

Version 5 (22.05.07)

Housing Strategy 2007 - 2010

we help people to live fulfilled and independent lives
in homes of their choice in safe and active communities



FOREWORD

We are pleased to present Dudley's Housing Strategy (2007-2010). Living in homes of our choice, that are suitable for our needs, is fundamental to creating thriving and sustainable communities. We are proud to tell you that 88% of the Borough's population live in homes that are suitable for their needs. However, we are not complacent, we recognise that there is still work to be done to ensure that all people are able to access good quality suitable accommodation, particularly those who are vulnerable and less able to help themselves.

Reflecting upon the achievements of our last strategy issued in 2004 we have achieved much. We are on target to make all council homes decent by 2010, our actions to help prevent homelessness within the Borough means that we are within the top 25% performing local authorities within England, we have also been named as Regional Homelessness Champions by the Government and tasked with sharing our good practices with other housing providers.

This strategy comes at an opportune time to tell you about the changes that we have made to the way that we deliver our services. Whilst historically there has been strong joint working between housing and social services the recent remodelling of the Council's Directorates has combined the resources and expertise of housing, social care, libraries and archives, and adult and community learning into the new Directorate of Adult Community and Housing Services (DACHS). This has afforded even further opportunities for us to deliver better services in order to help people to lead fulfilled and independent lives in homes of their choice in safe and active communities.

Much work has also been done regionally to work across local authority borders to ensure that housing markets across the whole of the West Midlands are monitored and developed to meet local housing needs. Alongside this, however, there also needs to be recognition that within the region there are different sub-regional housing markets. The Borough of Dudley, whilst sharing some housing market characteristics with neighbours, has its own unique housing needs. For example, Dudley has less social rented housing (local authority or housing association) than its neighbours. Dudley is not suffering from large scale outward migration (people leaving the Borough) and it has more semi-detached properties, but less flats and terraced housing than the national average. These unique characteristics require responses unique to our Borough. Dudley will be working with our colleagues from the Black Country Boroughs to help deliver the thirty year vision set out in 'The Black Country Study' and we are also awaiting data from a sub-regional housing market study that will be used to inform and update this strategy when it becomes available.

Partnerships are key to delivering good quality housing for all and we are proud to say that we have well developed relationships with partners such as the Dudley Housing Partnership and a range of key service providers that will

help us to deliver against the challenging targets that we have set ourselves within the Strategy.

Councillor Michael Evans
Cabinet Member for Housing

Linda Sanders
Director of Adult
Community and
Housing Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy sets out Dudley's Housing needs and what we intend to do to address them during the period 2007 – 2010. This strategy gives consideration to the needs of all tenure types within the Borough. The largest single housing provider within the Borough is Dudley MBC as we own 23,951 properties.

Key facts:

- 88% of Dudley's residents live in homes that are suitable for their needs.
- It is projected that Dudley's population will increase by 1,500 people by 2021
- Affordability of housing is a key issue because between the years 2000 to 2005 house prices have risen by 89% and 65% of the Borough's households earn less than the national average household income of £27,500 per year.
- The average price of a dwelling bought within the Borough during 2005/6 was £137,008.
- Responding to the needs of an increasingly elderly population and the increase in single or small household formation are key issues to be addressed by this strategy.

Our overall strategic priorities are:

- Planning for population change
- Greater integration with planning and strategically making better use of urban land (especially council owned land)
- Promoting environmental sustainability and the development of low/zero carbon homes
- Making homes decent - meeting Decent Homes standards (local authority and private sector)
- Increasing the number of affordable homes and establishing pathways of choice to promote sustainable communities and balancing the local housing market
- Connecting the housing strategy to economic and area regeneration
- Meeting specific housing needs

- Introducing Choice Based Lettings by 2010
- Reducing the number of empty homes in the private sector
- Increasing Community Respect
- Closer working between Dudley MBC and local housing associations

2007- 2010 HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

We believe that actions speak louder than words. These are the actions that we will take within the 2007-10 period, and beyond, in some cases. These actions relate to the objectives that are set out within the chapters of the strategy. N.B. where an action is mentioned more than once it is only listed in this plan in the first chapter that it is mentioned in.

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
Chapter 1 Planning for population change						
Work with planners to help meet the UDP target to provide 5,639 new dwellings by 2011	An increase in the number and range of new dwellings available within the Borough	Planning Policy Manager /Head of Strategy	2011	Annual monitoring and review of targets and land availability (every August)	Existing resources. Additional funding may be obtained via planning obligations and other funding streams including Housing Corporation	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
Using Section 106 powers we will work with planners to build 1,160 affordable homes by 2012	Build 1,160 affordable homes	Planning Policy Manager /Head of Strategy	2012	Annual review and monitoring of targets and policies (every August)	Use of planning obligations (Section 106 powers) as well as other funding streams including Registered Social Landlords and the Housing Corporation	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
Provide 5 extra care housing developments for the elderly by 2015	Completion of 5 extra care housing schemes	Head of Strategy	2015	Identify strategic partner to develop schemes by July 2007 Develop scheme for planning approval and commence on site by December 2007	We are looking to private finance sources to deliver this objective	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
DACHS will invest over £0.5million over the next two years to provide Preventative Assistive Technology to vulnerable householders, especially the elderly.	Helping people to maintain independent living	Assistant Director – Building Services	March 2009	Individual assessments completed on all people in receipt of Home Call services by end of 2009	Preventative Assistive Technology Funding	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will encourage local housing associations to provide larger properties (4 bedroom+) at	Increased housing options for larger households (including	Head of Strategy	Ongoing	This needs to be considered as part of the properties that are developed under Section 106 agreements	Housing Corporation Funding (to be confirmed)	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
affordable rents to meet the demand for larger properties that are available for social rent.	BME households)					
Chapter 2 Greater integration with planning and strategically making better use of urban land (especially council owned land)						
Work with planners to establish a land strategy and assembly group	More strategic use of land	Head of Strategy	Autumn 2007	Group established and meeting regularly by Autumn 2007	Council General Fund	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
Chapter 3 Promoting environmental sustainability and the development of low/zero carbon homes						
We will spend £1.5m during the next 5 years to replace inefficient night storage heaters with gas fired central heating systems	Provision of more energy efficient heating in council owned homes for people who currently have night	Assistant Director Building Services	2011/2012	Spend to annual expenditure profile	Housing Revenue Account	Safeguarding and improving the environment

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
	storage heaters					
During the redevelopment of the North Priory Estate we will encourage the use of products and building designs that will contribute to meeting low or zero carbon emissions to protect the environment	Residents of the newly developed estate being able to live in energy efficient homes, that meet their needs in a sustainable community, with more disposable income as a result of reduced fuel costs	Head of Strategy	To be confirmed	Oversee relocation of residents and clear site by December 2008 Produce developer's brief and procure a partner for regenerating the site by January 2008	Council General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Housing Corporation Funding (to be confirmed)	Safeguarding and improving the environment
We will develop a new fuel poverty/alternative energy sources strategy to promote the use	Increased energy efficiency options for local residents and	Head of Strategy	2008/09	Strategy produced and implemented by June 2008 Promotion of Energy Efficiency through	Council General Fund and other contributors (to be confirmed)	Safeguarding and improving the environment

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
of energy efficient sustainable products and sources.	lower heating and lighting costs			campaigns and Community events Sept 2007		
We will carry out a stock condition survey during 2007/08 to determine the energy efficiency levels of the privately owned stock within the Borough and devise actions and objectives to help improve energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption.	Completed Stock Condition Survey with baseline energy efficiency data	Head of Private Sector/Strategy Manager (Private Sector Housing)	December 2007	Survey company appointed May/June 2007 Survey completed autumn 2007 Mail shot to all vulnerable households to promote take-up of initiatives to tackle fuel poverty by December 2007	General Fund Direct Government funding via managing agents	Safeguarding and improving the environment
We will annually increase the	More energy efficient	Assistant Director of	Annually	NB the SAP index of measurement has	Housing Revenue Account	Safeguarding and

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
energy efficiency rating (SAP) of council owned homes.	council owned rented homes	Building Services		changed and we are required to recalculate our SAP averages and predicted rate of increase of the rating in accordance with revised methodology.(SAP2005). We will reassess our performance and targets and add revised targets to this strategy during July 2007		improving the environment
Chapter 4						
Making homes decent - meeting Decent Homes standards (local authority and private sector)						
We will make all council owned social rented properties decent (meeting the Government's Decent Homes Standard) by 2010	Improving housing conditions by making homes decent in relation to the Government's decent homes standard	Assistant Director - Building Services	2010/2011	Meet milestones set out in Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	Housing Revenue Account	Safeguarding and improving the environment

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
Chapter 5 Increasing the number of affordable homes and establishing pathways of choice to promote sustainable communities and balancing the local housing market						
We will promote shared ownership as a housing option by working with local housing associations	Greater awareness amongst residents about shared ownership housing options	Head of Strategy	March 2008	Promotion material and activities agreed with Dudley Housing Partnership by July 2007 Promotional activities to have commenced by September 2007	Council General Fund and resources provided by local housing associations	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will develop a process to assess if intervention is required on estates to make them more sustainable for the future by considering whole or partial redevelopment	The emergence of more mixed tenure sustainable communities	Head of Strategy	Commenced 2006. End date to be confirmed pending progress	Redevelopment of the North Priory Estate commenced 2006/07 Agree a process to identify estates for action in the future by March 2008 using experience gained from North Priory development	Housing Revenue Account, Council General Fund, Housing Corporation investment	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will develop a range of measures that will encourage	Increased housing options for people	Head of Private Sector	2008 – 2010	Property accreditation scheme developed and implemented by 2008	Council General Fund	Promoting a sense of well-being and good

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
property owners to consider becoming private sector landlords	seeking to rent a home			Landlord accreditation scheme developed and implemented by 2008		health for everyone
Chapter 6						
Connecting the housing strategy to economic and area regeneration						
We will ensure that housing needs are fully considered within plans that are developed to regenerate designated areas within the Borough. This includes providing housing to attract and retain high earners within the Borough.	Protocol (linked to the strategic land use group) to be developed and agreed to ensure that there is increased integrated working between the Housing Strategy Division and economic regeneration agencies	Head of Strategy	Summer 2008	Strategic land use group established by Autumn 2007 Protocol drafted by Spring 2008 Protocol implemented and in use by Summer 2008	Council General Fund	Safeguarding and improving the environment
Implement Town Centre Action	Improved Town Centre	Planning Policy Manager/	Ongoing	Dudley Plan approved December 2007	Various funding streams	Promoting a sense of

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
plans (Dudley, Brierley Hill, Halesowen and Stourbridge)	areas	Economic regeneration		Brierley Hill Area Action Plan to be finalised by October 2009 Halesowen and Stourbridge Area Action Plans to be finalised by April 2011		well-being and good health for everyone Safeguarding and improving the environment
Develop District and Local Centre Plans for Lye, Shell Corner, Cradley/Windmill Hill, Quarry Bank/Pensnett and Lye	Improved local areas	Planning Policy Manager/ Economic regeneration	Ongoing	Lye Plan finalised and in implementation phase April 2007 onwards Shell Corner, Cradley/Windmill Hill and Quarry Bank/Pensnett Plans finalised April 2007 and in implementation phase	Various funding streams will be considered	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone Safeguarding and improving the environment
Chapter 7						
Meeting specific housing needs						
We will seek to develop second	Improved housing	Head of strategy	Dependant on Housing	Funding and design secured	To be confirmed – subject to Housing	Promoting a sense of

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
stage group or cluster accommodation for people with alcohol issues who do not want to live in a hostel but are not ready for independent living.	options for people recovering from alcohol misuse		Corporation Funding Cycle	Properties built and in-use	Corporation bid	well-being and good health for everyone
We will further develop access to housing and support for people with drugs issues	Improved housing options for people recovering from substance misuse	Head of Strategy and Strategy Manager (Housing and Supporting people)	2010/11	Complete needs analysis by March 2008 Improved access by Mach 2009	Within existing funding streams including Supporting People funding	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will examine our policies on rent arrears and re-housing and link these to engagement with money management and	Linking policies on rent areas to money management and debt services	Area Manager	2007/08	Policies reviewed and revised policies implemented	Housing Revenue Account and Citizens Advice Bureau staff time contributions	Creating a prosperous Borough

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
debt prevention services						
We will aim to increase the number of furnished lettings within the Borough by encouraging people to become private sector landlords providing furnished lettings.	Increased number of private sector furnished properties available for letting	Head of Private Sector Housing	2009/2010	<p>Collect baseline information on the number of furnished lettings by May 2008</p> <p>Discuss barriers to providing furnished accommodation by June-September 2008</p> <p>Develop and implement scheme (linked to landlord or property accreditation scheme) to encourage furnished lettings 2009/10</p>	Council General Fund and other appropriate funding sources	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will fundamentally review our lettings and nominations policy whilst introducing Choice Based	Replacement of the housing waiting list points scheme	Area Manager	2007/08	Review completed and Choice Based Letting Pilot evaluated by end of March 2008	Housing Revenue Account and Council General Fund	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
Lettings to make the best use of resources						
We will develop a strategic approach to ensure that the remaining un met Supporting People priorities that have a requirement for new/additional housing are picked up through Dudley's investment submissions to the Regional Housing Board. We will do this by developing a supported housing strategy.	Increased integration in the approach taken to providing housing with support	Strategy Manager	September 2008	Review of unmet priorities and an assessment of housing provision required by March 2008 Strategy produced and implemented by September 2008	Within existing Council General Fund and Supporting People funding and possible Housing Corporation funding	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will monitor	Ensuring	Area Manager	Annually	Monitoring report	Housing Revenue	Promoting a

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
the number of properties let to Black and Minority Ethnic households (local authority and local housing associations) to ensure equality of access to social housing	equality of access for BME service applicants		(May/June)	completed by May/June of each year and any remedial action agreed and implemented	Account and Housing Association resources	sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will maintain or exceed 65% contractual occupancy for our Home Office contract to house asylum seekers within the Borough	Compliance with Home Office contract and creating sustainable communities	Asylum Seekers and Refugee Team Manager	Annually	Achieving a minimum 65% occupancy annually	Home Office Contract Funding	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will develop a policy for dealing with failed asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds so that they do not	Creating sustainable communities	Strategy Manager (Asylum Seekers and Refugees)	Dependent on Government policy lead	Policy agreed and in operation	To be agreed	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
have a negative impact on local communities.						
We will encourage local refugees who live within council owned accommodation to participate in local tenants' forums, and tenants and residents association meetings.	Enhanced opportunities for refugees to contribute to creating sustainable communities	Strategy Manager (Asylum Seekers and Refugees)	July 2007	Refugees attending local meetings	Housing Revenue Account	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
We will monitor the impact of EU accession/migrant workers and develop appropriate local policies to ensure that there is local community cohesion and communities are sustainable.	Creating sustainable communities	Strategy Manager (Asylum Seekers and Refugees)	March 2008	Local policies developed and implemented	Council General Fund	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
We will establish the requirement for either a borough wide, or sub regional assessment, of the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers in the area	Increased knowledge and co-ordination of approaches to meeting the needs of travellers	Head of Private Sector/Strategy Manager (Private Sector Housing)	Sept 2008	To establish requirement for borough wide or sub regional needs survey August 2007 To develop partnership if required and secure funding to commission survey September 2007-April 08 Develop specification for survey October 2007-April 2008	To be confirmed	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
Explore the possibility of providing a play area on the Oak Lane site.	Provide a play area within Oak Lane Site	Head of Private Sector/Strategy Manager (Private Sector Housing)	July 2008	Outline proposal of scheme September 2007	100% Charitable Funding (to be confirmed)	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
Chapter 8						
Introducing Choice Based Lettings (CBL) by 2010						
We will pilot a CBL scheme in Halesowen and Stourbridge by	Establishing if CBL contributes to creating	Area Manager/CBL Project Manager	Autumn 2007	Pilot CBL scheme in operation	Council General Fund and Housing Revenue Account	Promoting a sense of well-being and good

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
Autumn 2007.	sustainable communities					health for everyone
We will roll out of the CBL system by summer of 2008 (pending evaluation).	Creating more sustainable communities	Area Manager/CBL Project Manager	Summer 2008	CBL scheme pilot in operation	Council General Fund and Housing Revenue Account	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
Chapter 9						
Reducing the number of empty homes in the private sector						
We will reduce the number of private sector empty properties in the borough from 1,881 to 1,580 by March 2010.	Reduction in the number of empty properties	Head of Private Sector/Strategy Manager (Private Sector Housing)	March 2010	Appoint Empty Property Officer October 2007 Produce Empty Property Strategy Action Plan March 2008	Council General Fund	Safeguarding and improving the environment
We will take appropriate action to deal with empty properties that are causing a nuisance	Reduction in the number of nuisance empty properties	Head of Private Sector/Strategy Manager (Private Sector Housing)	March 2008	Review effectiveness of Arson Taskforce referral process March 2008	Council General Fund	Making Dudley a safe and peaceful place to live

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
(approximately 20 per year)						
We will develop processes and service standards to assess, prioritise and take action on empty homes by March 2008	Service Standards in operation and monitored	Head of Private Sector/Strategy Manager (Private Sector Housing)	December 2008	Review Directorate Service Level Agreement with Legal Services October 2007 Implement revised service standards and processes by March 2008	Council General Fund	Safeguarding and improving the environment
Develop a protocol to ensure that we have a planned strategic approach to clearing housing sites that are scheduled for redevelopment to reduce the risk of arson and nuisance behaviour	Improved community safety	Head of Strategy/Head of Private Sector Housing	March 2008	Protocol agreed and in use March 2008	Council General Fund	Making Dudley a safe and peaceful place to live

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
Chapter 10 Increasing Community Respect						
Create a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) unit.	Increased community safety	Head of Community Safety	April 2007	ASB Unit in operation	Council General Fund	Making Dudley a safe and peaceful place to live
Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (DFTRA) will hold an event looking at issues of Respect, ASB and Hate Crime.	Facilitating a community event to discuss ASB issues	Area Manager/DFTRA	May 2007	Conference held	Housing Revenue Account	Making Dudley a safe and peaceful place to live
Spend £250,000 on upgrading the street lighting on housing owned land	Increased feeling of community safety for tenants	Assistant Director – Building Services	2011/2012	Upgrades completed as per spending profile	Housing Revenue Account	Making Dudley a safe and peaceful place to live

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
Chapter 11						
Closer working between Dudley MBC and local housing associations						
Carry out a review of the membership and terms of reference of the Dudley Housing Partnership to ensure that it is operating to its maximum potential	Improved joint working between housing organisations within the Borough	Head of Strategy	September 2007	Review of membership completed by July 2007 Terms of reference reviewed and updated (if required) by September 2007	Council General Fund and Housing Association funding	Safeguarding and improving the environment
Consider including local housing associations in our choice based lettings scheme (subject to evaluation of pilot)	Creating more sustainable communities	Area Manager/CBL Project Manager/local housing associations	Post Summer 2008	CBL scheme pilot in operation and expanded to include housing association properties	Council General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Housing Association funding	Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone
Set up a process to capture and exchange data with housing	Greater awareness of shared ownership	Head of Strategy	March 2008	Review of data captured by July 2007 Exchange protocol	Council General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Housing	Promoting a sense of well-being and good

Objective	Outcome to be achieved	Officer Responsible	Date to be completed by	Milestones	Resources/Funding	Links to Community Strategy
associations on households on the council waiting list who would like to know more about shared ownership housing options	products for potential home buyers			agreed between Dudley MBC and participating housing associations by December 2007	Association Resources	health for everyone

SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy has been developed in response to the need to update Dudley's Housing Strategy. Many of the actions outlined in our previous strategy that covered the period 2003/4 to 2007/8 have been completed and there have been many changes that we have, and are, responding to. We felt that we needed a new strategy to reflect this.

