable homes to be traded against number (as detailed in the issues paper), where viability is an issue, or need is for larger homes, which would make the number required unviable].*

“Proposed SPA charges should be reduced – for affordable housing, even if not for private.”

“The proposed new SPA charges represent a serious threat to development viability, particularly for affordable housing. They reduce the amount that HAs are able to pay for land and therefore make it less likely that landowners will bring the land forward for development.”

“Educate people in the borough about the need for housing”

“Many residents are not aware of the growing housing waiting list in the borough, and do not realise that some development is necessary to meet needs.”

### Tenure

“Numbers are more important than tenure at the moment. Given the financial climate, anything that is viable must be brought forward. However we should still be wary of mono-tenure development.”

### Intermediate Rent/Market Rent

The grant for intermediate rent is the same as for shared ownership, yet the provider retains maintenance responsibility, and does not have an initial capital receipt to help fund the property. This means that HAs are very reluctant to provide this tenure, unless GBC can provide funding to bridge this gap. Particularly as the market is now picking up - all housing association staff present reported an improved rate of shared ownership sales. This has been helped by some HAs providing smaller equity shares and lower rents.

HAs requested that whilst intermediate rent should be considered as part of an overall housing mix, S106 agreements should ask for intermediate tenure, not intermediate rent only, as this is too restrictive and a scheme may not be viable with intermediate rent.

Market rent is possible, and several partner HAs are looking into this. However there is more risk involved for HAs in providing market rent than private sector landlords, because HAs have a less ‘commercial’ approach, for example in the way they treat evictions.

Rural Housing: Two HA partners reported that they were having trouble providing shared ownership in rural areas due to lenders being unhappy with restrictions on staircasing (further restrictions came into place in April 2009 following the recent Housing and Regeneration Act, and apply to most rural settlements in Guildford borough).

Incentives to downsize were discussed. There were requests for GBC to increase the cash incentive, but others felt that cash alone would not convince people to move.

Homesteading was suggested – helping people to refurbish an existing property. More details are needed on how this works.

“GBC should provide mortgages to people on low incomes.”

“Intermediate rent also tends to feature shorter tenancies than social rent, and leaves the provider with a liability in the form of redecoration and repair each time a tenant moves out.”

### **Improving Existing Housing**

“There are a lot of non-decent properties in the private rented sector (approx 1/3 of all non-decent homes).”

“GBC should introduce voluntary accreditation for all landlords. This will help raise standards in accommodation including management of things such as ASB. Incentives are needed to encourage landlords to sign up to the scheme.”

“Paying HB directly to landlords and paying 4 weekly in advance rather than 2 weekly in arrears would encourage landlords to help tenants in need.” *[NB this may not be possible due to HB regulations being set nationally].*

“The Council should make better use of its powers under EDMO to bring empty properties back into use. This would help increase supply and meet housing demand.”

“GBC should better publicise the existing facility for interest free loans offered to homeowners who wish to install energy efficient products. Likewise with loans/grants for landlords, e.g. existing facility for loans to bring properties up to standard.”

### **Social and Economic Well-being**

Gypsies and Travellers are among the most socially excluded in the borough. There are varying needs amongst Gypsies and travellers, with some being settled and others living a nomadic lifestyle.

Concern was expressed about identifying small traveller sites, as these can quickly grow to an unmanageable size.

Older People were identified as often excluded – floating support should be increased, and GBC should do more work with the voluntary sector.

Agreed that there is insufficient information on BME groups.

Gurkhas are likely to be an increasing BME group in the borough following recent legislation. 4000 per annum are expected to emigrate to the UK, with the majority choosing to live near barracks or near other Gurkha people. *[Note: GBC does not expect a huge influx, however we are not far from Aldershot Barracks so we are likely to encounter some Gurkhas who may be in housing need].*

Increased use of the internet can be a barrier to access. As more and more services are delivered online and information is distributed via websites, those who don't or can't use the web can become excluded. The solution lies in outreach work, visiting all parts of the borough.

Rough sleepers – more nowadays are Eastern European, and many can not be helped because they do not have recourse to public funds. There are some charities that will help but they are generally focused on helping people from specific countries, so will not help everyone.

An increasing number of rough sleepers have alcohol/drugs problems, and alcohol/drugs are not allowed in hostels.

Housing needs in terms of bricks and mortar do not vary much between groups, but support services are where the needs differ. Services that go into the community are most effective, for example Supporting People funding support for Gypsies and Travellers.

Some housing associations provide Community Development Workers for large development schemes, who encourage community activities and help the community gel in the early stages. There is no set time limit for how long they will engage – it can be for several years following initial occupation of a development.

Incentives are needed for people to move out of under-occupied homes – in both the private and public sectors. Providing the type of housing that older people find attractive is the key rather than financial incentives

Local lettings plans could be used to create flexibility and encourage downsizing.

Targeted market research would help to identify older people's aspirations

Mixed views on targets for special needs accommodation – many thought this should be considered on a scheme by scheme basis rather than an absolute percentage target on each site.

More work needed on identifying what the need is for each type of specialist housing.

“GBC should not place an undue burden on employers through planning contributions – some concern about proposals for affordable housing contributions from non-residential developments.”

“GBC should undertake detailed analysis of employee movements and employer requirements.”

“What type of housing is required by people who are currently commuting into the borough?”

“Need to identify sites for Gypsies and Travellers.”

“GBC should improve customer profiling to ensure that services provided, staff etc match the ethnic make-up of the borough. However there is not currently an accurate enough picture of ethnicity in the borough.”

“There are no ‘wet hostels’ in the borough – GBC should look into whether this type of provision would be beneficial.”

## Appendix 2

## Affordable Housing Position Statement

### Guildford Borough Council

#### Affordable Housing Position Statement December 2010

The Government's current definition of affordable housing is in PPS3, Nov 2006, as updated.

In its recent Comprehensive Spending Review, the Government stated its intention to introduce a new tenure of 'Affordable Rented' housing, at 80% of market rents.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Housing Needs Survey (HNS) 2008, updated in 2010 identified that a large proportion (some 60% of households) of those in housing need would not be able to afford 80% of market rents.

Social rented housing guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime (being generally about 40% of market rents).

Whilst Affordable Rent, Intermediate Rent, Shared Ownership and Social Rent all meet the definition of affordable housing in PPS3, the Council requires affordable housing provided through S106 to be 60% social rented and 40% other affordable tenures except where a strong case can be made and evidence is provided to show that this is not viable, as set out in the Planning Contributions SPD.

[www.guildford.gov.uk/contributionsspd](http://www.guildford.gov.uk/contributionsspd)

Affordable housing provided by developers of market housing should be predominantly social rented housing (at rent levels equal to those of current social rented properties and with rent increases at the same rate of inflation), in accordance with identified local housing need and affordability (house prices to wages).

This applies whether or not there is HCA grant available. If HCA grant is available, it is expected to be used to improve the housing mix or increase the proportion of social rented units.

When properties are provided as Affordable Rented, the Council expects that rents (including service charges) will not exceed a maximum of 80% of market rents.

<p>The evidence for our requirements includes the viability study carried out in 2008 and updated in 2009 which showed that affordable housing could be delivered without grant in most areas of the Borough. This study is currently being updated, and the results will be published by the end of 2011.</p>
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The Council has recently completed an interim housing strategy statement - to be published by April 2011, with a full review by April 2012.

