



**Brentwood**  
Borough Council

# Brentwood's Housing Strategy 2004 and Beyond



**Mr R I McIntock** M.Sc. DMS Dip. Ed  
Chief Executive and Town Clerk

**Mr C Wainman** MCIH  
Head of Housing Services

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## Brentwood Borough Council

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## Chairman's Introduction

This Housing Strategy is a full revision of the version produced two years ago. Last year the Council produced an "update", as there had not been significant changes in the strategy context during the previous year. Since then there have been a number of active issues emerging which have made the full revision necessary.

For the first time the Strategy is required to satisfy the "fit for purpose" criteria advised by the Government Offices (East), and adjustments in content and presentation have been made to address this. During the last year the Council has approved a Homeless Strategy, a Local Supporting People Strategy, Fuel Poverty Strategy, a Housing Renewal Policy and has embarked on the consultation process associated with the Replacement Local Plan Review. An independent Options Appraisal on investment in the Council's housing stock was completed, although it is recognised that this will need to be revisited in the light of the cross-tenure housing stock condition and housing needs surveys to be carried out in 2004. Regard will also need to be had to the Go-East "signing off" criteria within the period to July, 2005. These are all within the national, regional and sub-regional policy environment which has been taken into account.

The Local Strategic Partnership has also developed over the last year, and has helped to highlight the cross-cutting nature of housing and social inclusion issues. It has provided an overarching multi-agency setting from which this Strategy flows.

I hope that the Housing Strategy will be useful to all those working with the Council to improve housing in the Borough as we move forward through 2004 and beyond.



Councillor Mrs Jean McGinley  
Chairman - Community Panel



## Executive Summary

The Borough of Brentwood is situated in the South West of Essex, immediately to the east of the Greater London Metropolitan area, and entirely within the Green Belt. The closeness to London, with good road and rail links, and a high quality urban and rural environment result in the town and villages being highly desirable places to live. Major challenges are therefore to meet housing demand generally within green belt constraints, and to address the affordability issue for lower and middle income households for whom private house prices and rents are prohibitive. Median to average incomes are £13,900 to £27,500 p.a - typical 3 bed semi-detached house price £245,000.

Household numbers, including smaller households, are projected to grow to 29,500 in 2011. There are 1751 households in need (1998 Survey), with 275 estimated to be falling into need annually. The Regional Structure Plan envisages 1450 new dwellings in the Borough from 1996 to 2011.

The emergence of the London Commuter Belt sub-Regional agenda, where Brentwood shares similar challenges to other Essex and Hertfordshire authorities in the sub-region, has been significant within the regional context. The Housing Strategy now emphasises the interaction with the local position. Affordability is a critical priority in the Sub-Region. The Council is seeking to maximise provision via a higher proportion of affordable housing on new build sites of 15 or more homes.

Concerns remain that housing schemes in the Borough should continue to attract grant assistance from the Housing Corporation, and that the Growth areas identified in the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan should not be over-riding in this respect.

Housing stock condition in both the private and public sectors continues to be a priority with a new cross-tenure survey to be commissioned in 2004. This will be carried out at the same time as a new Housing Needs Survey. The previous stock condition survey was carried out in 2000, and the previous needs survey in 1998. Following the Best Value Reviews the Council took a conscious decision to rationalise the survey process to bring them both into a five year cycle. A key part of the stock condition survey will be to discover the extent of vulnerable people in non-decent homes in the private sector. The Council already has detailed knowledge of its own stock, and is confident of meeting the national decency standard target by 2010.

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan details the programmes in place to address the decent homes target, alongside other investment needs as identified through survey and tenant consultation. As a result of an independent Options Appraisal carried out in 2002, the Council decided that stock retention was the viable option to pursue. This will be revisited taking into account the Government's "sign-off" criteria within the next 9 months.

A series of Best Value reviews were completed in 2002, and improvement plans are now in place and being implemented for Housing Strategy, Private Sector Housing, Housing Needs, Tenant Participation, Sheltered Housing, Estate Management, and Repairs and Maintenance. The required self-assessments on "Balancing Housing Markets" and "Delivering Decent Homes" were produced in preparation for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council's service due in February, 2004. The Council has been assessed as "good", the Decent Homes assessment or "low risk", and an improvement plan includes housing issues.

The Local Strategic Partnership has, via a multi-agency housing working group, developed a set of housing objectives and actions for 2004/05 which dovetail with those previously developed through the housing strategy process, and reflect the cross-cutting approach inherent in the Partnership. The Local Supporting People Strategy has mapped the supply and needs of the range of client groups requiring housing in the Borough. This will inform the County Commissioning Body in its decisions on future revenue funding, and bids to the Housing Corporation where new build or rehabilitation of schemes is required. There has been significant development of floating support to vulnerable tenants over the last year, with over 50 individuals assisted. Attention is also required on a cross-boundary basis to provision for smaller client groups, where numbers make it difficult to justify schemes serving Brentwood only, e.g. young single vulnerable parents and babies.