Given the pace of change within Government, local government and the development of more integrated approaches to regional and sub-regional housing development and investment, we have developed this strategy as a tool to drive forward actions that will improve the quality and supply of local housing within Dudley and influence future regional and sub-regional strategies.

To this end we have set a three year life span on the current strategy in terms of the actions planned. Throughout the document, however, there are indications of actions and plans that will require input beyond the three year life of this strategy.

This strategy will not stand in isolation, indeed, it will be used to raise the profile of housing issues within Dudley that need to be taken on board during the forthcoming sub-regional housing market assessment. We are keen to work together with others within the region to devise a joint housing strategy across sub-regional housing market areas as there is recognition that housing markets do not start and end at local authority borders.

This document will contribute to meeting the long term objectives set out in Dudley's Community Strategy that sets a vision for the Borough until 2020 and the thirty year vision contained within the Black Country Study.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS ABOUT DUDLEY

Dudley is a Metropolitan Borough with a population of 305,155 people (2001 Census), covering some 38 square miles. It is projected that Dudley's population will increase by 1,500 people by 2021

Ethnicity

93.7% of the Borough comprises of people who consider themselves to be 'British', 'Irish' or 'Other White.' 6.3% of people considered themselves to be from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background.

Deprivation

Dudley was ranked the 109th most deprived local authority area out of 354 by the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004.

Household Housing Tenure

There are 130,591 households within the Borough. Of these 78% (102,615) are owner occupied or owned by private sector landlords, 18.34% (23,951) are owned by the local authority, 2.96% (3,873) are owned by housing associations (Registered Social Landlords) and 0.11% (152) are owned by other public sector organisations.

Dudley's recent Housing Needs Survey that was carried out in 2005 indicated that 88% of households live in accommodation that is suitable for their needs.

Types of dwellings

Dudley has more houses and bungalows in the Borough (71.5%) than the national average (54%). It has less terraced houses (16.2%) than the national average (26%) and has less flats and maisonettes (12.3%) than the national average (20%).

Average property prices

The average price of a dwelling bought within the Borough during 2005 was £137,008.

Average rent levels

The average local authority weekly rent for 2006 was – £58.22

The average registered social landlord weekly rent was £67.97 (gross rent including service charges).

The average private sector rent for 2005 ranged from £368 per month for a 1 bedroom flat to £531 per month for a 3 bed roomed semi detached house.

Employment

94% (139,935) of people aged between 16-74 are in employment. The largest single area of employment is manufacturing (24.3%).

5.9% of Dudley's economically active population (aged between 16 and 64) are unemployed. This is lower than the 7.7% West Midlands average.

Average earnings

Overall, 65% of Dudley's households have an income of below the average national income of £27,500 per annum

Level of educational attainment

37.4% of 16-74 year olds have no education qualifications. This compares to the national average of 29.8%

Long term illness

5.3% of all 16-74 year olds are permanently sick or disabled. This percentage is the same as the national average.

Predicted population changes

It is projected that Dudley's population will increase by 1,500 people by 2021.

By 2021 the number of people in the following age groups will have declined:

0 - 19 year olds

30 - 44 year olds

By 2021 the number of people in the following age groups will have increased:

20 - 29 year olds

45 - 64 year olds

65+ age group (largest increase)

80+ age group

Predicted household changes

The average household size is predicted to fall from 2.46 in 2001 to 2.19 by 2021.

The number of households, especially single person households is predicted to rise by 7,600 between 2001 and 2021 (128,400 to 136,000).

For more details on this see Appendix 2

NATIONAL, REGIONAL, and LOCAL HOUSING CONTEXT

This chapter sets out what our strategic priorities are and why

National context

There are a number of key national policy drivers that will impact upon Dudley's housing strategy:

Communities Plan and Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing (PPS3)

This latest Planning Policy guidance from the Government was partly informed by the Barker Review into housing. This review was launched by the Deputy Prime Minister on 5 February 2003. The "Communities Plan", as advocated in the review, is a long term programme of action designed to develop communities in which people wish to live, by linking housing policies to improving economies, public services, transport and the environment at a local level.

Key issues that will impact on Dudley are:

- The regeneration of declining communities
- Addressing housing market decline by setting up nine pathfinders to tackle areas of low demand and abandonment in the North and Midlands. (Dudley is located adjacent to the Sandwell/Birmingham – Urban Living housing market renewal pathfinder so will need to work closely with neighbours to ensure that renewal activities do not destabilise any of the local housing markets within Dudley)
- Bringing all social housing up to a decent standard by 2010.
- Improving the efficiency of the planning system
- Protecting the countryside and improving the local environment.

PPS3, as a result, provides national planning guidance on the improved delivery of housing in terms of quantity and quality, ensuring that Local Planning Authorities provide sufficient sites within their areas to meet their housing targets. Each authority must provide a five year supply of housing sites on a rolling basis and ensure that they have sufficient plans and strategies in place to bring forward further sites for a ten year period beyond then.

PPS3 also suggests that the threshold for applying affordable housing policies to a development site should be reduced from 25 dwellings to 15 dwellings or 0.5 hectares. This means that when a developer proposes building on a site, if the proposals are for 15 properties or more, or the site is over 1.5 hectares planning permission may be granted on the condition that a percentage of the homes built on the site are for affordable homes (social rented or low cost home ownership schemes or the developer pays a sum of money to the council instead of building the affordable homes. These sums of money can be used for a variety of things such as providing play areas or funding the development of affordable homes on other sites).

Our Health, Our Care, Our Say Government White Paper

Key issues that will impact on Dudley are:

- Better preventative services to improve people's health
- More support for people with long term health conditions
- More care to take place outside hospitals and within the home
- Community based care – supported independent living

Extensive work is being done to address these issues within Dudley. This is evident in the emerging Commissioning Strategies that are mentioned later in this section and the work being undertaken to support the needs of the increasing elderly population (see Chapter 1).

Respect Action Plan

Respect is fundamental to functioning communities and places. It is about decent standards of behaviour, taking personal responsibility and showing consideration for others. Selfish, anti-social behaviour is the most striking manifestation of a breakdown in respect. The Respect Action Plan, launched on 10 January 2006, builds on the Government's drive to tackle anti-social behaviour and its underlying causes. The plan has given further impetus to the work Communities and Local Government is doing to build sustainable communities.

Promotion of low/zero carbon homes – new developments

During December of 2006 the Government launched the 'Building a Greener Future – Towards Zero Carbon Development' Consultation Paper. Currently, the energy used to heat, light and run our homes accounts for 27 per cent of all of the UK's carbon emissions - around 40 million tonnes. To help tackle this, the Government is proposing that all new homes be zero carbon by 2016. Energy efficient and insulated buildings, which draw their energy from zero or low carbon technologies and, therefore, produce no net carbon emissions from all energy use over the course of a year, will help reduce carbon emissions as well as lowering fuel bills for households.

Regional Context

The key regional policy drivers that will impact upon Dudley's housing strategy are:

Black Country Study 'The Future of the Black Country'

This is a 30 year vision that has been agreed by the relevant local authorities and communities that sets out an ambitious and bold vision for change, part of the vision is included below:

'By 2033, we aim to make the Black Country a confident 'we can do it' place, where skills, work ethic and diversity are key to our prosperity. The Black Country will be made up of a polycentric network of four centres – Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Brierley Hill/Merry Hill – each

offering a distinct, wide range of shopping, leisure and cultural facilities, office employment and housing.'

The four headline objectives are:

- Reverse net out-ward migration and grow population to 1.2million
- Raise income levels to 90% of the UK average from 81% today
- Accommodate a more balanced population, achieving parity with the national social grade profile
- Create high quality, sustainable environments

The implications of this for Dudley are:

- Whilst the Black Country as a whole has a net population decline this is not forecast for Dudley's population
- Dudley's income level is below the national average so actions to address this would be welcomed
- We would welcome the opportunity to increase the choice of housing within the Borough
- The proposed plans to develop Brierley Hill as the centre of the Borough, and the development of the metro network will also include plans to increase housing in the vicinity.
- The vision includes increasing house building within the Black Country to the point where 3,600 new homes are built per year between 2011-2021
- Whilst the manufacturing base is still strong further action needs to be taken to attract new 'knowledge based industries' and to attract and retain more skilled higher income households – these issues are addressed within Dudley's Economic Strategy.

These regional objectives are also being taken forward by the evolve Market Renewal Partnership that is currently drafting its prospectus for action.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) June 2004

The Regional Spatial Strategy provides planning guidance for the West Midlands region. Within the RSS are policies relating to housing under the Chapter entitled 'Urban Renaissance'. These policies promote the Major Urban Areas (i.e. the conurbations) as the main source for growth in terms of housing, employment and associated facilities, utilising previously developed land and preventing further urban sprawl and out-migration.

The RSS contains targets for each Local Authority for the construction of new housing including affordable housing, as well as targets for the utilisation of brownfield land to prevent urban sprawl and green belt development.

The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005 – Delivering a housing vision for the West Midlands in the 21st Century: Pathways of Choice

The Dudley Borough falls within one of four sub-regional housing market areas. The area is called the Central Housing Market Area (HMA). Within the

Central HMA Dudley falls within the 'West Central' zone which has the highest percentage of social housing, the lowest levels of private sector housing and has lost 5% of its population over last 20 years.

The key aim is to create sustainable communities by creating 'pathways of housing choice' to enable people to live near their work and other activities in affordable homes.

Key priorities are to:

- Increase the number of available new affordable homes. 22,184 new affordable homes need to be created in the central housing market area between 2006-2011 to meet housing need
- Establish pathways of choice for new households
- Link 'high technology' belts to housing market change
- Connect Regeneration Zones to Housing Market Areas
- Pursue clearance and urban renewal/restructuring of large social estates
- Meet Decent Homes standards
- Promotion of environmentally sustainable homes
- Meet the specific housing needs of a range of demographic groups including black and minority ethnic communities, people who are, or are at risk of, homelessness, asylum seekers and refugees, gypsies and travellers and people requiring support to enable independent living (Supporting People)

These all have implications for Dudley and are included within our strategy objectives.

Local Context

In addition to the national and regional drivers the following issues have been identified through key local documents, Housing Conference contributions and feedback, focus groups or partnership working:

Community Strategy – 2005 - 2020

The overall vision is to build stronger communities within the Borough. Six priorities have been identified by local people in order to achieve the vision.

They are:

- Creating a prosperous borough
- Promoting a sense of well being and good health for everyone
- Celebrating our heritage and local cultural life
- Safeguarding and improving the environment
- Promoting individual and community learning
- Making Dudley a safe and peaceful place in which to live

Whilst this strategy will contribute to meeting those priorities in a wide range of ways there are also explicit objectives that must be considered within this strategy. They are:

- **Creating a prosperous borough**
 - Developing Brierley Hill as an economic and retail centre for the Black Country, with the three complementary town centres of Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge undertaking area action plans to offer a model of urban living and working whilst promoting the built heritage
- **Safeguarding and improving the environment**
 - Improving the quality of local authority housing and also private housing occupied by vulnerable households, in line with the Government's 'Decent Homes Standard'
 - Increasing the number of affordable dwellings completed as a percentage of all new housing completions
 - Increasing household accommodation with central heating
 - Decreasing the percentage of all housing that is unfit
- **Promoting individual and community learning**
 - To support communities so that they are properly equipped to make a contribution to regeneration in their own areas
 - Increasing the amount of regeneration information available at a community level
- **Making Dudley a safe and peaceful place in which to live**
 - Reducing anti-social behaviour such as graffiti, offensive behaviour and noise nuisance, to reduce the fear of crime

Supporting People Five Year Strategy 2005 – 2010

The five year strategy sets out to identify the strategic gaps in provision for people requiring support to live independently. Whilst a number of the strategic priorities have already been met, there is need to further plan for the remainder of the priorities that may require specific types of accommodation to be built. Further information on this can be found in the 'Meeting specific housing needs' chapter of this strategy.

Local Area Agreements

Dudley's Local Area Agreement (LAA) was agreed in March. Key outcomes that are relevant to this strategy include:

- **Economic Development**

Plans to develop/improve the Castle Hill and Dudley Town centre areas and the continued development of the central Brierley Hill area (this will include the need for new housing developments).
- **Safer and Stronger Communities**

This includes tackling anti social behaviour, crime, criminal damage, domestic abuse, substance misuse and tackling climate change through reduced greenhouse gas emissions – by improving the energy efficiency of housing, improving the housing conditions within the most deprived neighbourhoods and improving the liveability of the worst neighbourhoods.

- **Healthier Communities and Older People**
Housing, the Home and Regeneration has been identified as a key priority for older people. This strategy takes into account the demographic trend of increased numbers of older people within the Borough and is taking the initiative in meeting these emerging needs.
- **Sustainable Development**
Sustainable communities and sustainable housing (low carbon, reduced CO2 emissions or zero carbon housing) are a key aim of this strategy. We will also be working closely with colleagues from planning to ensure that we reduce congestion, pollution, accidents and improve health as a result of providing new housing schemes.

All of these LAA outcomes will be delivered by working in partnership. The Dudley Community Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership) will oversee the delivery of these outcomes. The Strategic Housing and Environmental Partnership (SHEP) themed sub-group of Dudley Community Partnership will be responsible for monitoring the progress made against the housing related LAA objectives and the contribution that this strategy is making towards improving housing conditions within the Borough.

Dudley Borough Economic Strategy 2007/08 update

There are clear strategic links between the Housing Strategy and this strategy. Key achievements to date include attracting £5.35m of Advantage West Midlands approved funding for the development of Castle Hill. There are proposals to include 65 dwellings within the Castle Hill development, a proportion of these will be affordable housing. The strategy also proposes increased housing within Dudley Town Centre, amongst other areas within the Borough. In addition to these developments, other shared strategic objectives include:

- To raise average income levels within the Borough
- To support and develop new and existing businesses and to attract inward investment to the Borough. In order to do this the housing options for employees must be taken into account.
- Maximising the potential of the Borough's major development sites
- Promoting the regeneration of the Borough's Town Centres
- Promoting the regeneration of the Borough's District and Local Centres (Lye, Shell Corner, Cradley, Quarry Bank and Pensnett)
- Developing an 'Employment Heart' which is an innovation campus area to be developed near to the Dudley Southern by-pass.

Local issues that have emerged as part of the Housing Conference consultation process:

- Tackling empty homes
- Working towards meeting the Decent Homes standard in the private sector housing stock
- Developing better strategic links to economic regeneration within the Borough

For further details see Appendix 4 Housing Conference Feedback July 2006

Local issues that have emerged as part of everyday working or partnership working:

- The regeneration of the North Priory Estate
- Brierley Hill Regeneration
- Developing a more strategic approach to identifying council owned land that may be suitable for housing developments and making better use of planning policies and guidance, especially the use of Section 106 Agreements (Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- Introduction of Choice Based Lettings by 2010
- The need for closer working between Dudley MBC and local housing associations.

Under Occupation

We have chosen not to specifically focus on initiatives to tackle under-occupation (people living in homes that are larger than they need) for a range of reasons. A lot of older people under occupy properties and they have strong emotional attachments to their homes and are often unwilling to move. Our ethos is to enable people to live independently, in homes of their choice and, therefore, we will be working to provide a wide range of housing options so that people can consider down-sizing if they wish to do so, but we will not be establishing specific schemes to tackle under-occupation. Work will, however, include more supported housing options, including the use of new technology and extra care housing schemes. Further reasons for not considering under-occupation schemes at this point in time, are the impact on the supply of social housing empty properties following the redevelopment of the North Priory estate with some 300 households, predominantly council tenants seeking rehousing (permanent or temporarily) and the introduction of our pilot choice based lettings system.

Commissioning Strategies

This strategy links to a number of emerging commissioning strategies that are being developed within Dudley MBC. These strategies will be finalised in June 2007 and contain actions that will be taken over the next three years. These strategies include issues that will impact on this housing strategy including:

Care and Nursing Homes for Older People 2007 onwards

Clearly there are links to be made when considering if older people will be best served by receiving care within their own homes or moving to care and nursing homes at an appropriate point in their lives depending on their health and level of care/support needs.