## Appendix 3

### The Comprehensive Spending Review and its effect on housing provision in Guildford

<i>CSR Decision</i>	<i>Implications for the Borough</i>
<b>Homelessness Grant</b>	
The Homelessness Grant has been preserved.	This has a positive impact on the Council, as we receive a significant amount of Homelessness Grant and rely on it to provide current levels of service. We will review the current expenditure to reflect emerging needs.
<b>Capital Funding for new homes</b>	
Capital investment in new affordable housing reduced by 50% to £4.5bn.	<p>The Government has a target of 150,000 new affordable homes over four years, which is equal to around three quarters of previously planned targets.</p> <p>However the reduction in capital funding means that funding the development of social rented properties with large capital subsidies from Government will now cease.</p> <p>Alternative funding models will need to be considered.</p> <p>Powers to implement Tax Increment Funding will be detailed soon. This is a possible means of accessing finance, via borrowing against future income from business rates or council tax. We will monitor the situation, in particular in relation to opportunities for financing the redevelopment of the Friary Centre, and for delivering the Slyfield Area Action Plan (SARP).</p>
<b>New Homes Bonus</b>	
<p>The Government plans to encourage house building by paying a 'New Homes Bonus' of additional council tax on each new home for 6 years at a rate of the national average for the council tax band of the property in question. For each affordable home, the government will increase payments by £350.</p> <p>It is proposed that it also</p>	<p>This will bring in extra income and should help to encourage local communities to take a positive view of developments. However it does not help with the initial funding of the development.</p> <p>There is a proposal that it will be split 80% to the Borough/District and 20% to the Counties.</p> <p>Its use is not restricted to affordable housing, so there will be competing demands for its use.</p> <p>If there is limited housing development in the Borough there will be low levels of funding.</p>

<p>applies to bringing empty homes back into use and additional pitches for Gypsies and Travellers</p> <p>The Government has put £946m over 4 years into this initiative.</p>	<p>The Council is preparing a response to the Government's consultation paper about this funding.</p>
<p><b><i>Regional Growth Fund</i></b></p>	
<p>Funding for regional growth was included in the CSR.</p>	<p>This funding is targeted at areas that are currently dependent on the public sector so is likely to go to regeneration projects in the North. The Council will bid for any available funding, but there will be a lot of competition with other areas.</p>
<p><b><i>Localism and the Community Right to Build</i></b></p>	
<p>The Localism Bill, contains planning reforms that include a presumption in favour of development, and the Community Right to Build, which aims to allow rural communities to bring forward housing without planning permission, providing that 75% of the local community is in favour.</p>	<p>This may be a useful route for rural communities to provide housing with less red tape. The Council will respond to this once more details become available.</p>
<p><b><i>Supporting People</i></b></p>	
<p>Supporting People funding has been cut in the CSR by 11.5%, to £6.5 billion over 4 years.</p>	<p>Due to the complex distribution formula for SP funding, it is not clear how this will affect Surrey. This grant is no longer ring-fenced, so there will be competing pressures for funding between Adult Social Services and Supporting People.</p>
<p><b><i>Disabled Facilities Grant</i></b></p>	
<p>Disabled Facilities Grant will rise with inflation.</p>	<p>This will assist meeting cost of service delivery.</p>
<p><b><i>Empty Homes</i></b></p>	
<p>£100m has been included to bring empty homes back into</p>	<p>This money is unlikely to have a huge effect in Guildford. £100m across the country represents an average of about £150 per empty home, each of which needs an average of</p>

use.	£5000 worth of improvement work to bring it up to lettable standard. However the Council's new Empty Homes policy should improve our ability to bring homes back into use.
<b><i>Mortgage Rescue</i></b>	
£200m has been budgeted to protect vulnerable homeowners.	The impact of this will be low in Guildford as the mortgage rescue scheme is complex and we have had very few cases come through.
<b><i>Decent Homes</i></b>	
£2bn is allocated towards the completion of Decent Homes.	This is mainly targeted at those landlords who have a long way to go in meeting the standard. The Council's performance in this area has been good and Decent Homes has been achieved for nearly all of the Council stock.
<b><i>Warm Front</i></b>	
Warm Front will be scaled down over the next two years, and then replaced by the Green Deal which will impose obligations on energy providers to help households improve energy efficiency.	We await further details on funding for measures to improve energy efficiency. The funding should result in a significant improvement in the quality of the private sector stock.
<b><i>Abolition of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA)</i></b>	
The Tenant Services Authority has been abolished and their role is to be within the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).	The regulatory regime will continue under the HCA and although there will be fewer reporting requirements, landlords will have to meet similar standards.
<b><i>Changes to tenancy, tenure and rent levels</i></b>	
All new rented housing is now expected to be 'Affordable Rented', let on fixed term tenancies at 80% of market rents. Housing associations are being encouraged to let all new rented properties on this basis.  Similarly Housing associations may be encouraged to convert	A clear definition of "affordable rented" housing is required. The extent of the areas over which "market rent" is decided has not yet been agreed.  <u>Existing tenants' rents will not be affected.</u>  However this proposal would mean that rents for new tenants could be higher than those of existing tenants.  It is expected that Housing Benefit payments will enable households on the Council's housing register to afford

<p>existing properties to 'Affordable Rented' when they become vacant. This will increase the pressure on the existing social rented stock.</p>	<p>these higher rental levels. However housing benefit is being capped, and Local Housing Allowance rates reduced. It is not clear whether housing benefit will bridge the gap for all sizes of property in all areas of the Borough.</p> <p>Changes to tenancies and rent levels will mean that tenants will be reluctant to leave public sector housing, or to downsize.</p> <p>Council homes would be excluded from these changes in the short term as primary legislation is required to change the type of tenancy that can be granted by local authorities.</p>
<p><b><i>Local decision: a fairer future for social housing</i></b></p>	
<p>The Government released a consultation document in November 2010 entitled <i>Local decision: a fairer future for social housing</i>.</p>	<p>The document outlines the Government's plans for the future of social housing and includes the following proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A new local authority affordable rent tenancy with a minimum fixed term of two years.</li> <li>- A stronger role for local tenants to hold landlords to account for service delivery.</li> <li>- Local authorities will be able to fully discharge their homelessness duties into the private rented sector.</li> <li>- Replacing the Housing Revenue Account with a self-financing arrangement (distributing the national housing debt between local authorities and allowing them to keep the rental income from properties so they can service this debt).</li> <li>- Investment of £100m to bring empty homes into use as affordable housing.</li> </ul> <p>The Council is considering the implications of these proposals. More details will be included in the Localism Bill and in announcements on a revised tenancy standard.</p>

## **Appendix 4      EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY**

### **GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2011**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Council recognises that there is both a high need and demand for housing in the Borough with a particular shortage of affordable housing. There are, however, considerable constraints on the development of new housing; a significant proportion of the Borough is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas, or the Green Belt. Therefore making the best use of the existing housing stock is an essential part of meeting the community's housing needs.

There are over 1000 properties that are empty in the Borough and of these over 600 have been empty for more than 6 months. Having a clear and contemporary strategy and an action plan will enable the Council to reduce these numbers with definite benefits to the community.

#### **58. MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

The Council and its partners are committed to working with property owners to provide advice, assistance and encouragement to ensure that all empty homes are brought back into use. Bringing empty properties back into use will provide additional housing and at the same time improve environmental conditions. Action to utilise empty homes and wasted space addresses a range of housing, environmental and community safety issues that impact upon the health and well being of local residents.

Empty properties can blight communities. They may rapidly attract vandals, can be a focus of anti-social behaviour and may affect neighbouring properties by causing dampness, rodent infestation and other problems. Empty Homes are also a financial loss to an owner, both in terms of income lost and the cost of protecting the asset whilst empty; Council Tax must still be paid and problems can be caused by rubbish accumulation and damage by vandals or squatters. At a time when housing supply is struggling to keep up with demand, the optimum use of existing stock is an important objective for the Council.

The strategy is designed to lead to a range of tangible benefits for the local authority, the owners of empty properties and the community as a whole. It proposes:

- An increase in the supply of housing which helps to meet the housing need of local people, reducing the need to build on Greenfield sites, generating additional Council Tax and preventing empty properties from becoming the focus of anti-social behaviour.