The Homelessness Strategy produced in 2003 has identified a set of prioritised actions. In particular the national target to avoid the use of bed and breakfast for households with children for more than six weeks is addressed, via a number of initiatives to use alternative forms of temporary accommodation in the local authority, RSL and private rented sectors.

The Annual Housing Forum held in July, 2003 included for workshops on Children and Young People - Links with Housing, The Council's new approach to assistance in the private sector, Housing and Community Safety, and the problems and challenges of developing brownfield sites. A number of issues arising to inform this Strategy are set out in the main text.

A combination of information from the housing needs survey, housing register and transfer list and allocation trends points to the need for affordable rented housing in the ratio of 2:1 1 bedroom flats and 3 bedroom houses affordable rent on new housing sites. A need for key worker housing and housing at affordable intermediate cost levels has also been identified, although quantification of this is to be carried out in the 2004 Housing Needs Survey.

The Council's Interim Housing Renewal Policy was issued in July, 2003. This document identified the Council's priorities with regard to housing renewal in the private sector together with details of how that is to be delivered and financed. It is recognised that further methods of providing assistance to vulnerable residents need to be developed and the Policy will be reviewed once its impact has been assessed.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The key priorities in Brentwood's Housing Strategy are:-

1. To optimise the provision of affordable housing.
2. To seek to ensure that homes comply with minimum standards of fitness and decency.
3. To deal with homelessness in the borough, with particular emphasis on reducing the use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation.
4. To develop our service to tenants and applicants for housing through the approved improvements plans.

These priorities are a distillation of a whole range of objectives arrived at through the corporate process described in chapter 2, through the wider consultative processes described later in chapter 3, and consideration of the national, regional and sub-regional priorities as shown immediately following.

Appendix 1 shows how Brentwood's Strategic objectives relate to each of the key priorities, the key actions relating to each of the objectives, the relative priorities of the key objectives, their relationship to the Council's corporate core values, the timetable for implementation, the lead officer(s), and associated funding where relevant.

The key actions represent the options selected to deliver the key priorities. For each key priority, however, there are options which have been considered and not pursued, and these are referred to within the document as follows:-

Key priority 1	-	Section 4.11 and Section 5.3
Key priority 2	-	Section 5.4
Key priority 3	-	Section 2.15.7
Key priority 4	-	Section 5.2 (The Best Value Review process involved looking at options for delivery of a range of services. The most relevant to this strategy is the Option Appraisal for investment in the Council's housing stock).

### 1.2 National, Regional and Sub-Regional Priorities

National policy arises through formal published documents, such as "Quality and Choice - A decent home for all" and the Sustainable Communities Plan and through interim initiatives such as the drive to reduce the use of bed and breakfast provision for homeless families. The following are key Government priorities and the Council's approach to addressing them locally is shown:-

<b>Policy</b>	<b>The Council's Approach</b>
Sustainability to underpin new housing development.	The Local Plan, in protecting the Green Belt, emphasises development on previously used land. Mixed use and mixed tenure development on medium to larger sites is actively sought, via planning guidance and use of S106 agreements. "Balancing Housing Markets" is being addressed under CPA.
Provide affordable housing where it is needed.	The Draft Replacement Local Plan is seeking to increase the proportion of affordable housing on medium to larger sites. Housing Needs surveys are carried out periodically to inform property and tenure type.
Address housing demand in the South East via Growth areas as set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan.	The Borough is not situated in any of the identified Growth areas. There is concern, in common with other authorities within the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region, that this should not result in a reduction in grant assistance to enable affordable housing to be developed.