People with a Physical or Sensory Impairment

Work will be undertaken to ensure that options for community living are increased for this client group.

People with Mental Health Needs

Services will be commissioned as close to home as possible to ensure that health and social care are delivered to local people in their own homes, where possible

During the development of our supported housing strategy we will be seeking to develop supported housing for people aged under the age of 65 who have support needs in relation to mental health needs

Care at Home

We will work towards meeting some of the needs outlined in this commissioning strategy during the development of our five extra care housing schemes for the elderly.

We will work with commissioners to ensure that people can live in homes of their choice and receive care at home through the provision of a locality based care services based on geographic districts.

Learning Disabilities

Working with key agencies we will enable people to live independently, in homes of their choice. This will also include exploring the need for specific housing provision to meet the needs of clients who have a range of complex needs.

SUMMARY OF DUDLEY'S HOUSING NEEDS

During July 2005 a Borough-wide Housing Needs Survey was carried out on behalf of the Council by David Couttie Associates (DCA). The purpose of the survey was to examine the housing requirements, needs, aspirations and demands for the communities and households within the Borough. Almost 9,500 households across the Borough were surveyed during this study. The findings were:

Overall housing needs:

- 88% of households live in accommodation that is suitable for their needs
- 13,896 households have indicated that they will be moving within the next 3 years

Affordability

- Affordability of housing is a major issue for newly forming households as 31% cannot afford to rent privately. Home ownership is beyond the reach of 43% of concealed households (concealed households are people who are living with another household because they cannot afford to be in the housing market), even though 17% of them earn over £27,300 per year (national average earnings).
- It is estimated that 43% of households cannot afford to buy a property. The average terraced house sold for £113,511 during 2005. The annual income required to buy one is between £26,900 and £31,400. The average flat or maisonette sold for £93,157. The annual income required to buy one is between £19,800 and £32,300
- It is estimated that 31% of households cannot afford to rent privately
- 22% of properties are social rented housing (local authority or housing association). This provides 1,855 re-let units each year but annually we need to have available 2,404 units (549 more than there are).
- There is a need to develop a more balanced housing market as Dudley has less social housing stock than all other Black Country authorities. It has the smallest private rented market and it has the highest number of owner occupiers.
- Dudley's supply of small units, flats and terraced houses is extremely low compared to national averages and the stock is dominated by semi-detached houses. Dudley has a high number of detached and semi detached properties with 3 bedrooms compared to the national average.

Market balance

- Less than 4% of the housing stock within the Borough is for private rent so it is essential to develop this market to provide a more balanced housing market.
- With a high number of 3 bedroom detached and semi detached properties Dudley needs to develop more 1,2 and 4 bed roomed properties, particularly in the private sector.
- The private rented sector does not have an adequate supply of properties to provide access to the market for all new forming households
- There is a need to develop a more balanced housing stock in the private and social rented stock. There is especially a need to provide more flats and terraced houses in the private sector. Dudley has more houses and bungalows in the Borough (71.5%) than the national average (54%)
- Dudley has less terraced houses (16.2%) than the national average (26%)
- Dudley has less flats and maisonettes (12.3%) than the national average (20%)

Housing Stock Balance

- Small units, flats and terraced houses are 28.5% of the existing housing stock compared to the national average of 45%. Future site briefs should promote these house types.
- There is a need for 549 affordable housing units per year. 35% of units on new housing developments should be 'affordable' housing with 50% being for rent (274) and 50% for intermediate housing (275) for low income households, key workers, those on low incomes who are unable to purchase.

Planning for population changes

- The retired population will increase by 27% by 2021. There is an inextricable link between ageing and disability. 64% of those with a support need are over 60, and over two thirds (73%) have a walking difficulty.
- It is projected that Dudley's population will increase by 1,500 people by 2021
- By 2021 there will be less 0 -19 year olds (decrease of 3,100 during 2006-11)

- The number of 20-29 year olds will increase (especially between 2006-11 with an increase of 3,200)
- The 30-44 year old age group will decline (especially between 2006-11 with a decrease of 6,900)
- The number of 45-64 year olds will increase (especially between 2006-11 with an increase of 2,600)
- The 65+ age group will increase (especially between 2011-16 with an increase of 5,300)
- The 80+ age group will steadily increase (the greatest increase being between 2016-2021 of 2,200 people)

Concealed Households

- 4.6% of households contained one or more households seeking accommodation (estimated total 5,789 households by 2007)
- 80% (1,380) of the total concealed households planning to move within the next year consisted of people described as children of the household (aged 16+). Almost 6% of the concealed households were as a result of relationship breakdown. 82% of households planning to move did not have any children.
- 82% of the households said they needed a one or two bed roomed property. 39% of them wanted a flat, 37% a semi-detached house and 15% a terraced house.
- Two thirds of the concealed households are aged between 20 and 29 and one third are aged over 30
- Of the concealed households two thirds preferred owner occupation and just under a third wanted to rent from the council.
- 24% of those wishing to rent couldn't afford to pay more than £50 per week. 49% could pay no more than £60
- 49% of those wanting to buy could not afford to pay more than £300 per month
- 76% of concealed households had an income of below £25,000.
- The incomes of 43% of the new households formed over the past 2 years are below the level necessary to be able to buy or 31% to rent in the local market.
- It is estimated that there will be 5,789 concealed households within the Borough by 2007. Of the concealed households now, 67% are

aged between 20 and 29 and 23% are over 30. Of these only 25% are on a housing waiting list

- 41% of households have incomes below £15,000 p a (compared to 28% UK average)
- 35% of households have incomes above £27,000 p a (compared to 27% UK average)

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Households

- 47% of BME households said their home was too small compared with 43% of the wider population
- Income levels for BME groups are slightly lower than the wider population
- The majority of BME households who stated that they intended to move within the next 3 years stated that they required a bungalow with two bedrooms

Support Needs

- 28% of households (34,651) contain somebody with a support need. Over half of those who needed support (18,379) had difficulty walking
- Around 10% of households with support needs contained a wheelchair user (3,294). Of these a quarter of them lived in properties that had been adapted for a wheelchair
- Of household members with a support need, 12% (2,156) felt they needed care or support which is not currently provided for.
- 12% of all dwellings have been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person (14,220). Of these 63% have handrails, 49% bathroom adaptations and 30% ground floor toilet adaptations.

Sheltered Housing

- A total of 1,112 units of sheltered accommodation for older people are required over the next three years (326 households and 871 who may in-migrate).

Extra Care

- There is a limited supply of extra care housing within the Borough but with an ageing population and indications that up to 249 units may be required for in-migrating parent/relatives, this is an area for strategic development.

Supported Housing

- Over the next three years the following will be required:
 - 370 units of independent accommodation with external support
 - 25 units of independent support with a live in carer
 - 585 units of residential/nursing homes

AFFORDABILITY

The affordability of housing is a key issue for any local authority whilst developing its housing strategy. The ability to access affordable, suitable, good quality housing depends on a number of factors:

- The number of properties that are available to buy or rent
- The cost of buying or renting
- The level of income that a household has
- The number of new properties being built
- The number and type of households requiring housing
- The type and quality of housing that is available
- Location of available housing

The cost of buying a home for owner occupation is largely dependent on the housing market i.e. what people are willing to pay to own the property. If the purchase price of the property is relatively low compared to the household income, households will be willing to consider purchasing. Also people who already own a property will also consider moving to a larger more costly property when house prices are low. This then frees up existing properties for first time buyers to access the market.

Between 2000 and 2005 property prices have risen by 89%. In real terms this means properties have increased in cost on average by between £50,000 for a flat and £60,000/£65,000 for a terraced or semi-detached house. Entry level housing (flats/maisonettes/terraced houses) prices have risen by 113%. This has impacted on the ability of many households to become owner occupiers. There has been a reduction in the number of houses available to rent from the local authority because homes have been purchased under the 'Right to Buy' legislation by the existing tenants. This has led to a loss of over 2,000 properties over the last 5 years.

There is currently a waiting list of over 5,000 people who would like to rent a home from the local authority. The number of additional properties that have become available for rent from housing associations over the last five years is 217. Changes within society have also led to a greater demand for housing for example, more people are living longer, there are more elderly single person households. There is also more relationship breakdown so larger family households are breaking down and from this several smaller single person household units may form.

Dudley has a small private rented sector (in comparison to neighbouring authorities) and there are increasing signs of people buying to let, but the cost of mortgage payments need to be met in order to make this a viable option, and therefore, the rents on these properties are often prohibitive to low income households seeking to rent.

Owing to the increasing value of properties, investment in property is being viewed by many as a safer financial bet than investing in the stock market or

putting money into savings funds. Even properties that are standing empty and are not being rented out are seen as adding to the wealth of the owner due to its increase in value when it is sold in the future.

It is clear from the housing needs survey that there are many households who cannot afford to either rent or buy a home of their own. 65% of the Borough's households earn less than the national average household income of 27,500 per annum.

Whilst we cannot dictate to people the amount of their disposable income that they are prepared to spend on housing, and therefore, we cannot regulate the cost of houses on the open market we will concentrate our resources on providing, where possible, affordable housing. This will take the form of houses being built by local housing associations for renting, shared ownership*and low cost homes. We will look at all types of housing options to try to make housing affordable for a range of households within the Borough.

Actions will also include working with economic regeneration agencies to try to raise the incomes of households within Dudley and also maximising incomes for people who claim welfare benefits.

* Shared Ownership (also known as New Build HomeBuy) is a scheme dedicated to helping people onto the property ladder who would otherwise not be able to afford to do so. It works by the purchaser buying a share in a home (most of which are brand new) and then paying a lower rent on the remainder to a Housing Association. In most cases, you can buy the remaining share so that you own your home outright, when you can afford to do so. This is called staircasing, although there is no obligation to do this. Typically, you buy a 50% share but often shares of between 25% and 75% can be purchased.

Summary

- The affordability of housing within the Borough is a concern, particularly as 65% of the Borough's households earn less than the national average household income of £27,500 per annum.
- Between 2000 and 2005 property prices have risen by 89%.
- We will make use of the options available to us to ensure that we build as many low cost/affordable homes to rent, or buy as possible.

KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Taking into account the priorities highlighted as national, regional and local policy drivers. Our strategic priorities are:

- Planning for population change
- Greater integration with planning and strategically making better use of urban land (especially council owned land)
- Promoting environmental sustainability and the development of low/zero carbon homes
- Making homes decent - meeting Decent Homes standards (local authority and private sector)
- Increasing the number of affordable homes and establishing pathways of choice to promote sustainable communities and balancing the local housing market
- Connecting the housing strategy to economic and area regeneration
- Meeting specific housing needs
- Introducing Choice Based Lettings by 2010
- Reducing the number of empty homes
- Increasing Community Respect
- Closer working between Dudley MBC and local housing associations

Chapter 1

PLANNING FOR POPULATION CHANGE

Assessment of priority

This is a local priority.

The Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS) was formed during 2006 as a result of the joining together of Social Services, Housing Services, Adult and Community Learning and Libraries. Whilst there was already a considerable amount of cross departmental working and co-operation prior to the merger, the benefits of having the services consolidated into one directorate have been many. This merger, combined with the links to health services previously forged by social services now means we are able to plan and deliver services on a wider scale to meet the needs of Dudley's population. The work in relation to older people and the increasingly ageing population mentioned in this chapter highlights Dudley's well co-ordinated approach to delivering services.

Issue/Needs analysis

Changes in the age profile of Dudley:

- It is projected that Dudley's population will increase by 1,500 people by 2021
- By 2021 there will be less 0 -19 year olds (decrease of 3,100 during 2006-11)
- The number of 20-29 year olds will increase (especially between 2006-11 with an increase of 3,200)
- The 30-44 year old age group will decline (especially between 2006-11 with a decrease of 6,900)
- The number of 45-64 year olds will increase (especially between 2006-11 with an increase of 2,600)
- The 65+ age group will increase (especially between 2011-16 with an increase of 5,300)
- The 80+ age group will steadily increase (the greatest increase being between 2016-2021, 2,200 people)
- The retired population will increase by 27% by 2021. There is an inextricable link between ageing and disability. 64% of those with a support need are over 60, and over two thirds (73%) have a walking difficulty.

Responding to the needs of the increasing elderly population

We need to plan new housing developments to meet the increasingly ageing population, particularly the 65+ age group.

It is our intention to ensure that the ageing population has a wide range of support and housing options to underpin our mission to help people to live fulfilled and independent lives in homes of their choice. This will include continuing to provide adaptations to existing homes, commissioning support

services to aid independent living, building extra care housing and using new telecare technology.

There is little current supply of extra care housing within the Borough but with an ageing population and indications that up to 249 units may be required for in-migrating parent/relatives this is an area for strategic development. To meet this need we will be developing five extra care housing schemes to widen the housing options for the increasingly ageing population. The schemes will provide a range of tenures (outright home ownership, shared ownership and rented) and a diverse range of services which may include health and leisure facilities.

Responding to single person household/small household formation increases

- 80% (1,380) of the total concealed households planning to move within the next year consisted of people described as children of the household (aged 16+).
- Almost 6% of the concealed households were as a result of relationship breakdown.
- 82% of households planning to move did not have any children.
- 82% of the households said they needed a one or two bed roomed property. 39% of them wanted a flat, 37% a semi-detached house and 15% a terraced house.
- Two thirds wanted to become owner occupiers and the remaining third would like council accommodation.
- The incomes of 43% of the new households formed over the past 2 years are below the level necessary to be able to buy or 31% to rent in the local market.

The needs analysis, alongside the existing housing stock profile of the Borough indicates that there is a need to develop a range of smaller sized properties to meet the needs of childless concealed households at affordable prices/rent levels. It should be noted, however, that the majority of smaller concealed households are children of the householder (aged 16+) and, therefore, alongside providing smaller affordable units to meet their immediate needs it would also be prudent to assume that many of these will be looking to either rent or buy family sized homes in preparation for having relationships and families of their own

Halting outward migration

Dudley falls within the Central Housing Market Area (HMA) along with Telford and Wrekin, Cannock Chase, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry, North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Tamworth, and Rugby. This HMA has lost 5% of its population over last 20 years. This is a continuing trend. Dudley's population, however, is predicted to increase by 1,500 people by 2021. There is still a clear need to monitor if outward migration is impacting upon the Borough. In order to prevent outward migration we will be working with partners to ensure that Dudley is an attractive place to live and work.

Providing a range of larger social rented properties

An analysis of our housing waiting list reveals that there are 424 households containing three or more children on our waiting list who require larger property types. During the past year only 23 four bed roomed houses owned by the local authority became available for letting. Where possible we will be encouraging local housing associations to build a supply of larger properties that are available to rent.

Increasing housing options within the Borough

At present Dudley needs to provide an additional 700 homes per year to meet the new housing targets set out within Dudley's Unitary Development Plan. This number, however, is likely to increase to between 800 and 900 per year once the Government has re-assessed housing provision targets later this year. This increase will be to try to halt further property price increases by increasing the supply of housing, to take into account that people are living for longer and the increase in the number of smaller households.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

The total number of properties that have been built in the Borough (minus demolitions) over the last five years is 1,953.

The number of affordable housing units built over the last 5 years is 280.

Through its Older People's Strategy and Action Plan DACHS works with a range of partners to deliver services to approximately 5,000 vulnerable older people per year to enable them to live at home with appropriate support.

DACHS is investing over £0.5million over the next two years to provide Preventative Assistive Technology to vulnerable householders. This range of equipment is designed to support independent living and ranges from providing alarms that can be activated if the householder is in need to sensors that monitor if medication has been taken or if the person has been active/inactive within their own homes. The technology allows calls to be made to support workers or family members as a need arises rather than requiring the support giver to be on site for long periods of time without being required. The use of this technology is allowing us to provide a more efficient, needs based service and enables older people to live independently for longer.

We have set up a range of health promotion initiatives within our Housing with Care and sheltered housing schemes to ensure that people are assisted to stay as healthy as they can and live independently for as long as possible. This includes monthly health checks and well-person advice sessions. We have also encouraged people to develop self-care programmes and participate in 'Expert Patient' schemes. DACHS employees have been funded and trained by the NHS to deliver health promotion activities such as smoking cessation, lung function tests and 'Get Cooking' to provide low cost, healthy meals for one person.

We have worked with colleagues in other directorates and agencies to promote welfare benefit take up schemes to ensure that older people are claiming the benefits that they are entitled to. It is estimated that generally each person advised becomes better off by between £5 and £50 per week. We have also worked with agencies to promote 'good neighbour' and 'befriending' schemes to prevent older people from becoming isolated in the area where they live.

We are leading the field nationally with the OTAGO scheme that we are piloting. DACHS employees work with elderly people to improve posture, stance and muscle strength to prevent people from having falls. This preventative work ensures people can live independently for longer, and saves a considerable amount of money for the local health service who have less elderly people admitted to hospital as a result of trips and falls.

We are currently modernising our sheltered housing schemes to ensure that they meet Decent Homes standards and are Disability Discrimination Act compliant. This work is also complemented by our in-house Occupational Therapist who works with residents to assess their needs and suggest solutions to barriers that may otherwise prevent elderly people remaining in independent living.

Other work that includes the wider community includes providing a dedicated bogus callers hotline in partnership with West Midlands Police to improve the safety of vulnerable people living within the community.

We also provide a service to 317 Carers Card holders. Care givers carry the card around with them and if they have a medical emergency the card provides a contact number to ring, so that the emergency services are made aware that the person is looking after another person who needs care and assistance. By calling the number on the card our Home Call service can alert alternative carers or attend the person needing care, thus providing peace of mind for the card holder who has been taken ill.

We also provide a range of community lunch, bingo and arts and crafts sessions for sheltered scheme residents and the wider community.

Currently we also provide low level support to 200 elderly people who require a visit once or twice per week to enable them to remain in independent living within the community.