- Property owners will benefit from the provision of support and advice on options for the re-use of their empty property, possible financial assistance and support to turn their costly empty property into a valuable asset.
- People living in Guildford Borough will benefit from improvements to the existing built environment, helping maintain safe attractive neighbourhoods and preventing depreciation of property values.
- A successful Empty Homes Strategy will also help to provide more affordable and flexible housing, reducing pressure on existing housing stock.

## **59. CONTEXT**

### **3.1 Empty Homes Achievements**

Guildford Borough Council launched an Empty Properties Strategy in 1995 in order to help deal with an acute problem at that time and to help meet the needs for affordable housing. It outlined the mutual benefits of this strategic approach to owners, partners, those in housing need and the Council. The strategy was developed to deal with a number of Council initiatives and successful funding bids from Central Government including the Living over the Shop Scheme (LOTS). The strategy was published and promoted in a number of ways including the first Landlord Forum run by the Council. Since the initial strategy the Council has introduced other initiatives including the deposit bond scheme Homes4U which have brought properties back into use more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

A team within Private Sector Housing have taken on the primary role of dealing with empty homes. The work sits alongside the other functions carried out within the enforcement team such as housing complaints, HMO licensing, administering grants and loans.

The proportion of time specifically allocated to empty homes has been limited given the other functions which tend to be more reactive. Refreshing the strategy and building upon existing links with landlords and Registered Housing Associations will provide new impetus to dealing with the issue of empty homes.

### **3.2 The National Context**

The charity Empty Homes estimates that there are 651 993 empty homes in the UK (of which 307 001 have been empty for more than 6 months), equivalent to 2.87 % of the total number of homes.

The introduction of the Housing Act 2004 gave Local Authorities new discretionary powers in the form of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs). These allow local authorities in certain specific circumstances to take over the management of empty residential properties with a view to agreeing with owners a plan to bring them back into occupation. This can only happen where the council has been unable to persuade the owner to bring the property back into use and considers this course of action is necessary as a last resort. Councils already have powers to bring empty properties back into use but EDMOs differ from existing enforcement powers, such as compulsory purchase and enforced sale, in that they require

councils to work with owners to find ways to bring properties back into use rather than forcing their sale.

Councils are also required to deliver sustainable development which limits the damage to and which protects the environment. The reuse of Empty Homes helps secure this objective. Research has shown that the creation of new homes will involve 50 tonnes of embodied carbon emissions whereas refurbishment of existing properties creates only 15 tonnes. (New Tricks with old bricks was published by Empty Homes in March 2008)

### **3.3 The Sub-regional Context**

Across the South East of England there are over 36 073 properties that have been empty for over 6 months (based on figures from Empty Homes 2009). In order to deal with empty homes in the most efficient way possible the Council has been working closely with some of our neighbouring authorities to develop specific initiatives to address the problem of across South West Surrey and North East Hampshire through SHIP (Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership).

The SHIP partnership comprises 8 local authorities working to raise the profile of empty homes

### **3.4 The Local Context**

The Borough offers residents a high quality diverse local environment and has experienced substantial economic and demographic growth over the last 20 years. There are high levels of housing need and affordability of housing is a key issue for Guildford and the South East.

Land registry house price information identified that the ratio of house price to median earnings in Guildford is 9.42:1, as at April 2010 - well above the national average of 6.5:1. This problem is exacerbated in our rural areas where people are regularly unable to access local housing and have to move away from family and friends. Social housing remains in high demand and the supply of affordable housing is a priority for Guildford Borough Council. Nevertheless Guildford has 628 homes that have been empty for over 6 months as at the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 according to council tax records. The records primarily reflect the council tax paid rather than the true state of occupation. Quite often a long term empty may change a two person household paying the same level of council tax. Equally there are empty dwellings where the owner has not disclosed that they are empty. These have sometimes been called 'invest to leave'.

### **3.5 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3:2010)**

This policy requires Local Authorities to develop positive policies to identify and bring into residential use empty housing and buildings in line with local housing and empty homes strategies and, where appropriate, acquire properties under compulsory purchase procedures.

### **3.6 Local Plan**

The importance of maintaining the current housing stock is highlighted in the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 where it states that the Council will use complementary policies set out in the Council's Housing Strategy.

### **3.7 Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2011**

The Strategy Statement is being updated at the same time that the Empty Homes Strategy is being drafted.

The strategy statement recognises the valuable contribution bringing empty homes back into use can make to meeting housing need

### **3.8 Housing and Private Sector Housing Strategy**

The return to use of empty properties will play a significant role in improving conditions in the private sector and will therefore contribute to the objectives identified in the Housing Strategy. Engaging positively with empty property owners has the benefit of assisting in the improvement of standards in the private sector through general advice and information as well as the promotion of housing initiatives. Properties which become occupied are quite likely to be rented from private landlords

### **3.9 Empty Homes in Guildford: Key Facts and Figures**

The total number of vacant properties in Guildford at 1 April 2010 is 1033 of which 628 have been vacant for more than 6 months. The table below illustrates the level of empty homes over the last four years. The number of longer term vacancies is much more volatile than the number for longer term empty homes.

**Table 1: Empty Homes Figures in the private sector as at 1<sup>st</sup> April for each year**

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Total Private Homes	996	1156	1614	1033
Empty for 6 months+	602	460	504	628
Percentage of private sector homes vacant for more than 6 months	0.60%	0.40%	0.31%	0.61%

## **60. TARGETING THE PROBLEM**

### **4.1 Sources of Information**

There are two main sources of information for identifying and increasing information available on empty homes in the district.

### **4.2 Council Tax Database**

Council Tax records are generally accepted to be a very useful source of information for local authorities to understand their empty homes problem. These records indicate the location of an empty property, the length of time empty and the name and address of the person responsible for paying the Council Tax (usually the owner). Limited information is also available on the reason for the property being empty. However, Council Tax records do need to be complimented by more detailed analysis and often physical inspections of homes to verify their status. Some properties, albeit in small numbers, are uninhabitable and may not appear on the Council Tax list.

### **4.3 Empty Homes Database**

The Empty Homes Database is currently being developed using the Council's current Complaint and Grants Database Ocella, primarily through members of the public and council officers reporting empty properties. Some information is obtained from the Surrey and Hants Empty Homes web site <http://everyhomecounts.info>.

We can build up a useful and more reliable database focussing on the priority empty properties in the district and keep a record of contact with the owner including, advice or assistance given, enforcement action taken and any action taken by the owner. Selecting the properties where intervention is more likely to be successful will maximise use of the Council's resources.

### **4.4 Where are the Empty Properties?**

Using Council Tax records, the properties that have been empty for over 6 months (as at April 2010) have been mapped out on a Geographical Information System.