We are working to give older people maximum choice over the services that they receive to help them live independently. This includes investigating alternatives to attending day care centres, using direct payments and individualised budgets.

During 2006/07 we completed 1,968 adaptations costing £1.65 million to provide people with stair lifts, level access showers, ramps and other equipments to enable them to live independently in a home of their choice.

We currently employ two Occupational Therapists who pro-actively work with people, particularly the elderly, who are on the Council's housing waiting list who need specially adapted equipment and properties to live in. They keep a database record of properties that have previously been adapted for occupants that have now become empty and available for use again and match these properties to people who have specific needs on the waiting list. This not only saves time and money in adapting properties but it is also a good re-use of an existing resource. They also help to make the move into the new home go as smoothly as possible.

We are in the process of choosing our strategic partner to work on the extra care housing schemes.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

We will work towards increasing the range and type of housing available in all areas including affordable housing and good quality market housing. We will promote mixed and sustainable communities and work to improve the physical and environmental quality of housing areas.

Dudley's Unitary Development Plan identifies the need to provide 5,639 new dwellings in accordance with Regional Planning Guidance to meet the housing needs of the whole community between 2003 and 2011. To date 1,953 have been built.

Using our powers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1990 we are planning to build 1,160 affordable homes over the next 5 years.*

We will plan to meet the needs of the increasingly elderly population by working with partners to provide five extra care housing developments by 2015.

We will continue through the delivery of our Older People's Strategy to provide a range of services that will enable older people to remain healthier and in independent living for as long as they wish to do so, where possible. This will include providing options for self-directed care so that people will decide what types of care and support they receive and purchase it directly from providers.

DACHS will invest over £0.5million over the next two years to provide Preventative Assistive Technology to vulnerable householders, especially the elderly to help people to maintain independent living.

During discussions with developers on affordable housing sites we will encourage the provision of some larger properties (at least 4 bedrooms) to accommodate the needs of larger households on our housing waiting list (this includes meeting the needs of some of the larger Black and Minority Ethnic community households – See Chapter 7).

Partnership arrangements

We will work with a wide range of regeneration partners, building developers and local housing associations to ensure that we plan and provide suitable housing that will meet the predicted population changes and housing needs within the Borough.

Resources

We use a variety of funding sources including existing Council budgets and seek funding opportunities such as the Housing Corporation funding streams.

We will also use partnership arrangements with housing associations, the Housing Corporation and building developers.

We will also make use of the Development Control Process to use Section 106 Agreements* to secure affordable housing on sites or gain funding that can be used on other sites to meet affordable housing targets.

*A Section 106 agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1990 is a binding agreement made between the Council and a developer as to what can be built/provided by the developer over and above what is contained within a planning application in order to meet social needs and benefit the community. This agreement is additional to any existing planning conditions that must also be met.

Summary

- It is projected that Dudley's population will increase by 1,500 people by 2021
- Responding to the needs of an increasingly elderly population and the increase in single or small household formation are key issues to be addressed.
- Dudley's Unitary Development Plan identifies the need to provide 5,639 new dwellings to meet the housing needs of the whole community between 2003 and 2011. To date 1,953 have been built
- Using our powers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1990 we are planning to build 1,160 affordable homes over the next 5 years.
- We will plan to meet the needs of the increasingly elderly population by working with partners to provide five extra care housing developments by 2015.
- We will encourage local housing associations to provide larger properties that are available for social rent as we have an unmet need on our council housing waiting list.

Chapter 2

GREATER INTEGRATION WITH PLANNING AND STRATEGICALLY MAKING BETTER USE OF URBAN LAND (ESPECIALLY COUNCIL OWNED LAND)

Assessment of priority

This is a national, regional and local priority.

Issue/Needs analysis

In order to ensure the expedient progress of planning applications for larger housing developments and to help increase the supply of affordable housing within the Borough, it is felt that more work can be done to ensure that we take a pro-active approach to new developments. Greater links have been forged with planners and developers over the years. There is, however, still a need to:

- Identify all council owned land suitable for housing development
- Identify all privately owned land suitable for housing development
- Make better use of Section 106 agreements*
- Proactively promote our supplementary planning document on Community Safety/‘Secure by Design’ issues at pre-planning application stage to try to ensure that potential community safety issues are addressed at the earliest stage possible if new buildings are being planned.

*A Section 106 agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1990 is a binding agreement made between the Council and a developer as to what can be built/provided by the developer over and above what is contained within a planning application in order to meet social needs and benefit the community. This agreement is additional to any existing planning conditions that must also be met.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

The Council have appointed a dedicated Section 106 Officer within the Planning and Development Section in the Directorate of the Urban Environment to ensure better integration and use of such agreements.

The council is reducing its threshold for applying its affordable homes planning policy from developments comprising 25 dwellings to those comprising 15 dwellings from April 2007. This will mean that a greater number of sites are likely to come forward for housing development which will be required to provide affordable housing within its development.

Analysis of options/future action/targets/objectives

In order to achieve this we will:

Increase activity and involvement in the negotiation of Section 106 Agreements.

Work with planning colleagues to review the planning policies on affordable housing in line with recommendations from the Housing Needs Study when the Unitary Development Plan is superseded.

Set up a land strategy and assembly group aimed at delivering a more joined up approach to land use and asset management, and meeting the needs of social and community well-being including health and education needs.

Partnership arrangements

We will work with a range of agencies, developers and council directorates in order to achieve our objectives.

Resources:

These activities will be delivered within existing Council budgets.

Summary

- We need to make sure that we are making the best use of land that is available us in order to help us meet our housing strategy objectives.

In order to do this we will:

- Establish a land strategy and assembly group in order to further co-ordinate land use and meet community needs within the Borough.
- Ensure that there is close working with planning colleagues within the Authority to assist in applying its reduced threshold for developments requiring affordable housing provision which has changed from 25 dwellings to 15 dwellings from April 2007.

Chapter 3

PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOW/ZERO CARBON HOMES

Assessment of priority

This is a national, regional and local priority.

Issue/Needs analysis

Safeguarding and improving the environment is a key theme of Dudley's Community Strategy and it is also a key issue for the Government. A recent Government consultation paper is proposing to make all newly built homes zero carbon by 2016. Low and zero carbon homes are homes that are extremely energy efficient and produce low or no emissions of carbon. To achieve this renewable energy sources are often used. These include use of solar heating and lighting, wind power and high levels insulation. Dudley has already worked with local housing associations to provide low carbon affordable homes within the Borough using a range of innovative technologies. We want to continue this work on future new build housing developments.

We are already working hard to ensure that existing homes within the Borough are being made as energy efficient as possible. Work includes promoting insulation and energy saving work that can be done to homes and working with local housing associations to build low/zero carbon affordable housing schemes. In addition to this we will be working with planners to encourage the use of low/zero carbon designs and materials.

There is a clear link between having access to warm, low cost, energy efficient housing and the health benefits that this affords to occupants through increased well-being, better health and a larger amount of disposable income to spend.

Work will include:

- Working with planners and building developers to encourage the use of low/zero carbon designs and products
- Encouraging local housing associations to develop zero carbon affordable housing schemes within the Borough
- Continuing current activities that encourage energy saving activities including the Health through Warmth, Warm Front schemes and fuel savings club

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

We have improved the energy efficiency rating of our council owned homes on a year by year basis. The index by which we measure the improvement is the Government set SAP(Standard Assessment Procedure) rating scale. Recently, however, the SAP rating methodology has been changed from an index of measurement based on a 0 to 120 scale (SAP 2001) to a 0 to 100

scale (SAP 2005). Audit Commission require 2006/7 returns to be based upon SAP 2005 and as a result, we are recalculating our 2006/07 performance score. Under the old SAP 2001 index our 2005/06 average was 64 but under the revised SAP 2005 this is recorded as 59. It is still, our intention to maintain the year on year energy efficiency rating improvement but our SAP number and targets set for the years between 2007 to 2010 are required to be recalculated to accommodate the change in the SAP rating index measurement. Revised SAP targets will be added to our Housing Strategy Action Plan during July 2007. Our underlying commitment, however, regardless in the change of SAP numbers reported, is to maintain our performance on increasing the energy efficiency of our homes.

Working with partners on the Warm Front (2) initiative from April 2006 – February 2007 we have enabled 2,830 households in the Borough to complete 3,424 energy efficiency measures to their homes including having cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, hot water tank jackets and replacement central heating boilers at a cost of £2.3million.

We have been pro-active in referring people with medical conditions or health needs through to the Government run Health through Warmth scheme. This enables qualifying households who have a health need and live in a property that could be deemed to be detrimental to their health/medical need to have energy efficiency improvement work done to their homes.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

For our council owned homes, over the next five years, we will do the following:

- Install heating to all unheated homes
- Spend £1.5m to replace inefficient night storage heaters with gas fired central heating systems
- Spend over £500,000 on energy efficiency measures
- Spend £1million on replacement windows for thermal comfort and security on properties with a poor energy efficiency rating

During the redevelopment of the North Priory Estate we will encourage the use of products and building designs that will contribute to meeting low or zero carbon objectives.

We will develop a new fuel poverty/alternative energy sources strategy to promote the use of energy efficient sustainable products and sources, and to help people spend less of their disposable income on heating and lighting costs.

We will carry out a stock condition survey during 2007/08 to determine the energy efficiency levels of the privately owned stock within the Borough and devise actions and objectives to help improve energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption.

We will calculate and set new targets in July 2007 to improve our energy efficiency (SAP) ratings.

The Council will be developing its planning policies to ensure that future housing developments utilise and encourage sustainable practices in terms of material use and producing properties that minimise energy usage and costs.

The Council is working with English Partnerships to develop a showcase demonstration site within the Borough that will pilot the use of a range of low and zero carbon technologies (this activity, however, is dependent upon English Partnerships securing the site in question).

Partnership arrangements

We will work with colleagues in the Planning Division of the Directorate of Urban Environment and a range of agencies that provide energy efficiency funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes.

Resources

For council owned housing, all funding is provided through the Housing Revenue Account.

Both Warm Front and Health through Warmth energy efficiency schemes are Government funded and Dudley is not allocated a specific sum of the funding to spend. We do, however, promote the access to this funding at all opportunities to ensure that the residents of Dudley get the maximum benefit from these opportunities.

Summary

- We have already worked with local housing associations to provide low carbon affordable homes within the Borough.
- We have improved the energy efficiency rating of our council owned homes on a year by year basis.
- Working with partners we have enabled 2,830 households in the Borough to complete 3,424 energy efficiency measures.
- We will carry out a stock condition survey during 2007/08 to determine the energy efficiency levels of the privately owned housing within the Borough.
- We will develop a new fuel poverty/alternative energy sources strategy to promote the use of energy efficient sustainable products and energy sources.

Chapter 4

MAKING HOMES DECENT - MEETING DECENT HOMES STANDARDS (LOCAL AUTHORITY AND PRIVATE SECTOR)

Assessment of priority

This is a national, regional and local priority.

LOCAL AUTHORITY OWNED HOMES – DECENT HOMES

Issue/Needs analysis

In July 2005, following an appraisal of the investment options that were available, the Council decided to retain the ownership and management of its social housing stock. Targets were set to achieve the Government's Decent Homes standard (for further details of the Decent Homes Standard see Appendix 3) by the Government's deadline of 2010. By the end of 2007/08 an estimated 23% (5,344) of properties will not meet the Decent Homes standard. This is planned to decrease to 14% (3,267) in 2008/9 and to 8% (1,787) by 2009/10. By 2010/2011 all homes will meet the decency standard.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

Dudley MBC is on target to meet the 2010 deadline set out by the Government to ensure that all local authority homes meet the decency standard by 2010. It has reduced the number of non-decent homes from 9,881 in 2001 to 5,883 as at 31st March 2006.

We do not have a backlog of council housing repairs, all repairs are carried out within our agreed repairs response times.

We have reduced the waiting time for adaptations to homes (the adaptations that are required for people with disabilities to live independently in a home of their choice) during the last twelve months from eighteen months to six months.

We have put in place a number of partnering arrangements with contractors and have reviewed and modernised working practices and commenced the development of projects to introduce innovative IT solutions to our repairs maintenance processes. These are targeted to deliver multi-million pound efficiency savings that will be further re-invested into our repairs and maintenance programme.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

Meeting the decent homes target is clearly the key objective during the life of this strategy. We are, however, considering the actions that we need to take to keep all homes decent and to move beyond merely making the homes decent according to the Government's decent homes definition. Our future priorities over the next five years include:

- Continuing to fit heating in unheated council properties (we have 1,500 unheated homes) and to replace 5,700 existing boilers.

- Carrying out £3.9 million of work over four years to improve security and community safety on estates.
- Completing an increased number of repairs (to match the increase in aspirations that tenants have about the standard of their property) whilst spending less year on year on our repairs budgets.
- Increasing our expenditure on grounds maintenance by £200,000 to improve the external appearances and sustainability of our properties and estates.
- Spending a further £3.7 million on adaptations to help people with disabilities to remain in their own homes, or move to other suitable homes, and thus help them to maintain independent living.
- Spending £1.5 million to replace inefficient electric night storage heaters with gas fired central heating systems.
- Spending £1 million on replacement windows to improve thermal comfort and security on properties identified as having a poor energy efficiency rating.

Partnership arrangements

The Building Services Division of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services is responsible for upgrading and maintaining council owned homes to ensure that they meet the Government's Decent Homes targets. In order to achieve this they work with a range of partners including, local residents associations, Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, and a number of building contractors and suppliers of materials.

New partnering arrangements have been entered into with contractors and are continuing to deliver improved efficiencies in terms of quality, value for money, and the use of more environmentally sustainable products. It is planned that £10 million of efficiency savings will be made over the next five years.

Resources

Capital resources

	06/07 £'000	07/08 £'000	08/09 £'000	09/10 £'000	10/11 £'000
Borrowing	5,069	5,644	5,195	5,176	5,221
Major repairs allowance	13,157	14,021	12,495	14,803	15,082
Revenue contribution to capital	3,308	4,165	0	0	78
Usable capital receipts	3,836	4,204	7,321	4,294	4,315
Less usable capital receipts transferred to support private sector housing capital	-2,289	-1,629	-1,670	-1,712	-1,755

Other	103				
Total	23,184	26,405	23,342	22,560	22,942

Revenue resources

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Brought forward	10,554	8,854	3,000	3,000	3,000
Transferred from HRA	22,076	20,316	25,673	26,153	26,757
Carried forward	-8,854	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
Total	23,776	26,170	25,673	26,153	26,757

PRIVATE SECTOR – DECENT HOMES

Issue/Needs analysis

Whilst all local authority and housing association housing should meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, in the private sector the emphasis is on achieving a higher rate of decent homes for vulnerable households i.e. the elderly and those on welfare benefits.

It is estimated that the proportion of vulnerable households in the private sector living in decent homes should increase year by year such that 70% of private sector homes occupied by vulnerable groups are decent by 2010 and 75% by 2020.

In 2006 we estimated that there were approximately 7,595 vulnerable households living in non-decent homes in the borough. The number of vulnerable households living in non-decent homes must be reduced by 2,039 to achieve the Government target by 2010. The results of the stock condition survey due to be completed by December 2007 may, however, affect this estimate.

A range of initiatives have been introduced that are aimed at assisting the Council achieve the Government target by 2010 but are dependent upon the retention of, or increase to, the existing funding for this type of work.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

A stock condition survey will be commissioned and completed during 2007/08 and it is anticipated that the results will be available in December 2007.

We have been engaged in the introduction of property appreciation loans (PALS) for the borough since 2005 through the West Midlands 'Kickstart' programme. This has enabled householders to undertake work on their own properties to meet their needs by using the equity that they have in their homes to fund improvements. This approach to home improvements increases choice and diversity, and has enabled the Council to gradually move away from an improvement grant dependency culture. The scheme has been piloted in partnership with six other urban authorities across the region plus Mercian Art Homes and Black Country Housing Group. Nineteen loans to the value of £184,000 have been approved since January 2005 and there are currently 35 potential applicants that should proceed to complete a loan.

Our housing assistance schemes involve both the Council and the Home Improvement agency run by Black Country Housing Group. The partnership aims to assist vulnerable households retain their independence and remain in their own homes by providing a range of services including:

- The Dudley Key Safe Scheme
- Housing Assistance schemes including property appreciation loans through Kickstart
- Hospital Release scheme

- Health through Warmth
- Warm Front (included in Health through Warmth)
- Houseproud
- Disabled Facilities Grants

The Housing Assistance scheme enabled 87 properties in the private sector to be renovated thus substantially improving living conditions for the occupiers at a cost of £889,000 during 2006/07.

148 properties were adapted during 2006/07 at a cost of £2,100,000 to support independent living or care in the home by providing safe access into and around the property and to basic amenities e.g. washing and toilet facilities, kitchen and sleeping accommodation.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

We intend to streamline and further improve our procedures for 2007/08 so that customers and potential scheme users receive an even better service from us. Work includes:

- Providing more information, advice, support and assistance to customers to ensure that their homes meet their needs
- Processing enquiries quicker
- Ensuring customers are made aware of the full range of options available to them in order to make informed decisions about their housing solutions
- Ensuring that owners are supported by a caseworker throughout the process and have a central point of contact

We will target our housing assistance schemes towards vulnerable households, empty properties and tenanted properties where landlords and their properties are seeking to become accredited under the Councils 'Accreditation' scheme that will be launched in 2007/08.

Partnership arrangements

We recognise the need to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the decent homes target is met by 2010 and that services are delivered in a cost effective and efficient way: Therefore we will continue to work with:

- Local Authority partners - West Midlands Kickstart partnership
- Mercian ART Homes
- Black Country Housing Group
- Property owners
- Elected members
- Managing agents
- Private tenants

Resources

The Private Sector Housing Capital Programme budget will continue to partially fund initiatives to deal with disrepair and adaptations to properties in the private sector.

Additional funding is also received from the West Midlands Regional Housing Board to underpin the Kickstart partnership in the sum of £500,000 and £1,129,000 from the Communities and Local Government (Central Government) to support the provision of disabled facilities grants.

Summary

- We are making good progress and on target to meet the Government set Decent Homes Standard for all of our local authority owned properties by 2010.
- We have a range of initiatives in place to help vulnerable people living in private sector homes make their homes meet the Government set Decent Homes standard.
- We will be doing a stock condition survey during 2007 to establish our exact position in relation to private sector decent homes targets.

Chapter 5

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE HOMES AND ESTABLISHING PATHWAYS OF CHOICE TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND BALANCING THE HOUSING MARKET

Assessment of priority

This is a regional and local priority.

Issue/Needs analysis

Our recent Housing Needs study has identified the following issues that need to be addressed in order to balance the supply of housing types (property type and tenure) that are available. If these issues are addressed it will increase the range of housing options and choice, especially for households who are unable or unwilling to enter the housing market (rented or home ownership) in their own right at the present time (these are referred to as concealed households – households who are living with other existing households).

Future house building needs to be focussed on:

- Increasing the range of affordable homes within the Borough. This includes offering a range of options including shared ownership and low cost home ownership.
- Increasing the number of newly built affordable homes each year
- We need to increase the supply of affordable private sector properties to rent as currently less than 4% of the Borough's stock is available for private renting and there is also a need to stimulate growth in this particular sector. There is also a need to increase the number of furnished properties available for renting.
- We need to increase the range of social housing (properties owned and let by the local authority or housing associations (Registered Social Landlords)
- We need to make the best use of the housing that we already have in the Borough by encouraging people to bring properties that are currently empty, back into use.
- We also need to encourage developers to build a varied mix of housing types from affordable dwellings right up to the supply of executive housing in order to attract and retain people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds within the Borough

There is also a clear need to do some promotion work about housing association accommodation with local people who are seeking housing solutions. Data gathered on the tenure preference of households during the housing needs survey, indicates that few households have indicated a preference for housing association rented or shared ownership accommodation. These housing options need to be promoted to make people more aware of how they could help to meet their housing needs.

Where possible we will also encourage the development of services that help people to maximise their incomes. This can include welfare benefits maximisation or encouraging the work of agencies that do free or low cost energy efficiency works to properties to reduce the amount of disposable income that is spent on heating/lighting costs.

In terms of creating sustainable communities, this will be done by working in partnership with planners and housing developers to ensure that where possible building schemes contain a mixture of housing and tenure types. We will also be working closely with colleagues who undertake economic regeneration activities to try to raise the income levels of householders in Dudley. This will widen the housing options that are available to them and reduce the likelihood of social exclusion.

We will also work closely with tenants and residents associations, and leaseholders to ensure that their views are taken on board within the management of council housing stock. Further information on how we do this can be found in our Tenant Participation Strategy. Copies are available to download from: <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/tenant-participation>

In terms of increasing the supply of private sector homes that are available for let, we acknowledge that over recent years there has been an increase in the 'Buy to Let' market as investors see this as a way to achieve a regular income stream and feel that they are likely to benefit from an increase in the re-sale value of the property. Anecdotally, however, we have observed a significant number of properties that are available to let on newly built housing schemes. This suggests that the rent levels that many of the properties are being marketed at are unaffordable to many of the concealed households that we have in the Borough who are seeking housing.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

Dudley's Unitary Development Plan identifies the need to provide 5,639 new dwellings in accordance with Regional Planning Guidance to meet the housing needs of the whole community between 2003 and 2011. The total number of properties that have been built in the Borough (minus demolitions) over the last five years is 1,953.

The number of affordable housing units built over the last 5 years is 280.

Last year 74 affordable homes were built

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

Using our powers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1990 we are planning to build 1,160 affordable homes over the next 5 years.

We will work with planning colleagues to try to meet the target of building 3,686 new dwellings by 2011. This, however, depends on the capacity of building developers to do this.

We will promote shared ownership as a housing option by working with local housing associations

We will be looking for opportunities to review estates to assess if intervention is required to make them more multi-tenure and/or sustainable for the future. Our first action in relation to this is the redevelopment of the North Priory estate to provide a range of good quality, affordable mixed tenure housing.

Re-establishing a land use and assembly group to ensure that new developments or the redevelopment of sites is linked to other infrastructure facilities that are needed, for example, schools and health services.

Monitoring and reviewing our Planning Policy on Affordable Housing.

Through the development of our Private Sector Housing Strategy we will be looking at ways of encouraging more people to consider becoming private sector landlords and thus increasing the supply of rented housing within the Borough.

An analysis of higher income households within the Borough indicates that at 16.4% of the Borough's population, we already have more households than our immediate neighbouring authorities. We will, therefore, look for opportunities to encourage the development of higher value/prestige housing in the Borough in order to attract and retain higher income households in line with the recommendations of the Black Country Study. However, in terms of increasing pathways of choice, we will primarily focus our energies on expanding low cost/affordable housing as households requiring affordable housing are less likely to be able to meet their housing needs without our intervention in the housing market than the higher earning households.

Partnership arrangements

We will work with a range of partners including neighbouring local authorities, planners, housing associations, property developers, private landlords, property owners who may be potential private landlords in the future, local agencies such as health providers, community groups and local tenants and residents groups to achieve our objectives.

Resources

We will use existing council budgets and seek funding opportunities such as Housing Corporation funding to achieve the delivery of these objectives. We will also make use of our Section 106 powers to increase the provision of affordable housing.

Summary

- We will provide a mix of housing and tenure types in order to help people to remain within the Borough regardless of their housing need.
- We will re-establish a land use and assembly group to ensure that new developments or the redevelopment of sites is linked to other infrastructure facilities that are needed, for example, schools and health services.
- Using our powers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1990 we are planning to build 1,160 affordable homes over the next 5 years.
- We will encourage more people to consider becoming private sector landlords to increase the supply of affordable rented housing within the Borough.

CONNECTING THE HOUSING STRATEGY TO ECONOMIC AND AREA REGENERATION

Assessment of priority

This is a regional and local priority.

The Dudley Borough Economic Strategy sets out the long term vision for economic regeneration in the Borough and the key strategic actions that will be delivered to ensure the sustained growth and development of Dudley's economy. The Economic Strategy is developed in the context of a wide range of national, regional, sub-regional and local policies, strategies and plans covering economic and spatial issues which impact on the local economy including the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, the West Midlands Economic Strategy, the Dudley UDP, the Dudley Community Strategy and the Dudley Council Plan.

The Economic Regeneration Division is also actively involved in the development of the City Region approach which is intended to ensure that strategic policies for spatial planning, economic development, skills and employment, transport, regeneration, housing, the reduction of carbon emissions and quality of life are effectively co-ordinated and mutually supportive.

The aims and objectives of the Economic Strategy seek to address the economic issues facing the Dudley Borough. The aims are:

- To optimise the opportunities for local people – including the most vulnerable people and those from deprived areas - to obtain local jobs
- To support and develop new and existing businesses and to attract inward investment to the Borough
- To encourage and support the development of a diverse and dynamic business base that increases the proportion of well paid jobs across the Borough
- To improve the economic and environmental infrastructure of Dudley Borough and its town centres
- To champion the interests and assets of the Dudley Borough, securing additional resources and improving its position regionally, nationally and internationally

The Economic Strategy supports the aspirations set out in the 2033 Black Country Study Vision 'Looking Forward: The Black Country in 2033' and its four key objectives, which are to:

- Reverse the trend of people leaving the Black Country
- Raise income levels by ensuring better skills and types of jobs
- To attract and retain people with higher level skills (change the socio-economic mix)
- Protect and enhance the environment and create a safe, attractive and healthy place to live and work.

Issue/Needs analysis

There are some key economic issues and challenges for the Borough which include:

- Gross Value Added (nationally recognised measure of productivity per employee) per head of population for Dudley & Sandwell is the lowest in the West Midlands region (£13,488 - 2003)
- Dudley has the lowest average weekly full time earnings in the Black Country for workers employed in Dudley, however, employed residents living in the Borough have the highest level of average full time gross weekly earnings in the Black Country, at £400.50 per week. (Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings, 2006).
- Nearly 30,000 people in the Borough are claiming either Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support or Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disablement Allowance.
- Low skills levels - 16% of residents of working age are without qualifications and 20.8% of the working age population have a Level 4 qualification, compared to 26% for England.

There are a significant number of long term major physical infrastructure developments that will significantly contribute to the delivery of the economic and housing strategy, particularly those around the Borough's town centres (Brierley Hill, Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge) which will radically change the face and nature of the Borough, offering up major large scale investment and development opportunities with long term economic, social and environmental impacts. Such developments will see a significant change in roles for each of the four town centres aimed at improving their attractiveness both to residents and visitors.

Part of the Black Country Study (BCS) was to plan a way forward for the future of the Brierley Hill/Merry Hill/Waterfront area and, in particular, secure its status as a strategic centre in order to provide more certainty in planning for the future of this area of the Borough and also give inward investors the certainty to provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities to realise its economic and regeneration potential.

The BCS was subject to an Examination in Public in January by an independent Panel of Planning inspectors. The Panel report recognised the need to recommend Brierley Hill becoming a strategic centre and also includes and endorses the need for the role and revised status of Dudley Town Centre as a non-strategic town centre to be recognised as a positive opportunity to take advantage of its tourism, cultural and historic role and as a focus for quality housing.

The transformation of Dudley town centre is a key objective for the Council. The Dudley Area Development Framework, which was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in December 2005, identifies nine opportunity areas in Dudley for significant public and private sector investment and development, resulting in the creation of new jobs and housing in the

town centre and the repositioning of Dudley town centre as a high profile regional tourist attraction to increase visitor numbers and spend.

Dudley MBC is working closely with the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership in taking forward the development of the Brierley Hill area which will result in a new mixed use environment, creating around 10,000 new jobs as well as new homes and improvements to the transport infrastructure.

In addition to the town centre regeneration, Dudley MBC is also addressing the regeneration of the Borough's District and Local Centres. Five centres at Shell Corner, Cradley/Windmill Hill, Pensnett, Lye and Quarry Bank have been agreed as priorities for action. The overall aim of this activity is to bring new businesses and jobs into these shopping centres and improve the environment for people to live and work in each area.

Dudley MBC will be working with key partners and stakeholders to further develop initiatives, particularly those focusing on jobs, skills and health and housing, and seek appropriate resources for implementation in order to improve the quality of life and well being for individuals in disadvantaged areas of the Borough.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

Work is underway to take forward the implementation of the Dudley Area Development Framework and recent achievements have included the approval of £5.35m of external funding for the Castle Hill development. This site will be developed for mixed use to provide business, employment and leisure and housing opportunities to include 65 new homes, as well as significant investment and improvements to Dudley Zoo and Castle.

In September 2006 the Council approved the 'Local and District Centres Review' and agreed the 5 centres at Shell Corner, Cradley/Windmill Hill, Pensnett, Lye and Quarry Bank as priorities for action. The overall aim is to bring new businesses and jobs into these shopping centres and improve the environment for people to live and work in each area.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

If all of the developments in the nine opportunity areas in the Dudley Area Development Framework are delivered, this could achieve around 3,000 jobs, close to 1,000 new homes, around 2,250 additional people living in the town, over 30,000 sq m of new business floorspace and close to 30,000sq m of new retail floorspace.

The Employment Heart project will focus on the development of a 27 Hectare Brownfield site that is part of the Black Country West Employment Land Investment Corridor. The Council is looking to institute change from a traditional industrial base and environment to deliver high quality development based on the introduction of knowledge/innovation based jobs. Closely aligned to this project is the ambition to create a centre of excellence for innovation and technology.

Following the completion of the review of the Brierley Hill Implementation Strategy, the Council has commenced the preparation of the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan which will involve a planned extension of its retail core, commercial enterprises and housing needs to establish its strategic centre importance through the further creation of jobs and business opportunities and leisure facilities. The Brierley Hill Area Action Plan will be adopted by September 2009.

Dudley Council will also be starting the process of developing the visions for Halesowen and Stourbridge Town Centres to establish them as centres where people wish to live, work, relax and conduct business.

Within the redevelopment of the North Priory Estate we will work to create job opportunities for local people by specifying in development briefs that developers must include plans to train and use local people whilst redeveloping the site. This will be done in partnership with Future Skills – Dudley (training agency).

Partnership arrangements

Dudley MBC continues to actively seek private sector partners to provide the investment to take forward the long term development projects in the Borough. The Economic Development and Regeneration Partnership (EDRP) is a formally recognised partnership within the Dudley Community Partnership structure with responsibility for sustaining the delivery of successful economic regeneration throughout the Borough against the five strategic aims of the Dudley Borough Economic Strategy. Its membership includes key external agencies and organisations including JobCentre Plus, the Learning & Skills Council, Business Link and local Colleges, as well as the local authority's Economic Regeneration Division and Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services. Through a mixture of membership and external consultation, local employers and businesses are involved and consulted with to ensure that their views are reflected.

Resources

Since April 2003, the Economic Regeneration Division has secured almost £31 million of external funding to support regeneration projects, including housing elements, with a total value of over £64 million.

Key funds have already been obtained from competitive external sources, in particular the European Structural Funds, Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and the Department of Transport. The Economic Regeneration Division has been actively involved in the development of the Zone Implementation Plan (ZIP) for the Arc of Opportunity and Future Foundations Regeneration Zones for the period 2007-2010. Schemes requesting a further £11m of AWM funding have been identified in the ZIP for which appropriate applications will need to be submitted.

Summary

- The implementation of Dudley's Economic Strategy will contribute to meeting the objectives of this strategy by creating opportunities to stimulate inward investment to the Borough and create higher value added employment opportunities with increased earnings potential for local residents. Increased income levels will widen peoples' housing choices and options.
- There is a recognition that there is a need for a greater diversity of housing types and quality types within the Borough. This means meeting the needs of those seeking affordable social housing, whilst also building housing that will attract and retain people with higher level skills and earnings in order to change the socio-economic mix of residents in the Borough.
- Work will continue on regenerating town centres via Town Centre Action Plans and further work will be identified for District and Local Centres including Shell Corner, Cradley/Windmill Hill, Pensnett, Lye and Quarry Bank.

Chapter 7

MEETING SPECIFIC HOUSING NEEDS

Assessment of priority

This is a regional and local priority.

Issue/Needs analysis

HOMELESSNESS

Following a sharp increase in the number of households accepted as homeless by the council between 1998 and 2003 we have found that the number of people presenting themselves as homeless has stabilised from 2003 onwards at around 2,000 per year. In 2005/6, there were 448 households accepted as homeless and a further 138 households were assisted to prevent them from becoming homeless.

In 2005/6, the presence of children or an expectant mother in the household continued to be the main reason for a priority need acceptance. (72% of all acceptances, representing 323 such households). The most frequent reasons given for the loss of their last settled home are relationship breakdown, mortgage arrears/repossession, end of assured short hold tenancy and family/relatives/friends no longer willing to accommodate.

Reason	2001/2	2002/3	2004/5	2005/6
Mortgage arrears/repossession	123 (30%)	132 (27%)	69 (11%)	94 (21%)
Relationship breakdown [of which violent]	112 (27%) [77 (19%)]	112 (23%) [75 (15%)]	143 (24%) [100 (17%)]	101 (23%) [77 (17%)]
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	98 (24%)	112 (23%)	102 (17%)	82 (18%)
Parents/relatives/friends no longer willing to accommodate	21 (5%)	37 (7%)	112 (19%)	64 (14%)

The Homeless Strategy has five strategic objectives:

- To further develop our strategic approach and new responses to tackle homelessness
- To strengthen the help available to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including the availability and quality of housing advice.
- To maintain low levels of repeat homelessness
- To continue to reduce levels of homelessness against the main causes of homelessness identified in Dudley as:
 - mortgage arrears possession
 - termination of assured shorthold tenancies

- relationship breakdown (including violent relationship breakdown)
- parents / relatives unwilling to accommodate
- To achieve a better balance between housing availability and demand

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

Since 2003 the annual number of homeless households in the Borough has stabilised.

By 2005/6, repeat homelessness has been reduced to less than 1%.

Our family hostel has been converted into six self contained flats, one of which is designed for wheelchair use. Previous residents contributed to the redesign process, and this is an approach we will use again in improving other services.

We have increased the number of Housing Advice Officers from four to six and changed the way that they work so that they are more proactively customer focused. This includes doing home, hospital and prison visits to provide advice and assistance.

We have produced a directory of homelessness services in conjunction with our neighbours Walsall and Sandwell, and developed a Tenancy Guarantee Scheme.

With partners, we have secured Supporting People funding to develop a Sanctuary Scheme that will enable people who experience domestic violence or racial harassment to remain within their homes with support and extra security measures rather than having to move away from the area where they live and their local support networks.

Analysis of options/future actions/targets/objectives

We have begun to develop specialist housing accommodation and support for people who need extra support because for example substance misuse, offending or chaotic lifestyles. We aim to help reduce both homelessness and reoffending, and to contribute to the reduction of anti-social behaviour and the promotion of sustainable communities. We will seek further funding opportunities that will enable us to do this.

We will work with other Directorates and agencies to develop an action plan in tackling and modifying the behaviour of persistent offenders.

We will seek to develop second stage group or cluster accommodation for people with alcohol issues who do not want to live in a hostel but are not ready for independent living.

We will further develop access to housing and support for people with drugs issues, including move on arrangements

We will examine our policies on rent arrears and re-housing (including former tenancy arrears) and link these to engagement with money management and debt services

We will aim to increase the number of furnished lettings within the Borough by encouraging people to become private sector landlords providing furnished lettings.

We will fundamentally review our lettings and nominations policy whilst introducing Choice Based Lettings to make the best use of vacancies, give fair treatment to all who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and avoid perverse incentives to claim homelessness. (Further details of this can be found in Chapter 8 'Introducing Choice Based Lettings by 2010')

Partnership Arrangements

The multi-agency Homelessness Review Group consisting of Council Directorates, voluntary sector organisations, and local housing associations meets to oversee the development and implementation of the Homelessness Strategy.