### **4.5 Why are Properties Empty?**

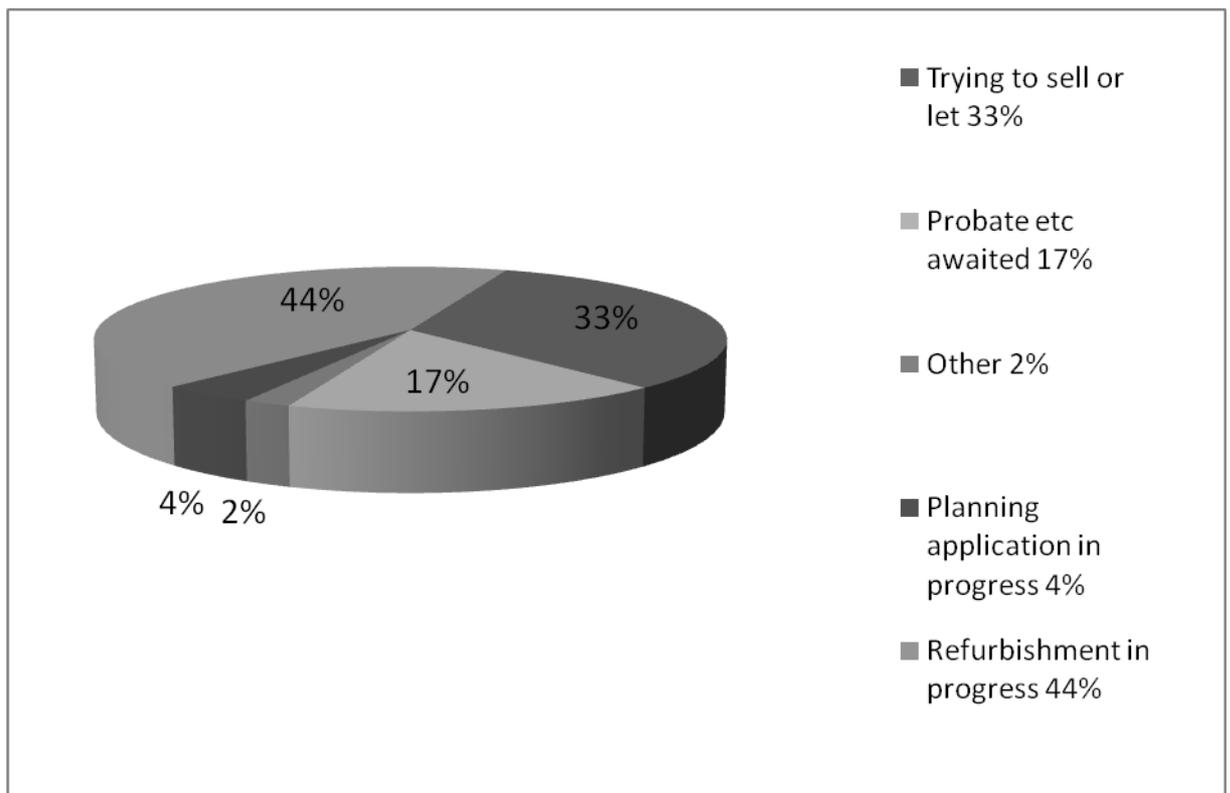
A key question for the Council was "Why are private homes being left empty?" Without an answer to this question, we are unlikely to be successful in encouraging owners to bring their properties back into use.

A questionnaire was sent out to 109 empty property owners identified from Council Tax lists. The questionnaire sought to primarily establish why owners are leaving their properties empty but it is identified that many were no longer empty. The exercise had some success in that it did identify the properties that were likely to be dealt with without further local authority intervention. Responses were higher from owners who were actively dealing with their property.

The chart below (figure 1) demonstrates that there are a wide variety of reasons homes are left empty. The most common theme in the responses was that the property requires renovation and they lack funds to carry out works or the owners claimed they were in the process of renovating the property (often slowed by lack of funds). These responses made up 28.3% of total responses.

Other responses such as "Inherited property and undecided what action to take" or trying to sell demonstrate the need for the Council to offer sound advice and information on options to the owners of empty property.

Figure 1: Reasons given by owners for why properties are left empty



## 61. IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS

The identification of the range of reasons why properties are left empty allows us to plan the range of solutions needed to tackle them. To develop and implement effective solutions, the Empty Homes Strategy should involve organisations outside the Council; it should have a corporate approach and should meet the needs of the local community.

### 5.1 Working in Partnership

This Council has been working in Partnership with a number of other Local Authorities in West Surrey and North East Hampshire bordering the Blackwater Valley via the Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership (SHIP) The SHIP initiative, includes developing equity release and loan products, tackling thermal comfort and fuel poverty issues and bringing empty homes back into use. The approach is designed to encourage innovation and ensure that good practice is promulgating across the group.

### 5.2 Strategic priorities

Bringing empty homes back into use contributes to all of the Council's Key Strategic Priorities:

- **Value for Money - Providing efficient, cost-effective and relevant quality public services.**
  - Homes returned to use contribute to the housing supply, generates council tax whilst utilising limited resources
- **Environment and Heritage - Preserving and enhancing a sustainable environment, both rural and urban, within Guildford Borough.**
  - Occupation of empty homes is a more sustainable option to new build and improves the appearance of the neighbourhood.
- **Social Cohesion - Ensuring our diverse community can live in safety and with dignity.**
  - Neglected, vacant or run down property can have a negative impact on a neighbourhood.
- **Dynamic Economy - Encouraging a vibrant business and knowledge based local economy.**
  - Bringing empty homes into use will often require building works which means material purchases, employment of contractors and more housing to accommodate residents.

### **Core Values of the Council**

The empty homes activity meets the two following core values:

- The Council will provide timely, reliable and targeted public services that are judged by their quality, their cost effectiveness and relevance to the community's needs.
- The Council will focus on providing what the community needs and this will be established through dialogue and consultation, delivered in close partnership with other organisations.

### **A Corporate Approach**

In order for the Empty Property Strategy to be successful a corporate approach is essential. Various Service Units within the Council can have a positive role within the strategy and also a source of useful information. Therefore the first step within the Strategy will be to establish an internal working group. The purpose of the group is to facilitate the two way flow of information between the relevant units and promote 'joined up thinking' approach necessary to secure the aims of the Strategy.

The Internal working Group aim is to improve, implement and monitor the effectiveness of enforcement measures across the Council. The group will include representatives from Planning, Building Control, Environmental Health, Private Sector Housing, Council Tax and Legal Services.

### **5.3 Options for the Future**

It is recognised that properties remain empty for a wide variety of reasons. Similarly owner's circumstances and requirements will vary. Given these factors the Strategy aims to offer owners a range of options, ranging from lighter involvement of offering advice and information, to voluntary agreements for bringing property into use and, if necessary, enforcement action to force the owner to bring the property back into use. These options are demonstrated by the shaded boxes in ANNEX 1.

#### **5.4 The Process of Engagement with Owners**

It is essential that a good working relationship is developed between the Council and property owners to encourage the voluntary re-use of long term empty properties. Only where voluntary approaches have been declined or ignored should the Council consider the use of its statutory enforcement powers. Each empty home and property owner will require an individual solution but there will be specific stages in all cases to ensure all empty homes are investigated thoroughly and dealt with fairly. These stages are set out below:

- Officers in the private sector housing team will assess the priority of all empty properties on the Empty Homes Database according to the Empty Property Prioritisation Sheet. This form takes into account a number of factors relating to the empty property such as housing need, length of time vacant, property condition, social impact, number of complaints received and notices served on the property.
- Those properties with the highest priority will be placed on an Action List and will be subject to further involvement from Officers.
- Owners of the empty properties will be contacted and provided with information on the full range of voluntary measures available to assist with the reoccupation of the property. A face to face meeting will be offered during which the owner will be asked what they intend to do to bring the property back into use. Officers will work with the owner to achieve a successful outcome to the owner's chosen option.
- Those owners who do not respond to the initial letter will be contacted again by letter and given the full range of measures available to bring the property back into use.
- Those owners who refuse to co-operate, either at interview or with the written advice given, will be informed that the Council may consider taking enforcement action to secure the re-use of the property.
- Those empty homes where there is little likelihood of being brought back into occupation voluntarily will be targeted for enforcement action. Before considering taking enforcement action the designated Empty Homes Officer would ensure the Council's Enforcement Protocol is referred to.
- Full use of enforcement powers would be made to tackle empty homes, including the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders.

#### **5.5 Funding**

Success in bringing empty properties back into use is likely to be better achieved if there are financial incentives to owners. The Borough's current policy provides financial support

specifically to bring empty homes back into use. Conditions are attached to the approval to ensure that the properties are rented out at intermediate rents and to council nominations. Take up however has been poor with only two properties being brought back into use.

The Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership (SHIP) has been working with South Coast Moneyline to develop an empty homes loan. South Coast Moneyline are a socially responsible not for profit organisation already working with SHIP to fund loans to make homes decent in the private sector. Such a loan facility would be an incentive to some owners particularly where there is more flexibility in the conditions which may be attached to the loan.