Resources

The Homelessness and Housing Advice Team are funded from the Housing Revenue Account and Council General Fund. Funding bids are made to fund various homelessness prevention activities when opportunities arise. This funding is usually provided by the Government (Communities and Local Government Department). In addition to this there are a range of services receiving Supporting People funding that provide housing support to vulnerable people to help them to live independently in their own homes. Many of these activities centre on maintaining a tenancy, money advice and developing independent living skills such as cooking and budgeting.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY

Issue/Needs analysis

The five year strategy sets out to identify the strategic gaps in provision for people requiring support to live independently. Whilst a number of the strategic priorities have already been met, and there is scope to provide support within existing accommodation there may be a need to develop specific housing types and schemes to meet these needs. These priorities are examined to see if specialist/additional housing is required on a case by case basis. In some cases funding commitments will be required for both the capital costs of building the housing and the on-going revenue costs that will be required from Supporting People funding to provide direct support to aid people to live independently.

The Supporting People Strategic objectives are:

Short term

- Focus on immediate pressure points where there is a demand for temporary or crisis accommodation where there is a risk of homelessness/self harm/harm to others
- Extending services to young people at risk/young offenders

Medium term (2006-2008)

- Develop extra care housing for older people with learning disabilities/mental health and dementia
- Refurbishment of women's refuges to improve quality standards
- Develop housing options for people with chaotic lifestyles
- Supported living for young people with physical disabilities
- Supported living options for people with learning disabilities
- Supported living options for people with mental health problems
- Supported living options for younger people with higher functioning autism
- Expansion of women's refuge accommodation
- Second stage housing for people with alcohol problems following detox

Long term (2008-2010)

- Floating support for people discharged from hospital especially people with dementia, physical and sensory impairment and mental health needs
- Develop a foyer scheme for young people at risk/care leavers/single homeless

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

Supporting People funding of £6.5million is provided to provide support to help vulnerable people live independently within the Borough. Key client groups include the elderly, people with learning disabilities, people recovering from drug and alcohol problems and people fleeing domestic violence. 41 agencies deliver these key services that aim to prevent homelessness, re-offending, anti-social behaviour and unnecessary hospital admissions with 5,486 people receiving support. Over the last few years key achievements have included providing support to travellers, expanding tenancy sustainment services to homeless families, providing help to teenage parents and providing support workers for ex-offenders/substance misusers.

Analysis of options/future actions/targets/objectives

We will develop a strategic approach to ensure that the remaining unmet Supporting People priorities that have a requirement for new/additional housing are picked up through Dudley's investment submissions to the Regional Housing Board. We will do this by developing a supported housing strategy taking into account known support needs and linking it to future building and redevelopment requirements within the Borough.

Partnership arrangements

Partners involved include: Regional Housing Board, Housing Associations, Supporting People Commissioning Body and Supporting People Core Steering Group.

The housing strategy division will work with a diverse range of partners throughout the lifetime of this strategy to ensure that our knowledge of the housing needs of the Borough is kept up to date. This will be through organising events of our own, or working with partners to use their events or communication channels to gather the information.

Resources

Dudley receives over £6million per annum to support people to live independently via the Supporting people Programme. This involves delivering 74 services through 41 service providers to 5,486 clients.

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) HOUSEHOLDS

Issue/Needs analysis

From our Housing Needs study we know that :

- 47% of BME households said their home was too small compared with 43% of the wider population. Of the newly forming or concealed households that were surveyed within these households, all of the households stated that they had a child due.
- Income levels for BME groups are slightly lower than the wider population
- The majority of BME households who stated that they intended to move within the next 3 years stated that they required a bungalow with two bedrooms
- The main reason stated for BME households who wished to leave the Borough was for employment and better access to work (59.6% of people who indicated a need to move).
- The level of BME respondents who had a disability or long-term illness is slightly higher than the whole population (30.9% compared to 27.8%) but the most frequent nature of the disability was a walking disability which was the same for all demographic groups.
- Within the BME responses there were clear preferences to either buy their homes and becoming owner occupiers, or to hold a tenancy with the council. Housing association tenancies and shared ownership did not figure as a tenure preference.
- 233 households that indicated that they were looking to move within the next three years said that they needed a four or five bed roomed

property. 58% of these wanted to buy the property but 41% of them were looking to rent the property.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

We will continue to promote the use of culturally appropriate finance packages to ensure that home ownership and shared ownership is considered within a range of housing options that our diverse communities can consider using.

We will encourage local housing associations to provide larger properties at affordable rents to meet the demand for larger properties that are available for social rent.

We will monitor the number of properties let to BME households (local authority and local housing associations) to ensure equality of access to social housing.

Analysis of options/future actions/targets/objectives

Given that we have a greater demand for social rented housing than we can currently meet within the Borough we will work with local housing associations to develop a range of larger properties in specific areas.

We will also encourage housing associations to work with local black and minority ethnic communities to publicise the range of rented and shared ownership housing that they have available as information on tenure preferences for the BME communities indicates that they are more likely to aspire to owner occupation or seek council accommodation than consider other types of affordable or social rented accommodation.

Partnership Arrangements

We will work with local BME communities and local housing associations through the Dudley Housing Partnership to achieve this.

Resources

Funding bids will developed as appropriate to match identified needs.

The promotion of the services of local housing associations will be funded by the individual housing associations. Dudley MBC will also offer promotion opportunities to housing associations as and when they occur. This can include the provision of information stands at events throughout the Borough or publicity in in-house produced magazines.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Issue/Needs analysis

Dudley has a contract with the Home Office (£1.6 million over 5 years) to house 487 asylum seekers within the Borough. They are housed within 143 properties. There is a dedicated team to deliver this contract and all costs are met through the Home Office Management Allowance.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

Dudley is currently performing well and meeting all of the Home Office contract stipulations. The contract is based on a 65% occupancy rate. Dudley is currently delivering an 80%+ occupancy level. The operation of this contract has helped to re-invigorate some areas of council housing within the Borough as previously difficult to let properties are now occupied and the Home Office contract has attracted inward investment into the Borough via the income stream paid by the Home Office.

Analysis of options/future actions/targets/objectives

We will aim to maintain, or exceed, the 65% contractual occupancy level. Dudley is represented at a national and regional level to ensure that any policies and services that are developed will promote community cohesion and strengthen local communities.

Work commenced in early 2007, working with the Government, to develop a policy for dealing with failed asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds so that they do not have a negative impact on local communities.

Partnership Arrangements

Partners include: Dudley MBC, Home Office, other neighbouring local authorities and local voluntary sector agencies and local service providers who provide services to asylum seekers and the wider community.

Resources

£1.6 million Home Office contract (runs 2006 to 2011)

REFUGEES

Issue/Needs analysis

Any asylum seekers that are given 'leave to remain' in Great Britain that are housed under the Dudley MBC/Home Office contract must leave the accommodation that they have been provided with whilst they were an asylum seeker within 28 days of being notified of their immigration status decision. The number of people that are granted refugee status within Dudley fluctuates depending on the countries that are deemed to be safe to return to, the nationality groups that Dudley is housing in its accommodation and the number of immigration status decisions that are being made.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

Dudley has a dedicated team who arrange interviews for people who need to leave the Home Office contract provided accommodation, as they are deemed to be at risk of homelessness. They also offer information to refugees about agencies and services that can help them access health, education, training services etc. On average the team deals with 100-130* refugees per year.

*These will not all be people who have recently been granted leave to remain as some of the people receive on-going support from the team when issues arise and they require support.

Analysis of options/future actions/targets/objectives

We will develop our existing services to refugees by further integrating the work we do within local communities. This will result in better multi-agency co-ordination and closer links to established Black and Minority Ethnic groups within the Borough. This work will commence from May 2007.

From early 2007 we have also taken steps to encourage local refugees who live within council owned accommodation to participate in local tenants forums, and tenants and residents association meetings.

During 2007 we shall also be monitoring the impact of EU accession/migrant workers and developing appropriate local policies to ensure that there is local community cohesion and communities are sustainable.

Partnership Arrangements

Dudley MBC, Home Office, other neighbouring local authorities, local voluntary sector agencies and local service providers who provide services to refugees, EU migrant workers and the wider community.

Resources

£54,000 per annum Supporting People contract and officer time.

GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

Issue/Needs analysis

The council currently owns and manages a traveller site at Oak Lane, Kingswinford. The site provides 19 plots and there is currently a waiting list of 19 families, some of whom have been waiting as long as five years.

Following the introduction of the Housing Act 2004, there is now a requirement for us to undertake an accommodation/need assessment and produce a Gypsy and Traveller accommodation strategy.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

We are currently seeking funding from the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Department of the Government to contribute towards the cost of providing three additional permanent plots and the refurbishment of the existing utility blocks within the existing curtilage of the site at Oak Lane at an estimated cost of £686,000.

These additional plots will generate additional revenue, which will help to offset future maintenance costs.

The option of transferring the ownership or management of the site was considered as part of a Best Value Review in 2002 and was not taken forward following consultation with site residents who were overwhelmingly against this option.

Since October 2004, the site now has a resident warden funded through the Supporting People funding stream to address resident support issues in addition to site management responsibilities.

Analysis of options/future action/targets/objectives

DACHS and Dudley's Planning Policy Team, in conjunction with the other three Black Country planning authorities, will be conducting a Gypsies and Travellers assessment during 2007 as part of work towards the Black Country Joint Core Strategy to establish future need.

Additionally in conjunction with Connexions we are exploring the possibility of funding for the provision of a play area within the Oak Lane site.

Partnerships

We will be working in partnership with other neighbouring local authorities to gather information on the needs of gypsies and travellers in order to provide a cross authority approach. This will include working to ensure that the views and needs of local gypsies and traveller site residents are taken on board.

Resources

The provision of three extra plots and refurbishment of the utility blocks at Oak Lane Kingswinford will be partly grant funded from CLG funding to the sum of £553,250 if the bid is successful. An additional £132,750 contribution has been agreed from the Councils Capital funds. The three extra plots will generate income of £11,856.00 per annum, to offset future maintenance within the site. The management and maintenance of the site is funded from the rental revenue from the plots.

Summary

- Whilst 88% of the Borough's population live in properties that are suitable for their housing needs we must work hard to ensure that specific groups and communities who are vulnerable or disadvantaged have access to good quality, affordable housing that is suitable for their needs.
- In the future we are going to plan for these in a new way by linking our future Supporting People Strategy which identifies the support needs of vulnerable groups to a supported housing strategy so that the needs are matched directly to our plans to develop new, or re-use existing housing in the future.

Chapter 8

INTRODUCING CHOICE BASED LETTINGS BY 2010

Assessment of priority

This is a national and local priority.

Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

Choice Based Lettings (CBL) was introduced as a concept in 2001 by the Government. In effect CBL is an alternative approach to allocating council housing and meeting housing need. At present when a council property becomes empty and we want to find a new occupant for the property we operate a waiting list. The applicants are prioritised on the list by being awarded points. The more acute your housing need is, the more points you get. You also receive points for the length of time that you have been on the list. Suitable properties are matched and offered to the households on the list with the greatest need.

Under CBL empty properties are advertised and home seekers are able to 'bid' for them. The person who bids for the property and has the greatest degree of housing need is offered the property.

CBL will not increase the supply of vacant council homes, nor will it necessarily change the balance of supply or demand for properties within areas. It will however, be a more transparent process for people requiring housing because they will be able to see the number and type of properties that become empty within an area, they will be able to choose whether or not they wish to be considered for it by making a bid if they are interested in the property, and they will be able to bid for other types of housing or other areas if they feel that their chances of receiving their first choice of property and area are not very good.

The introduction of CBL is intended to:

- Improve customer satisfaction
- Maintain or even reduce the length of time that properties are empty
- Maintain or even reduce the number of empty properties
- Provide greater opportunities to work with housing associations, private sector landlords and other neighbouring local authorities by considering their inclusion within the CBL system in the future.

Measures will be put in place to ensure that home seekers will not be disadvantaged within the bidding process if they have specific needs that have arisen from age, disability, language difficulties etc.

Alongside this there are also plans for a review of the council's current lettings policy.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

In September 2005 the Council's Cabinet agreed to develop a CBL scheme.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

The pilot CBL scheme will come into operation for Halesowen and Stourbridge in Autumn 2007.

Full roll out of the CBL system is projected for summer of 2008.

Partnership arrangements

A CBL Project Group has been formed to oversee the development and implementation. Membership includes Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services employees, Dudley Council Plus employees and local housing associations. The scheme has been subject to councillor approval via the Council's Cabinet. Oversight of the project and decisions on future roll out of the scheme are subject to the recommendations made by the Council's Select Committee on the Environment.

The project group are also working closely with agencies, service providers and service users who can advise on making the CBL process accessible and responsive to the needs of vulnerable customers and those demographic groups who have failed or refrained from accessing mainstream council housing in the past.

Resources

The CBL scheme is being funded from the Housing Revenue Account. A project officer is being employed to oversee the development and implementation of this scheme. A project team exists to assist the project officer so officer time is provided to facilitate this.

A computer system to facilitate the CBL process is being procured.

Summary

- A new Choice Based Letting scheme will allow people to bid for any council home that becomes empty.
- A pilot scheme will operate in Halesowen and Stourbridge from Autumn 2007
- The system is expected to be extended so that it operates throughout the Borough during 2008
- The Project Group will be working to include the empty properties of housing associations, private landlords and properties owned by neighbouring local councils.

Chapter 9

REDUCING THE NUMBER OF EMPTY HOMES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Assessment of priority

This is a national, regional and local priority.

Issue/Needs analysis

The Council's first empty homes strategy was reviewed and rewritten in 2006 and has highlighted the position in relation to empty homes in the borough. In April 2005 there was a total of 4,089 empty homes in Dudley, of which 3,515 were privately owned and 504 were owned by the Council. A total of 1,347(33%) of empty properties had been empty for more than six months.

The number of empty council homes has continued to decrease from over 1,000 to 504 in April 2005. There has however, been an increase in the number of private sector empty properties vacant longer than six months which has increased from 1,133 in 2003, to 1,347 by April 2005.

The empty homes strategy primarily focuses on privately owned empty homes and sets out four key objectives to assist in reducing empty homes in the borough by:

- Obtaining clear and accurate information on empty homes in each area and establishing priorities
- Enhancing the process for managing the identification, assessment and prioritisation of empty homes and any enforcement action to be taken
- Raising awareness of empty homes within the borough
- Promoting the availability of help and assistance through an Empty Homes Information Pack

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

We have worked to raise awareness of empty homes through the development of our housing website, enabling the community and other stakeholders to find out more about our empty homes work including how to report an empty property and how to bring an empty homes back into use and holding quarterly landlords forum meetings to discuss issues.

We are now able to identify empty homes more accurately through the provision of council tax data.

An IT based geographic mapping system has been utilised to allow us to identify potential empty property hot spots.

The Housing Assistance Scheme has been developed to provide grant assistance of up to £5,000 to encourage owners to bring empty homes back into use and gives the Council nomination rights to the property when the property is ready for letting.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

We will continue to develop initiatives in conjunction with our partners to:

- develop a better understanding of the local housing market dynamics in relation to empty properties
- reduce the number of empty properties in the borough
- take appropriate action to deal with empty properties that are causing a nuisance (approximately 20 per year)
- develop processes and service standards to manage the identification, assessment and prioritisation of empty home for enforcement action
- develop a protocol with partners such as the Arson Task Force to ensure that we have a planned strategic approach to clearing housing sites that are scheduled for redevelopment to reduce the risk of arson and nuisance behaviour

Partnership arrangements

We recognise the need to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to identify and bring about the reoccupation of empty properties within the borough and we will work closely with the following to achieve our objectives:

- All Council Directorates
- West Midlands Empty Homes Officers Forum
- Property owners
- Elected members
- Emergency services
- Registered Social Landlords
- Managing agents

Resources

The Private Sector Housing Capital Programme budget will continue to fund initiatives to deal with empty homes in the private sector.

Summary

- The number of empty homes is reducing but we want to reduce this number even further
- We are identifying empty properties and approaching the owners to see if we can help them to return them to use by selling the properties or renting them out to other people

Chapter 10

INCREASING COMMUNITY RESPECT

Assessment of priority

This is a national and local priority.

Issue/Needs analysis

The Dudley Borough has a relatively low level of serious Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). There has also been an overall reduction in crime by 5% during the past year. In comparison to neighbouring areas, there is not a pattern of widespread entrenched anti-social behaviour. There are periodic and sporadic outbreaks of serious anti-social behaviour, and there are a small number of locations where ASB can often be sustained over relatively long periods. These include areas within Castle and Priory, Lye and Wollescote and Pensnett.

Considerable multi-agency work is being done to tackle ASB and Dudley has an impressive track record of using ASB Order legislation and dispersal orders.

On January 10th 2006 the Government launched the RESPECT Action Plan, which is primarily aimed at co-ordinating agencies and services to provide early preventative interventions to address the manifestations and consequences of ASB.

The Directors of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS) and Children's Services are championing a corporate Dudley RESPECT Action Plan.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

On 30 January 2007 a RESPECT Action Planning day was held to plan and develop local activities to reduce ASB.

DACHS has developed its own Time2Talk mediation service which uses mediation as a route to solving ASB issues and working to prevent homelessness.

DACHS has, over the last few years, redesigned its housing management service delivery so that Housing Managers are designated specific geographic areas to manage. This patch-based proactive management works well in using early interventions to prevent ASB from becoming severe or widespread. This has been accompanied by the development of new policies and procedures for Housing Management employees on how to deal with ASB. These have been developed in partnership with tenants. The satisfaction of people who have reported cases of ASB is monitored regularly to assess the impact and outcome of the procedures. This helps to drive further improvements in services.

DACHS and Community Safety have commissioned an internet based ASB case management system that records all ASB interventions. This will go live in April 2007.

A Joint Activities Group (JAG) has been formed as part of the Dudley Crime Reduction Partnership, with a current focus on tackling criminal damage. DACHS Housing Managers contribute their time alongside the Community Safety Team ASB Officer (multi-tenure) to tackle issues that fall within their geographic management areas.

In addition, partners have embraced the roll out of neighbourhood policing with regular attendance at the 37 PACT (Police and Community Together) groups. These meetings include the regular attendance of DACHS Housing Managers who contribute to local problem solving.

There are four key targets intended to build RESPECT in Dudley's Local Area Agreement. These are:

- To increase the % of people informed about the activities taken by the Council to tackle ASB
- To increase the % of local people feeling that parents are taking responsibility for their children
- To increase the % of local people feeling treated with respect and consideration
- To reduce people's perception of ASB being an issue in Dudley

During 2006/07 £1.5m from the Housing Revenue Account was spent on Community Safety initiatives, on council estates, for the benefit of its tenants and other residents. Working in partnership with local tenants and residents groups, initiatives were identified and developed with the aim of addressing local concerns. Examples of work include providing enhanced lighting and better fencing. A further £69,000 has been set aside for Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations to prioritise and allocate on improvement works, such as fencing, that have been specifically requested by local Tenants and Residents Associations.

DACHS has commenced a programme to replace its warden call equipment. This will be replaced with more modern equipment that will also be compatible with new telecare technology (for example sensors that monitor movement). This will enable vulnerable people to remain in independent living and homes of their choice living for longer, and give them re-assurance that if they encounter problems they can call for assistance and support immediately.

The 'Design for Community Safety Supplementary Planning Guidance' that was approved by the Council in January 2002 to advise on how improvements can be made to the physical environment to help to mitigate crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour is utilised to assess all planning applications prior to planning consent being granted in order to promote community safety obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

During 2007 the Council will publish its local RESPECT Action Plan and encourage local housing associations to work towards or achieve the RESPECT Standard.

A dedicated ASB unit will come into operation from 2nd April 2007. This team will co-ordinate action in respect of severe and entrenched ASB utilising partnership resources according to the issues to be addressed. The work of the team will be Borough-wide and across all housing tenure types.

During May 2007 Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (DFTRA) will be holding an event looking at issues of Respect, ASB and Hate Crime. In order to reflect the increasing mix of tenure types (owners, private renters, council tenants and housing association tenants) within estates they will be working with Dudley Housing Partnership to invite local housing association and other residents to participate in the event. There will also be an emphasis on working with the diverse communities that live on council housing estates.

Over the next five years DACHS will be spending £250,000 on upgrading the street lighting on housing owned land this will contribute to people feeling safer in their local neighbourhoods. Over the same period there will be a budget increase of 11% (£200,000) to provide an improved grounds maintenance programme on housing owned land. The improvements to local environments may also contribute to an enhanced feeling of community safety.

A Sanctuary Scheme is in development for victims of domestic or racial abuse. This will provide different levels of support to households ranging from improved home security measures and providing support and guidance, to providing a highly secure room in which to escape abuse within their own homes. It is hoped that this scheme will become operational during 2007/08.

Partnership arrangements

Partnership working arrangements to tackle ASB and to reduce crime are well established within the Borough. This ranges from the strategic Crime Reduction Implementation Group involving all council directorates, West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service and the Probation Service to local ASB Case Conference meetings to discuss local solutions to specific ASB activities.

Resources

Most DACHS related activities are funded through the Housing Revenue Account. The ASB unit will be funded from the Council's General Funds and the Housing Revenue Account. Dudley will seek, where appropriate, other funding streams to complement its existing funding. This will include making bids to the Government (Home Office/Communities and Local Government and Government Office West Midlands)

Summary

- The Dudley Borough does not have areas containing widespread severe anti-social behaviour, however, there are some geographic ASB hotspots.
- Partnerships to tackle ASB are well established and have delivered well in recent years to reduce the impact of crime and ASB within the Borough
- A new ASB unit is being launched in April 2007
- Dudley will publish its local Respect Action Plan during 2007

CLOSER WORKING BETWEEN DUDLEY MBC AND LOCAL HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

The Dudley Housing Partnership (DHP) is currently made up of Dudley Council and thirteen of the housing associations currently operating in the borough. Their aim is to raise the profile of social housing. It is thought that many people are unsure about what housing associations are and what housing services they have to offer.

Housing Associations work with Dudley Council to meet housing needs and build stronger communities across the Borough. By delivering good quality affordable homes and good housing services, housing associations help the Council and the Dudley Community Partnership to regenerate Dudley and to create healthy, safe and sustainable neighbourhoods.

Some of the aims of the group are to:

- work with the council and the Dudley Community Partnership to create and support stronger communities.
- support and help deliver the objectives of the Community Strategy and contribute to the renaissance and regeneration of Dudley as a prosperous borough for people to live and work .
- be the primary vehicle for discussion, negotiation and joint working with the council and other strategic bodies on all matters relating to the activities of housing associations operating in Dudley.
- work with the council and other agencies to respond to, and influence, changing housing markets and the housing aspirations of people in Dudley.
- work with the council and other agencies to develop and implement the Borough's Housing Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and the Black Country Study.

Dudley Housing Partnership and the Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations are also keen to work closely together in the future to reflect the changing nature of housing estates within the Borough as often there is now a mix of tenures (owner occupiers, private renters, council tenants and housing association tenants) within estates.

Progress/delivery/achievements to date

Over the last 5 years the number of properties owned by housing associations has increased by 217 to 3,873.

Dudley MBC and DHP have jointly produced promotional posters and leaflets to raise the awareness of housing associations within the Borough.

Dudley MBC and DHP have worked together to introduce joint working in relation to matching people in housing need who require specific equipment/adaptations to their home with suitable empty local authority or housing association properties.

DHP meets regularly to facilitate joint working and contributes to Dudley's annual housing conference.

Analysis of options/ future action/targets/objectives

As DHP has been operating for a number of years it is felt that a review of group membership and terms of reference for the group would be beneficial to ensure that the group is operating to maximum effect. This will include consideration of how DHP links to the Strategic Housing and Environmental Partnership (SHEP) which is the Local Strategic Partnership themed sub – group, part of the delivery group for the Local Area Agreement.

DHP will contribute to helping us use our powers under Section 106 of the Town and Planning Act of 1990 as we are planning to build 1,160 affordable homes over the next 5 years.

DHP has agreed to work together to maximise the regional funding share that Dudley receives for new affordable housing.

Dudley MBC and DHP will work together during the life of this strategy (2007-2010) to carry out a series of promotional activities to raise the awareness of local people about shared ownership housing options as data from the Housing Needs Survey that was carried out showed a low awareness or preference for housing association renting or shared ownership options.

DHP will work with the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Project Group to consider including housing association lettings within the scheme after the pilot phase of CBL has been completed.

Dudley MBC, DHP members and a range of other partners are working jointly to develop a 'Sanctuary Scheme' that will provide families suffering from domestic or racial abuse with an opportunity to remain within the family home with enhanced security measures and support, as an alternative to using hostel or seeking alternative accommodation.

Dudley MBC and DHP have agreed to capture and exchange data on households on the housing waiting list who have expressed an interest in home ownership or shared ownership properties with a view to proactively marketing low cost or shared ownership opportunities within the Borough from June 2007.

Dudley MBC, DHP and planners will work together to ensure that where possible, when using Section 106 land planning agreements, we use specific design briefs that will meet the needs of households within the Borough that require specially built social or affordable housing.

Partnership arrangements

In order to deliver sustainable affordable housing a number of Dudley MBC Directorates will work together with others including local housing associations, other regional local authorities, the Housing Corporation, the

Regional Housing Board, Dudley Community Partnership, local National Health Services and Primary Care Trusts, Probation services and West Midlands Police.

Resources

Many of the agencies listed above spend a considerable number of officer hours to make the partnerships work. Additional specific funding comes from the Housing Revenue Account, Council funds, finance from local housing associations, Housing Corporation finance and Regional Housing Board funding.

Summary

- Dudley has a good working relationship with local housing associations.
- Key priorities for action are:
 - A review of the membership and terms of reference of the Dudley Housing Partnership to ensure that it is operating to its maximum potential
 - Maximising Dudley's share of regional housing funding that becomes available
 - Promoting the opportunities that local housing associations provide for people to access low cost or shared ownership housing

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The table below shows how each of Dudley's key objectives have been arrived at, for example, if there is national, regional or local policy driver that supports why we have chosen the objective as a priority to tackle within our strategy.

Key objective:	Local	Regional	National
	Identified through local housing needs analysis/focus group/partnership working or housing conference feedback	Regional Housing Strategy	Government Objective
Greater integration with planning and strategically making better use of urban land (especially council owned land)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Promoting environmental sustainability and the development of low/zero carbon homes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Making homes decent - meeting Decent Homes standards (local authority and private sector)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Increasing the number of affordable homes and establishing pathways of choice to promote sustainable communities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Needing to balance the local housing market	Yes	No	No
Connecting the housing strategy to regeneration and declining communities, and helping communities to contribute to area regeneration	Yes	Yes	No
Planning for population change	Yes	No	No

Key objective:	Local	Regional	National
	Identified through local housing needs analysis/focus group/partnership working or housing conference feedback	Regional Housing Strategy	Government Objective
Meeting specific housing needs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Introduce Choice Based Lettings by 2010	Yes	No	Yes
Reducing the number of empty homes	Yes	No	No
Increasing Community Respect	Yes	No	Yes
Closer working between Dudley MBC and local housing associations	Yes	Yes	Yes

See Appendix 6 for how the strategy was developed and how it will influence other strategy development.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

Corporate Assessment

The Audit Commission, in March 2007 rated Dudley MBC for their Corporate Assessment as:

'Dudley Council is performing well. Working effectively with its partners, the Council has clear and long term ambitions that are founded on the needs of its communities....'

The assessment also states that there is 'effective political and managerial leadership giving the Council clarity of purpose and a focus on improvement' and 'the Council has used its resources to support the achievement of its priorities and there are links between its financial and service planning.'

Scrutiny Arrangements

This strategy is subject to the Council's Cabinet approval in May/June 2007. In preparation for this, approval for this strategy will have sought and gained from the DACHS Directorate Management Team (DMT) and Corporate Board in May 2007.

Progress against action plan targets and subsequent review of the strategy will be reviewed periodically by the Assistant Director of Strategy and Private

Sector Housing and the Head of Strategy (Strategy and Private Sector Housing) alongside the Strategy Division Senior Management Team and the DACHS Directorate Management Team. Progress will be reported periodically to the Strategic Housing and Environmental Partnership (SHEP) which is the themed sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership.

The action plan will be monitored and updated on a quarterly basis.

Risk Management

The production of this strategy will put Dudley in a strong position locally to drive forward new housing developments, provide more affordable housing and to influence the development of the forthcoming sub-regional housing strategy. Failure to agree and implement this strategy may lead to a loss in momentum in relation to improving the condition of homes within the Borough and widening housing choices for local residents.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND CONSULTATION

Housing Strategy Steering Group

The Housing Strategy Steering Group was formed to ensure that this strategy was developed in a way that captured the synergy of Dudley's overall strategic objectives. The group consists of a cross section of officers from throughout the council. For details of the group membership see Appendix 5.

Dudley MBC Cabinet

This strategy was presented to, and agreed by, the Cabinet (elected members) in June 2007.

Dudley MBC Corporate Board

This strategy was presented to, and agreed by, the Council's Chief Executive and the Directors of the Council in May 2007.

Directorate of Adult Community and Housing Services – Senior Management Team

The development of this strategy has been reported to, and contributions have been received from, the senior management team. As managers of almost 24,000 social rented homes in the Borough they have a key impact on local housing markets.

Dudley MBC Consultation Database

The development of this strategy has been publicised on Dudley MBC's Consultation Database. Members of the public can access the database from the Council's website www.dudley.gov.uk. The consultation database provides people with details about consultation activities and who to contact if they would like to contribute.

Citizens Panel Consultation

During March/April 2007 the Citizens Panel (a sample of residents throughout the Dudley Borough whose demographic details have been chosen so that

their responses will accurately reflect the views of the wider population of the Borough) were asked this consultation question:

Dudley Council are currently drafting a Housing Strategy for the Borough. Please look at the themes listed below and tick the THREE you think most important as priorities in the Councils Housing Strategy:

- Planning for population change (increase in the elderly population and more single person and smaller households)
- Making better use of urban land (land that has already been used for housing/factories)
- Developing homes that are more environmentally friendly (produce less impact on the environment)
- Helping to improve the standard of existing homes (private and rented)
- Increasing the number of affordable homes for people with low incomes/unable to get on the housing ladder
- Creating closer links between new housing and economic regeneration
- Meeting specific housing needs (including homeless people, black and minority ethnic community needs, asylum seekers and refugees and people who need support to live independently)
- Changing the way we allocate council houses to people (introducing choice based lettings)
- Encouraging people who own homes that are empty to make use of them
- Reducing anti-social behaviour
- None of these – Please tell us what your priority is:

The outcome of the consultation indicated that the top four priorities (highest % responses) were:

	%
Reducing anti-social behaviour in and around housing areas in the Borough	71
Increasing the number of affordable homes for people with low incomes	49
Making better use of urban land	46
Planning for population change	39

Internet consultation

Council officers, agencies that work in the Borough, Dudley Community Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership) local housing associations, the Housing Corporation, and Government Office West Midlands have been consulted via internet based surveys during February 2007.

Dudley Housing Partnership

The development of this strategy has been reported to, and contributions have been received from, the Dudley Housing Partnership. The partnership is open

to all housing associations (Registered Social Landlords) that own or manage properties within the Dudley Borough. For a list of housing associations that currently operate within the Borough visit:

<http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConLA.60>

Dudley's Landlords' Forum

Members of the forum were made aware of the development of the strategy and given the opportunity to contribute to it's development via a direct mail out and short survey questionnaire to a sample of forum members during March 2007.

Strategic Housing and Environmental Partnership (Themed sub-group of local strategic partnership)

This group has been consulted via circulating a summary of the draft strategy during March 2007 and comments/contributions were invited from the members.

Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

A summary of the draft strategy and a short survey form were distributed at a consultation event on 28th March 2007.

Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (DFTRA)

DFTRA were consulted on the draft strategy during March 2007 at a DFTRA Committee Meeting. They were subsequently sent the draft by email for use in consulting their individual Tenants and Residents Associations.

The Homelessness Review Group

A summary of the draft strategy was emailed to group members for comments/contributions during March 2007.

Area Panels

The Stourbridge Area Housing Panel was consulted on the draft strategy during April 2007.

Regional

Black Country Joint Core Planning Strategy

The Council will be working in conjunction with the other Local Authorities within the Black Country to produce a Black Country Core Strategy as part of its Local Development Framework. This development of the Core Strategy will follow consultation stages from which a preferred strategy will emerge and form the basis for all future planning documents within the Borough. This will be an important document in determining the broad locations for future housing development and therefore must closely linked with the Council's Housing Strategy throughout its development. To this end, we have worked closely with planning colleagues to create and agree this strategy.

Regional Housing Strategy Officers and Central Market Area (Central West) C3 Group

These two groups that represent the officers and agencies responsible for regional housing developments were consulted on the draft strategy during April 2007.

Things that we have added or changed as a result of the consultation:

The majority of consultation responses that we received indicated that people and agencies were in agreement with the objectives/priorities set out in the draft strategy documents. A number of key partners had a direct input into the text that appears in some of the chapters for example, the 'Increasing Community Respect' Chapter was written in conjunction with DFTRA, Community Safety Team and Housing Management services.

Here are some examples of additions or amendments that were made following consultation:

Consultation with:	Resulted in:
Strategy Steering Group	<p>Adding the requirement for a Fuel/Affordable Warmth Strategy</p> <p>Inclusion of schools/health needs within the strategic land planning group that is being set up</p> <p>Inclusion of details on town centre and area regeneration plans and objectives to ensure housing needs are considered</p> <p>Inclusion of information on prolific offenders and the Sanctuary Scheme in the 'Meeting Specific Housing Needs' section</p> <p>Renaming the chapter on 'Reducing ASB' to 'Increasing Community Respect'</p> <p>Inclusion of a specific section on affordability</p>
DFTRA and DHP	Inclusion of a specific chapter on how we will work together with local housing associations
DACHS Senior Management Team	<p>Inclusion on information about how the emerging Commissioning Strategies will help to meet housing strategic objectives</p> <p>Inclusion of a section in the document to demonstrate how consultation has shaped the development of this strategy</p>

RESOURCES

These are the resources that will underpin the delivery of this strategy. For some funding streams we do not have confirmation of the allocations for years 2008/09 or 2009/10. In addition to this funding we shall be looking for opportunities to work with partner agencies to maximise the use of resources, continue to seek ways to make efficiency savings and look for other funding opportunities that may arise. During our Corporate Assessment published by the Audit Commission in March 2007 it was noted that 'the Council has used its resources to support the achievement of its priorities and there are links between its financial and service planning.' Future resources will continue to be prioritised into meeting our long term strategic vision as set out in Dudley's Community Strategy.