There is no provision in the capital programme to purchase empty homes but where a compulsory purchase is appropriate the Council would work with a Registered Social Landlord to avoid costs falling on the Council. Similarly where there is justification for the use of an Empty Dwelling Management Orders a suitable partner would be sought to provide the management.

The Government has announced that bringing empty homes back into use is also important in overcoming some local opposition to new housing. It is proposed to reward local authorities for bringing empty properties back into use through the New Homes Bonus. Local authorities should identify empty properties and work with property owners to find innovative solutions that allow these properties to be brought back into use. In addition it has been announced that £100 million will become available for RSLs to tackle empty homes. Details are eagerly awaited on these two new initiatives and reference has been made in the action plan to pursue these opportunities in so far as they are appropriate to Guildford.

## 62. THE WAY FORWARD

### 6.1 Action Plan

<b>Improvement Area Date</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Completion</b>
Information and Publicity	Arrange promotional work to publicise revised Empty Homes Strategy	June 2011
	Develop comprehensive empty homes publicity material, improve empty homes information on intranet and promote the SHIP 'Every Home Counts' website.	June 2011
	Awareness raising to local communities via promotional activity in National Empty Homes Week	June 2011
Liaison with Potential	Continued involvement in the organisation and promotion of Landlord Forums	Ongoing

landlords		
Recording and Monitoring	Extend, improve and maintain Empty Homes Database	Ongoing
Policies and procedures	Develop the Empty Dwelling Management Order policy and procedures produced by the SHIP Empty Homes Group	Jan 2011
	Develop the Compulsory Purchase Order policy and procedures produced by the SHIP Empty Homes Group	Jan 2011
Long term empty properties	Identify long term empty properties where owners have not been willing to cooperate in bringing the property back into use and the appropriate enforcement action including where suitable EDMOs and commence action in line with policy/procedures	January 2011 onwards
	By using enforcement measures proactively tackle properties that have been empty for over 6 months and in areas of housing need.	January onwards 2011
Partnership working	Progress SHIP partnership working and identify areas for which common approaches/procedures can be developed drawing upon the different areas of expertise available amongst SHIP members.	April 2011
	Establish Internal Focus Group to development enforcement work	December 2010
Empty Homes Resources	Utilise a proportion of existing staff resources to meet performance targets	Ongoing
	Develop a loan facility in conjunction with South Coast Money Line for owners	March 2011
Performance	Implement annual performance targets	April 2011
Review strategy	Carry out review of empty homes strategy	March 2013

## 6.2 Performance Management

### Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 64

This is the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) which has been used to measure performance on empty homes work in the past. It was deleted in 2008. It measured ***"the number of longer term non local authority owned dwellings returned to occupation or demolished during the year as a result of action by the local authority"***.

It is recommended that this indicator be adopted locally as a benchmark for measurement of future performance. It is also intended that it would be useful to monitor the overall percentage of empty properties to inform any changes to the strategy.

The suggested targets within the action plan are set out below and provide an overall target to return 50 empty properties back into use over the next 5 years.

### **Annual Targets**

	<b>Homes empty more than 6 months: % returned to occupation</b>	<b>Local PI (inclusive in overall target)</b>
2010/2011	2	0
2011/2012	2	10
2012/2013	2	12
2013/2014	2	14
2014/2015	2	14
<b>TOTAL</b>		50

## Options for Returning Empty Properties to Use

### Advice and information To empty property owners and members of the public

#### Help owners to sell property:

- Interested Purchasers Database providing interface between empty property owners and interested purchasers/developers
- Advice on estate agents/auctions

#### Help owners to rent property:

Providing information on being a landlord

- Landlord Manual and Landlord Training
- Landlord Forum

### Tenant Finding Council Scheme

Homes4U provides a Deposit Guarantee Scheme and a free tenant finder service to landlords with a dedicated support service to ensure tenancy success

### Empty Homes Grant/Loan or West of England Empty Properties Scheme – proposed scheme

Where property requires renovation. A mixture of grant and loans as appropriate to the individual case will be offered to bring property up to the Decent Homes Standard. Free no-obligation visit and schedule of works prepared by Council Officer. Conditional on owner letting to council nominated tenants for a minimum of 5 years.

Enforcement Action	Where property is adversely affecting amenity of an area, Council may serve Section 215 Notice (Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	➔	
	Where property is dangerous or requires boarding up, Council may carry out works or require owner to carry out works to make the property safe (Buildings Act 1984)	➔	Building Control
	Where property is likely to become a danger to public health (Public Health Act 1936), is causing a statutory nuisance (Environmental Protection Act 1990) or where there are pest control issues (Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949) the Council may serve notices or carry out works to remedy conditions	➔	Environmental Services
	Where a hazard exists at a property that has the potential to result in harm (The Housing Act 2004) the Council may serve notices or carry out works to remedy conditions	➔	Private Sector Housing Team
Improving condition of property			

### Enforced Sale

Where a local land charge has been made on a long term empty property (possibly through enforcement action outlined above), the council can force the sale of the property to a third party

### Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)

Where property has been empty for over 6 months for no apparent reason and the owner has refused all reasonable offers of assistance. The property must be in an area of housing need and no prospect of property becoming occupied under current owner. The Council would facilitate any capital works needed to allow the property to be leased and used to accommodate people in housing need. An interim EDMO can be obtained relatively quickly and cheaply but the Council will need to assess costs against potential income when applying for a final EDMO.

### Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Where property is long term empty, in poor condition and in an area of housing need, ultimately for those owners who fail to re-use their property the threat and use of compulsory purchase powers will be considered. This power is most appropriate for property which requires extensive renovation and where EDMO is unlikely to be persuasive or cost-effective.

## Appendix 5 Housing Benefit and Welfare Reform Proposals

Proposed Change	Effective Date	Additional Details (where known)
Remove £15.00 per week excess from Local Housing Allowance entitlement.	April 2011	For existing customers this will take effect on the claim anniversary date.
Capping of Local Housing Allowance rates.	April 2011, deferred until April 2012	Rates for all sizes of property will be capped. No customer will be eligible to receive more than £400 per week.
Increase room allocation for claimants with a disability and non-resident carer.	April 2011	
Increase deductions for non-dependants.	April 2011	This will reverse the freeze applied since 2001/02.
Increase Government contribution to Discretionary Housing Payments by £10 million in 2011/12 and £40 million in each year from 2012 to 2013.	April 2011	Details of distribution across the country not yet known.
Set Local Housing Allowance rates at 30 <sup>th</sup> percentile as opposed to median (50 <sup>th</sup> percentile).	October 2011 brought forward to April 2011	For new lettings in the private rented sector. Existing customers this will take effect on the claim anniversary date.
Shared room rate for Local Housing Allowance to apply to under 35's as opposed to under 25's.	April 2012	

### Future changes

Up rate Local Housing Allowance rates in line with the Consumer Price Index.	April 2013	This should reduce year on year increases in Housing Benefit expenditure.
Housing entitlements for working age people in the social sector to reflect family size.	April 2013	
Housing Benefit awards to be reduced to 90% of the initial award after a period of twelve	April 2013	

months for claimants receiving Jobseekers Allowance.		
DWP to take forward work to introduce a Universal Credit over the next two Parliaments.	From April 2013	This credit will combine all out-of –work benefits, including Housing Benefit. The plan is to start taking new claims to Universal credit in 2013, with a lengthy transition period for existing claims up to 2017. This credit will be delivered by the DWP as opposed to local authorities.