Funding	2007/08 £m	2008/09 £m	2009/10 £m
Supporting People	6.5		
Public Sector Housing:			
Housing Management	14.0	14.1	14.5
Revenue repairs	23.8	26.2	25.7
Capital	23.2	26.4	23.3
Private Sector Housing Capital:			
Disabled Facilities Grants	2.0		
Housing Assistance	1.0		
Kickstart	1.1		
Oak Lane and other	0.7		

Housing Corporation Forward Allocation Pool:

Site	Housing Units	Funding
Beacon Centre	50 rented 21 shared ownership	£6,680,000
The Woodlands	22 shared ownership	£880,000
Cavendish Quarter	16 rented 47 shared ownership	£1,858,007

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Housing Strategy 2003/04 to 2008/09 Action Plan Update

Target	Date	Progress
To provide 400 new homes constructed to lifetime housing standards and reduce levels of unfit housing	By 2005	We have delivered 280 affordable homes over the last five years. We are currently establishing the precise number of these homes that have been constructed to lifetime housing standards. We are also on target to deliver decent homes and reduce unfitness in local authority homes and we are expecting to be on target for vulnerable private sector households once we have confirmation from the private sector stock condition survey in Autumn 2007.
Improve the supply of homes in Dudley by providing 5,300 extra homes by 2011 including the affordable element indicated in the draft UDP	By 2011	1,953 of the 5,300 additional homes have been provided up to March 2006
To review the local authority's lettings policies to offer more housing opportunities to young single people	Ongoing	The Lettings Policy is kept under rolling review, and was "health checked" by Shelter in 2006. In 2007, it is being reviewed in the light of the 2005 Housing Needs Survey, in preparation for Choice Based Lettings, and for the replacement of the waiting list points system with bandings.
Increase the supply of affordable housing by using planning regulations	Ongoing	280 affordable homes have been provided using planning obligations
Conduct a further housing needs survey in conjunction with the Regional Housing Partnership	Timescale to be agreed with Regional Housing Partnership	The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy was produced in 2005.
Reducing non-decent social housing by	By 2010	The 33% target was met and all council owned homes are on

33% by 2004 and to eliminate non-decent housing by 2010		target to be decent by 2010.
To undertake an options appraisal to identify additional resources necessary to meet the Decent Homes target	By 2005	Options appraisal completed. Stock retention by the Local Authority was the preferred option selected by tenants.
To develop and produce a strategy for future housing renewal in response to the Regulatory Reform Order	Ongoing	This action plan target has been superseded by the Kick Start Programme. We will, however, be developing a new Private Sector Renewal Strategy during 2007/08.
Expand the action taken to improve the quality of private rented accommodation	2004 – 2008	A landlord and property accreditation scheme will be made available to landlords during 2007/08. All licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) will be licensed by 2008. A priority inspection scheme for private rented properties will be developed in 2007/08.
To complete a sub-regional housing market study into areas of reducing or low demand	2004	Work has commenced on agreeing a timescale/approach to produce a sub-regional strategy.
Produce and implement an Empty Homes Strategy	September 2003	Produced and implemented in June 2006.
Demolish or return to use 25 empty private sector properties	End of 2005	By the end of the 2005/06 financial year 53 properties had been demolished or returned to use.
Explore the possibility of introducing a choice based lettings scheme	Timescale to be agreed	Pilot scheme to commence in Halesowen and Stourbridge by Autumn 2007
To continue doing 200 security upgrades per year for vulnerable households	Ongoing	This is being done through the Home Security Initiative
Implement a revised and updated racial harassment policy and procedure	2004	Completed and implemented

Increase energy efficiency in the Borough by 25% by 2006	By 2006	The energy efficiency ratings of council owned housing continues to increase year on year and over £2m was invested during 2006/07 on homes in the private sector. The private housing stock condition survey to be carried out by the end of 2007 will confirm our progress in relation to this target.
Development of an ethnically sensitive loan scheme to fund home improvements/house purchases	By December 2004	Developed and implemented in conjunction with ART Homes (Kick Start Programme)
To build a range of larger family homes, targeting 25 such dwellings each year	Ongoing	We are currently establishing how many of the 280 affordable homes built over the last 5 years contain more than 3 bedrooms.
To monitor access to our services via our Race Equality Scheme (RES)	Ongoing	Years 1 to 3 RES (2002-2005) Service reviews have been completed. A revised RES was published in May 2005 to cover an interim period until publication of the Council's Equality Scheme (2007-2010), which will incorporate Race, Gender and Disability strands.
To compile a directory of housing staff with a knowledge of community languages	December 2004	Completed and implemented
Continue to gather up to date and housing needs information	Ongoing	Housing Needs Survey completed 2005 and in discussions on gathering sub-regional housing needs data
Match known needs to existing sites and proposed developments	Ongoing	This is on-going work. There are proposals to revamp the corporate land use and development group (see Chapter: Greater integration with planning and strategically making better use of urban land (especially council owned land)).
Widening the remit of the Homelessness Review Group	Ongoing	The Group now has representation from Adult Services in addition to Childrens Services, from the Probation Service, and from Public Health. A second Homelessness Strategy has been developed ahead of

		the five year target.
Improving the housing lettings and homelessness advice service	Ongoing	<p>The Lettings Policy is kept under rolling review, and was “health checked” by Shelter in 2006. In 2007, it is being reviewed in the light of the 2005 Housing Needs Survey, in preparation for Choice Based Lettings, and for the replacement of the waiting list points system with bandings.</p> <p>The Homelessness Service has been reviewed and is subject to a comprehensive Improvement Programme. In 2006/7, the service achieved upper quartile performance against all relevant Best Value Performance Indicators and was appointed Regional Champion by Communities and Local Government (Government Department).</p>
Increase the range of homelessness prevention advice services by implementing the Homelessness Strategy	End of 2004	<p>New services include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A directory of homelessness and housing support services (in partnership with other Black Country boroughs) • Time2Talk family mediation service • Time2Save scheme encouraging young people to plan and save for their future housing needs • Crash Pad for young people (in partnership with Mediation service, Youth Offending Service, and Heantun Housing Association) • Debt Prevention for Housing Managers (in partnership with Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)) • Debt outreach and intervention (in partnership with CAB, Castle & Crystal Credit Union and others) <p>In 2007/8, we are developing a sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic or racial abuse and a new housing options advice service, reviewing all of our homelessness processes, and developing a homelessness prevention toolkit</p>

Appendix 2

KEY CHARACTERISTICS ABOUT DUDLEY

Dudley is a Metropolitan Borough with a population of 305,155 people (2001 Census), covering some 38 square miles. It is situated within the West Midlands conurbation and its neighbouring local authority boroughs are Birmingham, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall. It is projected that Dudley's population will increase by 1,500 people by 202.

Ethnicity

93.7% of the Borough comprises of people who consider themselves to be 'British', 'Irish' or 'Other White.' 6.3% of people considered themselves to be from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background. The largest BME groups are the Pakistani community at 2.04%, the Indian community 1.55% and the Caribbean community 0.77%. Dudley's BME population is smaller than our other neighbouring local authorities. (2001 Census)

Deprivation

Dudley was ranked the 109th most deprived local authority area out of 354 by the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004.

Household Housing Tenure

There are 130,591 households within the Borough. Of these 78% (102,615) are owner occupied or owned by private sector landlords, 18.34% (23,951) are owned by the local authority, 2.96% (3,873) are owned by housing associations (Registered Social Landlords) and 0.11% (152) are owned by other public sector organisations. (HIP HSSA 2006)

Dudley's recent Housing Needs Survey that was carried out in 2005 indicated that 88% of households live in accommodation that is suitable for their needs.

Types of dwellings

Dudley has more houses and bungalows in the Borough (71.5%) than the national average (54%). It has less terraced houses (16.2%) than the national average (26%) and has less flats and maisonettes (12.3%) than the national average (20%). (Housing Needs Survey)

Average property prices

Average property prices within Dudley are slightly lower than the West Midlands Region's prices. The average price of a dwelling bought within the Borough during 2005 was £137,008.

Property Type	Dudley Average price	West Midlands region average price
Terraced	113,511	118,385
Semi-detached	131,084	147,355
Detached	206,898	270,316

Flats and maisonettes	93,157	119,428
All properties	137,008	161,075

(Housing Needs Survey)

Average rent levels

The average local authority weekly rent for 2006 was £58.22 (DACHS- Rent Control)

The average registered social landlord weekly rent was £67.97 (gross rent including service charges) (published by Housing Corporation 12.12.06 – Average rent by Local Authority Area (Table B3)).

The average private sector rent for 2005 ranged from £368 per month for a 1 bedroom flat to £531 per month for a 3 bed roomed semi detached house.

Employment

139,935 people aged between 16-74 are in employment. The largest single area of employment is manufacturing (24.3%) followed by wholesale/retail (18.8%). The most common occupation is skilled trades (14.6%) followed by administration/secretarial (14%).

(Census 2001)

5.9% of Dudley's economically active population (aged between 16 and 64) are unemployed. This is lower than the 7.7% West Midlands average.

(Census 2001)

Average earnings

Overall, 65% of Dudley's households have an income of below the average national income of £27,500 per annum

16% of households have an income of over £40,000 per annum and 41% of households have an annual income of less than £15,000. (Census 2001)

Level of educational attainment

37.4% of 16-74 year olds have no education qualifications. This compares to the national average of 29.8% (Census 2001)

Long term illness

5.3% of all 16-74 year olds are permanently sick or disabled. This percentage is the same as the national average. (Census 2001). 19% of Dudley's total population consider themselves to have a long term illness or disability.

Predicted population changes

It is projected that Dudley's population will increase by 1,500 people by 2021.

By 2021 there will be less 0 -19 year olds (decrease of 3,100 during 2006-11). The number of 20-29 year olds will increase (especially between 2006-11 with an increase of 3,200). The 30-44 year old age group will decline (especially

between 2006-11 with a decrease of 6,900). The number of 45-64 year olds will increase (especially between 2006-11 with an increase of 2,600). The 65+ age group will increase (especially between 2011-16 with an increase of 5,300). The 80+ age group will steadily increase (the greatest increase being between 2016-2021, 2,200 people).

Predicted household changes

The average household size is predicted to fall from 2.46 in 2001 to 2.19 by 2021.

The number of households, especially single person households is predicted to rise by 7,600 between 2001 and 2021 (128,400 to 136,000).

Neighbourhood Management

Within Dudley there are pockets of deprivation that are masked unless the deprivation factors are looked at on a ward by ward basis. Neighbourhood managers have been assigned to these areas in order to address specific local issues.

Appendix 3 Decent Homes Standard

A full definition of a Decent Home can be found in the following guidance document:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/191/ADecentHomeDefinitionandguidanceforimplementationJune2006update_id1152191.pdf

In summary, a Decent Home is one which is wind and weather tight, being warm with reasonably modern facilities. A home may fail in one or more of the following ways and must:

- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- Be in a reasonable state of repair
- Have reasonably modern facilities
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing

A Decent Home will be one that, in the opinion of the local housing authority is reasonably suitable for occupation because it has no Category 1 hazards as rated using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS was introduced in England on the 6th April 2006 and replaced the Housing Fitness Standards, which was set out in the Housing Act 1985.

Reasonable State of Repair

A Decent Home will be one where

- No key components are old **AND** need replacing or major repair **OR**
- Less than two other components are old **AND** need replacing or major repair

Key components are walls, roofs, windows, external doors, chimneys, heating systems and electrics

Standard component lifetimes (years) are defined in the Decent Homes Guidance, but examples are :

	Houses and bungalows	Flats less than 6 floors	Flats more than 6 floors
• Wall structure	80	80	50
• Roof	50	30	30
• Chimney	50	50	n/a
• Windows and External Doors	40	30	30
• Kitchen	30	30	30
• Bathrooms	40	40	40
• Heating boiler	15	15	15
• Heating other	30	30	30
• Electrical systems	30	30	30

Dwellings are in poor condition when the component:

- Is sufficiently damaged that it is impossible to repair
- Is unsuitable and would be even if it were repaired
- Even if repaired would still need to be replaced within 5 years

Reasonably Modern Facilities

A Decent Home will have at least 3 of the following

- Kitchen 20 years old or less
- Kitchen with adequate space and layout
- Bathroom 30 years old or less
- Appropriately located bathroom and WC
- Adequate noise insulation (where external noise is a problem)
- Adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats

Thermal Comfort

A Decent Home will have **both** efficient heating and effective insulation.

An effective package of insulation means that for dwellings with gas / oil programmable heating

- Cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively) **OR**
- At least 50mm loft insulation (if there is loft space)

Dwellings heated by electric storage heaters / LPG require a higher specification of insulation.

- At least 200mm of loft insulation (if there is a loft) **AND**
- Cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively)

Appendix 4

Housing Conference July 2006 - Feedback

Key issues that should be addressed:

- Shared ownership
- % of affordable housing
- Designing more homes to lifetime standards/mobility
- Providing more social housing

Empty Homes - ideas

- Need more local information on empty homes
- Assess/make more use of flats – Living Over The Shops (LOTS)
- Need to bring more people back into living in town centres
- Need for tenancy sustainment services for private sector tenants/landlords and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)
- Need for private sector landlords to have access to lettings management expertise and how to modify/control tenants behaviour
- Develop a responsible tenant scheme
- Inherited properties – provide more expertise to help people who have inherited properties so that they can let them out or sell them instead of leaving them to stand empty
- Reduce empties in unpopular high-rise blocks
- Take a neighbourhood approach to identifying and reducing empty homes
- See empty properties as empty 'homes' rather than properties – links to homelessness

Developing the Housing Strategy - ideas

- Create genuine housing choice and mixed ownership
- Provision of a full range of support/accommodation for elderly people
- Establish balance between small and larger properties (includes current use of stock, over supply of certain types)
- Identify land for potential housing sites
- Identify shared agendas with partners
- Links to sustainable environments
- Housing demand from migrant workers
- Links to regional spatial strategy

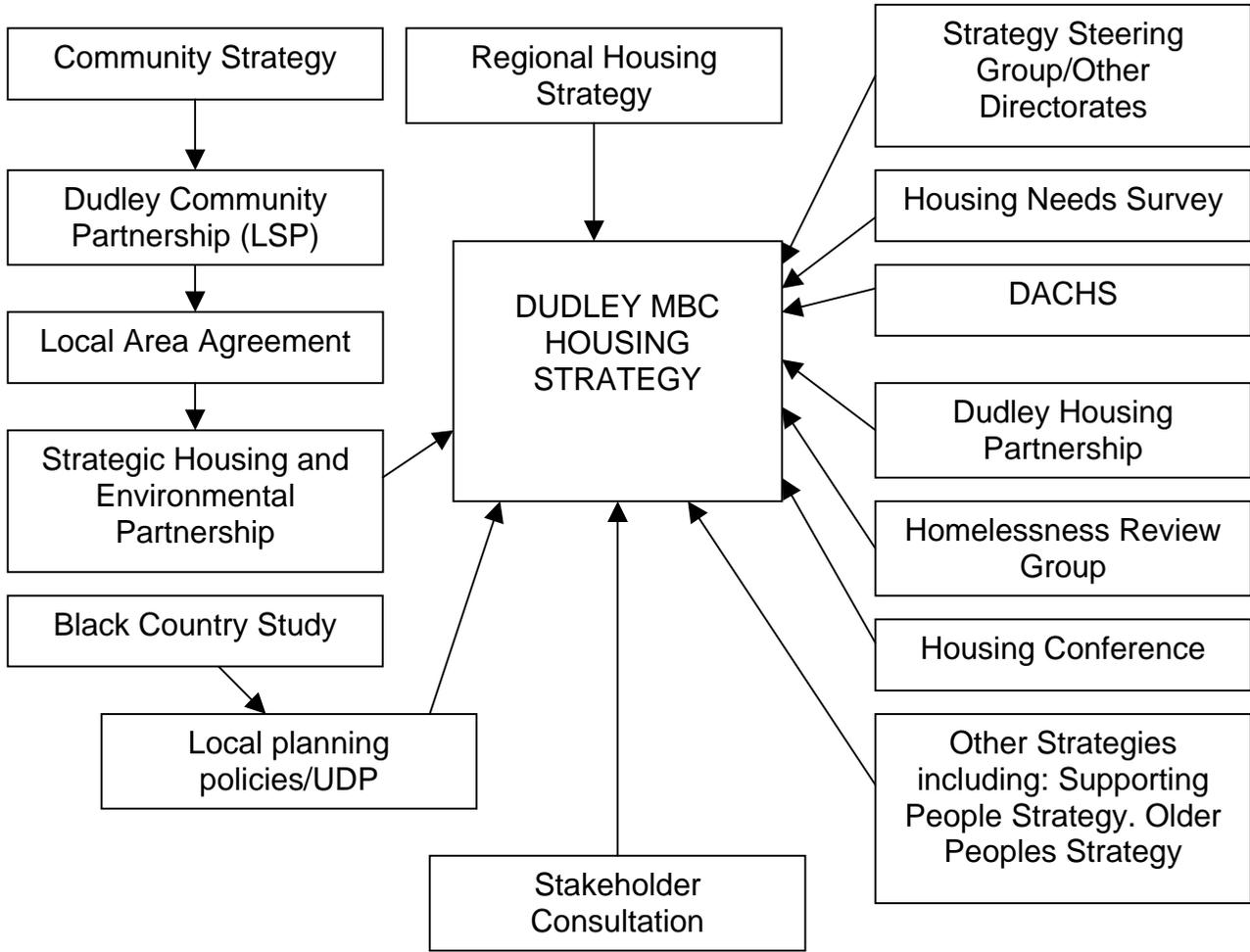
Appendix 5

Housing Strategy Steering Group Membership

Ron Sims	Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing – Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS)
Andrew Leigh	Head of Service (Strategy and Development) - DACHS
Jo Forbes	Strategy Manager (Supporting People and Housing) - DACHS
Diane Channings	Assistant Director of Housing Management - DACHS
Ray Watson	Assistant Director of Resources - Directorate of Childrens Services
Chris Ballinger	Area Manager – Assessment -Directorate of Childrens Services
Sue McGavin	Head of Neighbourhood Management - Chief Executives
Peter Field	Acting Policy Manager – Directorate of Urban Environment
Jean Brayshay	Head of Resources and Partnership – Directorate of Urban Environment
Mohammed Farooq	Principal Lawyer – Law and Property
Dawn Hewitt	Head of Community Safety – Chief Executives
Andy Wright	Head of Strategic Research and Intelligence – Chief Executives
Liz Ralph	Benefits Manager – Directorate of Finance

HOUSING STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT
PROCESS

Appendix 6



DACHS strategies that will contribute to achieving the Housing Strategy Objectives