### Wider social welfare reform

<p>The Government has released a consultation paper:</p> <p><a href="#">Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing - Housing - Department for Communities and Local Government</a></p>	<p>To be decided – possibly as early as April 2011</p>	<p>The proposals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An end to ‘tenancies for life’. Both local authorities and housing associations will be able to offer a new ‘flexible’ tenancy with a minimum term of two years.</li> <li>• A new duty on local authorities to publish a policy outlining the objectives that should be considered by social landlords when granting tenancies.</li> <li>• The Right to Buy to be extended to flexible tenancies.</li> <li>• New powers for councils to set their own rules about who can go on the housing register. Councils will ‘no longer be forced to include... those with no real need and no realistic prospect of ever receiving a social home’.</li> <li>• New flexibility within homelessness legislation meaning that councils will be able to discharge their duty with an offer of suitable private sector accommodation, without requiring the consent of the applicant.</li> </ul>
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## Appendix 6

### Action Plan 1- Increasing Supply

Aim	Action number	Actions	Responsibility	Target Date	Outcomes
<b>1. Enable new housing to be built</b>	1.1.1	Deliver the identified sites in the Local Investment Plan	Housing Development, Planning.	As identified in the LIP 2011-2016	Sites developed
	1.1.2	Redevelop the White Hart Court site in Ripley.	Housing Development, Planning, A2Dominion Group	2012/13	At least 40 new homes, 80% of which will be affordable. A range of property types/sizes.
	1.1.3	Obtain outline planning permission to replace the park homes at Lakeside Close with new homes and commence decommissioning the site. Consider most viable option for redevelopment. Redevelopment of site.	Housing Development, Planning.	2011/12  2013/14	30 social rented homes developed on the site.
	1.1.4	Enable new affordable homes to be built on other key Council-owned sites, including New Road, Gomshall; Bright Hill car park and Guildford Park car park.	Housing Development, Planning.	By 2013/14	Affordable homes comprise at least 35% of new housing being delivered on each site.
	1.1.5	Ongoing input to the Core Strategy to ensure that Planning Policy supports the aims of the Housing Strategy, including changes to S106 affordable housing thresholds, to increase supply of affordable housing	Housing Development, Planning.	Ongoing	Increased supply of affordable housing
	1.1.6	Maximise opportunities for housing development on further sites	Housing Development,	Ongoing	Increased supply of affordable housing

			Planning, Economic Development.		
	1.1.7	Ensure supply meets needs on the housing register by negotiating as many family-sized homes as possible	Housing Development, Planning.	Ongoing	A proportion of family-sized homes achieved on each site
	1.1.8	Provide at least 70% of social housing as social rented tenure	Housing Development, Planning.	Ongoing	70% of social rented housing achieved.
	1.1.9	Ensure new developments meet the needs of the ageing population and those with disabilities	Housing Development, Planning.	Ongoing	A proportion of new homes built to lifetime homes standard and a proportion of new homes to wheelchair adapted.
<b>2. Increase the provision of rural affordable housing</b>	1.2.1	Work with Surrey Community Action to identify rural housing need, and engage with Parish Councils regarding suitable sites	Housing Development, Planning. Surrey Community Action	Ongoing	Rural housing needs identified
	1.2.2	Target for rural housing agreed with Planning (100 units between 2008/09 and 2012/13)	Housing Development, Planning,	By 2013	The amount of affordable housing in rural areas increased, helping to maintain the vitality of villages in the Borough.
	1.2.3	Carry out rural housing needs surveys across the Borough, as agreed with the LSP, following schedule drawn up with Surrey Community Action	Housing Advice Services, Surrey Community Action, Parish Councils	2014/15	All parishes to have up to date figures on the need for affordable housing for local people

<b>3. Review funding sources and investigate new ways of providing affordable homes.</b>	1.3.1	Investigate the possibility of providing housing via proposed new planning legislation relating to community housing projects (The Community Right to Build)	Housing Development Manager	April 2011	Suitability of this option assessed. If appropriate, parish councils/community groups informed.
	1.3.2	Assess alternative methods of funding and delivery	Housing Development Manager	Ongoing	Assessment completed
<b>4. Review options and methods to increase the delivery of affordable housing.</b>	1.4.1	Review all Council-owned land and assess the potential for disposal to housing associations for the provision of affordable housing	Strategic Property Review and SHLAA	2011/12	Review completed and sites included in the LIP
	1.4.2	Review Council-owned buildings, and assess the potential for redevelopment	Strategic Property Review. NHMS	2011/12	Review completed and sites included in the LIP
	1.4.3	Consult with Housing Associations in the Borough about their use of land and buildings to consider if there are further development opportunities.	Housing Development Manager	2011/12	Review completed and sites included in the LIP
	1.4.4	Consult with other public sector bodies about their use of land and buildings to consider if there are further development opportunities as part of the County wide Strategic Property review.	Economic Development/L SP	2010/11	Review completed and sites included in the LIP
<b>5. Bring empty properties back into use</b>	1.5.1	Adopt the Empty Homes Strategy (Appendix 3)	Community Care Services	January 2011	Aim to bring 10 long term empty properties back into use per year.

<b>6. Make better use of existing housing</b>	1.6.1	Work closely with landlords to enable effective access to private rented housing through the Homes4U scheme. Negotiate with landlords on rental levels to ensure that homes are provided at LHA rates.	Community Care and Housing Advice Services	Ongoing	Ongoing access to good quality private rented housing at LHA rates
	1.6.2	Hold regular forums with landlords and produce a web page to keep for local landlords updated	Housing Advice Services Community Care Services	From 2011	At least annual forum event
	1.6.3	Ongoing liaison between the Housing Benefit section and landlords to maintain fast, efficient processing of claims. Clear information and advice about changes to benefits provided	Revenues and Benefits Services Housing Advice Services	Ongoing	Accurate and efficiency of claims processed. Timely information produced.
	1.6.4	Work with the Social Care services and the Home Improvement Agency to enable people to downsize to more suitable accommodation, in particular in the <i>private sector</i> .	Housing Services, Community Care Services, Social Care Services	Ongoing	No of householders given advice
	1.6.5	Review the housing allocations policy to help downsizing in the <i>public sector</i> . Encourage transfers to more suitably adapted dwellings to reduce the cost of adaptations to less suitable properties.	Housing Advice Services, Sub Regional CBL partners, Community Care Services	On going	No of transfers
	1.6.7	Ensure existing homes meet the needs of the ageing population and those with disabilities	Housing Development, NHMS, Community Care Services	Ongoing	No of adaptations completed. No of homes meeting decent homes and "Guildford Standard"
	1.6.8	Promote the Homeswapper mutual exchange scheme	Housing Advice	Ongoing	Increased mobility

			Services, Housing Associations.		through mutual exchanges
	1.6.9	Review the Transfer Incentive Scheme	Housing Advice Services	2011/12	Increased transfers
	1.6.10	Develop an overcrowding action plan	Housing Advice Services NHMS	2011/12	Less impact of overcrowding
	1.6.11	Reduce and discourage social housing fraud including unauthorised sub-letting.	NHMS	Ongoing.	Reduced Social Housing Fraud
	1.6.12	Consider use of Article 4 planning powers to control development of shared houses, and HMOs.	Planning, Community Care services	Ongoing	More suitable mix of housing tenure across the Borough.

## Appendix 7

### Action Plan 2 - Improving existing housing

Aim	Action Number	Actions	Responsibility	Target Date	Outcomes
<b>1. Improve conditions and reduce category 1 hazards and non-decency</b>	2.1.1	To deliver the Home Improvement policy to improve or repair dwellings in private ownership utilising the full range of tools including advice, grants, loans and handyperson service.	Community Care Services.	Annual target ongoing	To reduce level of non decency by at least 50 private sector homes per annum.
	2.1.2	Seek to extend Home Trust loan scheme beyond March 2011.	Community Care Services SHIP authorities.	From April 2011	Scheme extended.
	2.1.3	Increase awareness of category 1 Hazards among most vulnerable groups, through website and communications with voluntary and statutory agencies.	Community Care Services.	2011/12	Awareness raising campaign carried out.
	2.1.4	Work jointly with the PCT and Adult Social Care to reduce risk of falls.	Community Care Services. PCT, Adult Social Care.	2011/12	Reduced risk of falls.
	2.1.5	Consider options to promote fire safety among vulnerable groups.	Community Care Services, Fire Service.	2011/12	Additional fire safety measures installed in homes.

<b>2. Reduce carbon emissions in residential property and park homes</b>	2.1.6	Increase take-up of interest free loans for homeowners who wish to install renewable energy solutions.	Community Care Services, SHIP local authorities, Climate Energy.	Annual target ending on 31/03/2012	To complete 10 Renewable energy installations each year
	2.2.1	Extend the Warmth 1000 scheme beyond March 2011.	Community Care Services, SHIP authorities	From April 2011	To complete installation of 150 energy efficiency measures each year
	2.2.2	Consider Schemes to increase individual householder awareness of how they might improve the energy efficiency of their homes	Community Care Services Corporate Development.	Ongoing.	Events/campaigns organised each year
		Carry out thermal imaging of properties and transfer information to GIs	Corporate Development	March/ April 2011	Data collected on thermal properties
	2.2.3	Greater publicity and marketing of assistance with energy saving measures provided by the Council.	Community Care Services.	2011	Increased take up of services and advice
	2.2.4	Use planning policy to ensure homes are built to the Code for Sustainable Homes.	Housing Development, Planning.	Ongoing	Homes built to Sustainability code level 3 and above
<b>3. Improve quality of</b>	2.3.1	Continue to work with tenants to meet the 'Guildford Standard', raising the standard of all	NMHS	Ongoing	Decent homes standard met for

<b>Council Stock</b>		Council-owned stock beyond the Government's Decent Homes Standard.			all Council homes. Revised standard and target agreed by 2014
	2.3.2	Maintain investment in major repairs and improvements at least at 2010 levels.	NMHS	2011/12 Ongoing	Investment level maintained -. £6 Million
	2.3.3	Consider opportunities to increase investment in energy efficiency measures such as through the Government's "Green Deal".	NMHS	2011/12 Ongoing	Improved energy efficiency.
	2.3.4	Undertake an annual programme of environmental improvements on housing estates to increase tenant satisfaction with the built environment.	NMHS	2011/12 Ongoing	Improved quality and satisfaction on estates.
	2.3.5	Review condition of Council's shared ownership housing and consider funding and delivery options to help owners maintain their homes and carry out major repairs.	NMHS, Housing Advice Services.	2011/12	Options identified.
<b>4. Improve quality of Housing Association stock</b>	2.4.1	Collate information on proposed investment in housing association stock over the coming years, and proposals for improving energy efficiency.	Housing Development, Community Care Services.	2011/12	Information and proposals collated and incorporated in future housing strategy action plan
	2.4.2	Collate information on condition of housing association shared ownership properties and proposals to maintain the condition of these homes.	Housing Development, Community Care Services.	2011/12	Information and proposals collated and incorporated in future housing strategy action

					plan.
	2.4.3	Provide advice and information to Housing Associations, particularly smaller and non registered providers about options to improve standards including energy efficiency.	Housing Development, Community Care Services	2011/12	Increased awareness and improved energy efficiency.
<b>5. Implement student accreditation scheme</b>	2.5.1	Implement a pilot accreditation scheme with Surrey University. Evaluate scheme.	Community Care Services Surrey University	October 2011	Scheme implemented
	2.5.2	Consider options to extend the scheme subject to the success of the pilot.	Community Care Services, Surrey University.	2012/13	Scheme extended
<b>6. Encourage a vibrant private rented sector</b>	2.6.1	Support landlords to provide well maintained homes, provide advice on respective obligations of landlord and tenants, housing standards and grants available.	Community Care Services, Housing Advice Services.	2011/12 Ongoing	Improved quality of private rented homes.
	2.6.2	Liaison with landlords and tenants through forums and regular communication routes. (See Action Plan 1- action 1.6.2)	Housing Advice Services Community Care Services.	From 2011	At least annual forum event.

## Appendix 8

### Action Plan 3 – Social and Economic Well-being

Aim	Action Number	Actions	Responsibility	Target Date	Outcomes
<b>1. Support and promote local initiatives and strategies to address social and financial inclusion</b>	3.1.1	Review access to Money Advice Services in conjunction with Guildford and Ash CAB. Consider options to increase access to services.	Housing Advice Services, Community Care Services, NHMS, Revenues and Benefits Service.	2011/12	Review completed. Effective access to money advice services available.
	3.1.2	Establish links with new floating Housing Support Service provider and ensure effective referral and liaison arrangements.	Housing Advice Services	April 2011	New service operates effectively.
	3.1.3	Develop an action plan in conjunction with partners to address “worklessness”, particularly in the social housing sector.	Housing Advice Services, Community Care Services, NHMS, Revenues and Benefits Service, Economic Development, HR.	2011/12	Action plan agreed.
	3.1.4	Provide timely advice and information about the housing benefit changes being introduced from April 2011. Consider providing targeted advice to those that are vulnerable or facing a greater impact than others.	Revenues and Benefits Service Housing Advice Services, Community Care Services, NHMS,	February 2011	Joint Action Plan on HB agreed.
	3.1.5	Consider provision of information/outreach surgeries/drop-in events to deliver housing and financial	Housing Advice Services, NHMS,	2011/12	Surgeries/Events

		advice.	Revenues and Benefits Service, CAB.		held.
	3.1.6	Increase awareness of financial literacy in the community. Consider targeting specific groups eg young people, those on lower incomes, or those with a history of poor financial management.	Housing Advice Services, NHMS, Revenues and Benefits Service, CAB.	2011/12 ongoing	Programme to raise awareness agreed and introduced.
	3.1.7	Contribute to Surrey County Council's Child Poverty strategy and work to implement the identified action plan.	Housing Advice Services, Community Care Services, NHMS, Revenues and Benefits Service. Leisure Services, Parks and County-side, Children's Service, LSP.	2011-2015	Actions implemented.
	3.1.8	Monitor the Government proposals for welfare reform and work jointly with other statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure these are communicated effectively and that advice is made available to those that will need it.	Housing Advice Services, NHMS, Revenues and Benefits Service	2011-2013	Advice provided to those in need
<b>2. Contribute to the action plan for the Westborough area</b>	3.2.1	Implement a local lettings plan in the Westborough area.	Housing Advice Service	2011/12	Plan implemented
	3.2.2	Target Westborough to new initiatives in respect to "worklessness", advice and outreach surgeries etc	Housing Advice Services, NHMS, LSP,	2011/12	Initiatives implemented, outcomes to be agreed.

<b>3. Meet the housing needs of the most vulnerable households</b>	3.3.3	Ensure that over the life of the strategy that 10% of new affordable housing meets the requirements of those with special needs (eg elderly, disabled, young people, with mental health needs or learning disabilities).	Housing Development, Planning.	2011/16	10% of new affordable housing meets the requirements of those with special needs.
	3.3.3	Advertise all vacant adapted properties through the Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme, to give those with disabilities on the housing register the opportunity to apply for suitably adapted properties in neighbouring boroughs. Extend this across all Surrey Authorities.	Housing Advice Services, Sub Regional CBL partners, other Surrey authorities	2011/12 ongoing	Increased access to disabled accommodation. Fewer properties requiring disabled equipment to be removed.
	3.3.4	Consider the implementation of a Register of Adapted Properties on a countywide basis.	Housing Advice Services, Community Care Services, other Surrey authorities	2012/13	Register introduced.
	3.3.5	Manage demand for disabled adaptations by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing DFG processes.</li> <li>- Assessing alternative funding opportunities for DFGs.</li> <li>- Introducing a demand management system for applications.</li> </ul>	Community Care Services  Surrey County Council	March 2012	Project completed and implemented
	3.3.6	Implement the proposals in the Later Life Strategy for a Hub and Spoke model of sheltered and extra care housing provision.	Community Care Services,	April 2011	Remodelled service.
	3.3.7	Improve access to information about services to help vulnerable people to live more independently. Eg Care	Community Care Services,	2011/12 ongoing	Better information available.

		and repair, Disabled Facilities Grants etc.			
	3.3.8	Implement the actions in the county-wide Joint Accommodation Strategy	Surrey Housing Authorities, County Council Adult Social Care, PCT, Probation, Housing Advice Services, Community Care Services	From April 2011	Actions implemented.
	3.3.9	Explore opportunities to meet the need for Gypsy and Traveller sites identified in the GTAA. Include identified sites in the Local Investment Plan.	Planning Services	To be agreed	Opportunities explored. Monitoring planning permissions. Sites included in Local Investment Plan.
<b>4. Improve knowledge of how housing is linked to the economy</b>	3.4.1	Collate information about how housing impacts on the on the local economy, through continuing analysis of employee movements and employer requirements in the Borough.	Economic Development	From 2011	Monitoring systems in place and information collated annually.
	3.4.2	Consider future requirements for key worker housing subject to employment trends in the Borough.	Housing Development, Economic Development	2011 ongoing	Monitoring systems in place and information collated annually.
	3.4.3	Consider the needs of local workers as part of any rural housing development taking account of funding conditions.	Housing Development, Economic Development Planning	From 2011	Local workers housed in new affordable homes in villages.

	3.3.4	Monitor the impact of migration and population change by cross referencing records, e.g. quarterly data on National Insurance Numbers.	Housing Advice Services, Economic Development.	From 2011	Monitoring systems in place and information collated annually.
<b>5. Use planning policy to deliver affordable housing in rural areas.</b>	3. 5.1	See action plan 1 Action points: 1.2.1-1.2.3			
<b>6. Prevent Homelessness and Rough Sleeping</b>	3.6.1	Implement the recommendations of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy action plan 2010-12.	Housing Advice Services.	March 2012	Actions implemented.
	3.6.2	Review the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and develop a new action plan from April 2012.	Housing Advice Services.	March 2012	New plan produced and homelessness minimised.

## **Appendix 9                      List of other relevant strategies**

*The following documents are linked to and/or provided evidence for the Housing Strategy statement. Most are in the public domain.*

[Housing Solutions: Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007-2012](#)

Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy – Action Plan Update 2010

[2008 Residents' Survey](#)

Guildford Economic Study 2009

[Guildford Economic Strategy](#)

Surrey Farm study 2008

[Strategic Housing Market Assessment \(SHMA\) for West Surrey \(2009\)](#)

[Strategic Housing Market Assessment \(SHMA\) – Guildford Summary](#)

[Strategic Housing Market Assessment \(SHMA\) update \(2010\)](#)

[The Surrey Local Investment Plan](#)

[Guildford Sustainable Community Strategy](#)

[Sustainable Communities Strategy Delivery Plan](#)

[Guildford Local Strategic Partnership](#)

[Surrey Strategic Partnership](#)

Surrey Child Poverty Needs Assessment 2010

[Strategic Property Review \(Draft\)](#)

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Later Life Strategy

[Surrey County Council Accommodation Strategy](#)

Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership

[Audit Commission Comprehensive Area Assessment for Surrey](#)

[Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment](#)

[Catalyst Housing Group \(Homebuy\)](#)

[The South East Plan](#)

[The Local Plan for Guildford Borough \(2003\)](#)

[The Core Strategy for Guildford Borough](#)

[Planning Policy Statement 3 "Housing"](#)

[Town Centre Master Plan](#)

[Lifetime Homes: Lifetime Neighbourhoods](#)

[Document M \(Access to and use of Buildings\) \(2006\)](#)

[Planning Contributions SPD](#)

[Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations](#)

[Surrey Rural Strategy](#)

[Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment](#)

[Homes 4 U](#)

[Guildford Homechoice \(Choice Based Lettings\)](#)

[Homeswapper website](#)

[Private Sector House Condition Survey](#)

[Warmth for 1000](#)

[Home Trust Loan Scheme](#)

[South Coast Money Line](#)

[LSP Strategy for Westborough \(Draft\)](#)

[Surrey Supporting People](#)

[Information for landlords](#)

<http://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/2712/Information-for-landlords>

## Appendix 10

## Key Contacts

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## Appendix 11      Glossary

AMR	Annual Monitoring Report
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment: an assessment of the Surrey area by the Audit Commission. This assessment will not continue under the current government.
CAB	Citizens' Advice Bureau
CBL	Choice Based Lettings (the Council's system of allocating housing, in which properties are advertised each week and applicants can register an interest in their preferred properties)
CHP	Community Heat and Power
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy (a tariff on developments to fund infrastructure)
CLG	Communities and Local Government - the government department dealing with housing and local government
Core Strategy	The central, over-arching document in the Local Development Framework
Decent Homes Standard	The government standard for affordable housing. The target set by the previous government was for all affordable housing to meet this standard by April 2010.
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EDMO	Empty Dwelling Management Order
GDF	Guildford Development Framework
GTAA	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
HCA	The Homes and Communities Agency
HMO	Housing in Multiple Occupation (a shared house, bedsit, etc of 3 or more storeys with 5 or more tenants forming two or more households)
Homes 4 U	A service provided by the Council to assist applicants to access private rented housing, and includes the provision of rent deposit

	bonds, and in certain cases a loan to cover rent in advance.
HomeSTEP	Tenancy support for families
HOST	The Homeless Outreach team
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
LDF	Local Development Framework: this is the planning structure within which sites for development and other infrastructure improvements are programmed. It includes the locally detailed translations of the overall RSS targets
LEP	Local Economic Partnership (the proposed replacement for Regional Development Agencies)
LIP	Local Investment Plan: The plan forms the basis for the allocation of government funding for affordable housing and associated infrastructure in Surrey.
LSP	The Local Strategic Partnership for Guildford
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements - to deal with potentially dangerous offenders
MARAC	
NEETs	People not in education, employment or training
PPS3	Planning Policy Statement 3 ( <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing">http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing</a> )

Registered Provider	<p>All providers of social housing are now known as 'Registered Providers' or RPs.</p> <p>There are two types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-profit RPs</li> <li>• Profit-making RPs</li> </ul> <p>Since 1st April 2010, it has been obligatory for all providers to be registered with the TSA, however non-profit organisations (for example existing RSLs) are subject to a greater degree of regulation from the TSA.</p> <p>This includes local authorities. The Council is also now a registered provider – although at the time of writing local authorities are not subject to various parts of the regulation regime e.g. Rent Standard and Governance.</p> <p>Most former RSLs are now non-profit RPs.</p> <p>Some former RSLs (for example A2Dominion) have both a non-profit and a profit-making arm in their structure, so that they can use the most appropriate arm depending on the situation.</p>
RHS	Regional Housing Strategy: this is the non-statutory companion of the RSS, addressing specifically housing issues
RSL	Registered Social Landlord (see Housing Association) - now known as a Registered Provider
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy: a statutory document which sets out both the overall housing numbers to be built and also the affordable proportions for a given region. The RSS is consulted upon so that the local views and the local evidence base of the SHMA is a part of the process
S106 agreement	A legal agreement attached to developments that puts obligations on the developer concerning the provision of affordable housing and/or infrastructure
SADAS	Surrey Addiction and Drug Advisory Service
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure (a means of assessing the energy efficiency of a dwelling)

SCC	Surrey County Council
SHIP	The Surrey and Hampshire Improvement Partnership (a cross-boundary partnership to channel resources into improving existing homes)
SHLAA	The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment carried out by the Council to identify a 5-year supply of housing sites
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment: one that involves all tenures and is set in a stakeholder process that produces results for a given set of market and sub-market areas
SP	Supporting People
SPA	Special Protection Area - developers are required to make contributions towards the protection of birds if building in certain parts of the borough
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance
SSP	Surrey Strategic Partnership
Staircasing	An option available to owners of a shared ownership/shared equity property, allowing them to purchase further shares in the property