Enable sustainable home ownership, with particular attention to key worker needs.	The Council has acknowledged the issue, by specifically referring to key worker needs as a proportion of the affordable housing to be sought via S106 agreements. The Council has made available property assets for key workers. The Housing Needs Survey 2004 will include a detailed assessment of key worker needs.
The Decent Homes agenda.	The HRA Business Plan takes into account as a minimum the Governments target for all Council homes to meet its Decency standard by 2010. A Housing Stock Condition Survey in 2004 will give a cross tenure update, and will include decency standards in the public and private sectors.
Local authorities strategic role to be strengthened.	The Housing Strategy has been amended to meet Government "Fit for Purpose" criteria. Housing and Social Inclusion is a major pillar of the Local Strategic Partnership.
Improving the standard of private sector housing.	The Council has set priorities pending the completion of the Housing Bill, by approving an Interim Housing Renewal Policy.
Tackling low demand, and increasing choice in the letting of social housing.	The Council is applying the choice principles in the letting of low demand sheltered housing.
Encouraging energy efficiency in the domestic setting.	The Council has prioritised energy efficiency measures in its own stock. An "affordable warmth" approach is applied on prioritising grants to private sector residents. The Fuel Poverty Strategy is integral to the Council's approach.
Require local authorities to publish and implement homelessness strategies, with particular attention to the minimising of bed and breakfast use by homeless families.	The Council has produced a Homelessness Strategy, and has prioritised the minimising of bed and breakfast for families within the detailed action plan.
Reducing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.	The Council, in partnership with the police and the community is taking practical measures to tackle this issue, which has been of increasing recent concern via:- Crime and Disorder Partnership. Published Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Increased use of tools such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, injunctions and possession action.
Implementation of the Supporting People Programme.	The Council has partnered with Chelmsford and Maldon to employ a Supporting People Team, to work with the County Team. A Local Strategy has been produced to inform local action and the county strategy. The scheme reviews are underway.
Reform of social housing rents.	The Council has restructured its rents in line with the requirements.

### 1.2.2 East of England Region Housing Strategy

Under the guidance of The East Of England Regional Housing Forum (now reporting to the Regional Housing Board) the Regional Housing Statement has been developed into a strategy to cover the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. The Regional Strategy incorporates the "Action Plan for Housing" from the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan for the East of England, and the strategies developed in each of the recently formed Sub-Regions. Brentwood is part of the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region (see below).

The Regional Strategy sets out a vision built up from five strategic aims:-

Vision - To achieve sustainability of our communities and the environment they live in.

## Aims

1. To ensure everyone can live in a decent home at an affordable price.
2. To contribute effectively to social inclusion within sustainable communities.
3. To enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality.
4. To use housing investment to complement sustainable economic development.
5. Contribute to a sustainable environment.

Appendix 2 sets out how the Council's own strategic approach links to the Regional objectives attached to each of these aims.

### 1.2.3 The Sub- Regional Strategy

The London commuter Belt Sub-Region consists of 14 district authorities - all ten Hertfordshire and four Essex authorities, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Epping Forest and Harlow. The recently developed strategy includes a vision and priorities for action as follows:-

- |        |   |   |
|--------|---|---|
| Vision | - | To make better use of all resources including finance, land and the existing housing stock. |
|        | - | To deliver affordability and choice in housing for all households.                          |
|        | - | To meet the support needs of vulnerable households.   |
|        | - | To seek innovative solutions through joint working as sub-regional relationships develop.   |

Priorities for action - the priorities identified reflect closely those established for the whole region, on the matching key actions are set out in the Sub Regional Strategy document. The Council's approach is as given in Appendix 2 on Regional Priorities. Most of these will be reflected in other housing authorities' strategies across the Region, but the issue of access to affordable housing to those on low and intermediate incomes in predominantly green belt areas of high land, build and property costs is the one which requires highlighting and addressing. The Council's policy on affordable housing, now incorporated in the draft Replacement Local Plan is the mainstay of the Council's response to this challenge.

The Council was particularly concerned that the Sub-Regional Strategy should include priorities for action which acknowledged the affordability issue as critical, and that activity relating to fitness and decency in the private sector was adequately referred to.

## 2. Housing Strategy and the Corporate Approach

2.1 The Council's Mission and Corporate Purpose is set out in the Borough-wide Corporate Performance Plan "Facing the Future".

"Brentwood Borough Council exists to serve the needs of local people, and its overall Mission and Corporate Purpose is as follows:

***The Council's Mission is to serve the needs of local people and work in partnership with the whole community in order to ensure that the Brentwood Borough remains a pleasant and healthy place in which to live, work and relax for the benefit of current and future generations.***

2.2 In this context, the Council will aim to ensure that quality services are delivered fairly to all sections of the community, having regard to the core values of:

- a putting the needs of the public first**
- b ensuring equality of opportunity**
- c countering poverty and inequality**
- d providing open, responsible and accountable government**
- e respecting and protecting the environment and ensuring local sustainable development**
- f working in partnership with other organisations**
- g ensuring a sound economic base for the Borough**
- h observing good employment practice"**

A copy of the Corporate Performance Plan is available along with this statement, and from the section on Housing and Social inclusion pages 9, 18, 19, and 23 it can be seen that there is a strong link between the two. The diagram over page shows how the Housing Strategy interlinks with other plans and strategies.

2.3 The Council has led on the development of the Local Strategic Partnership. Following a multi-agency cross-community consultation, the following strategic objectives have been identified, which, when incorporated in the fully developed Community Strategy, will also be formally reflected in the Corporate Performance Plan. They represent a development of the objectives previously identified in the Community Plan and Housing Strategy:-

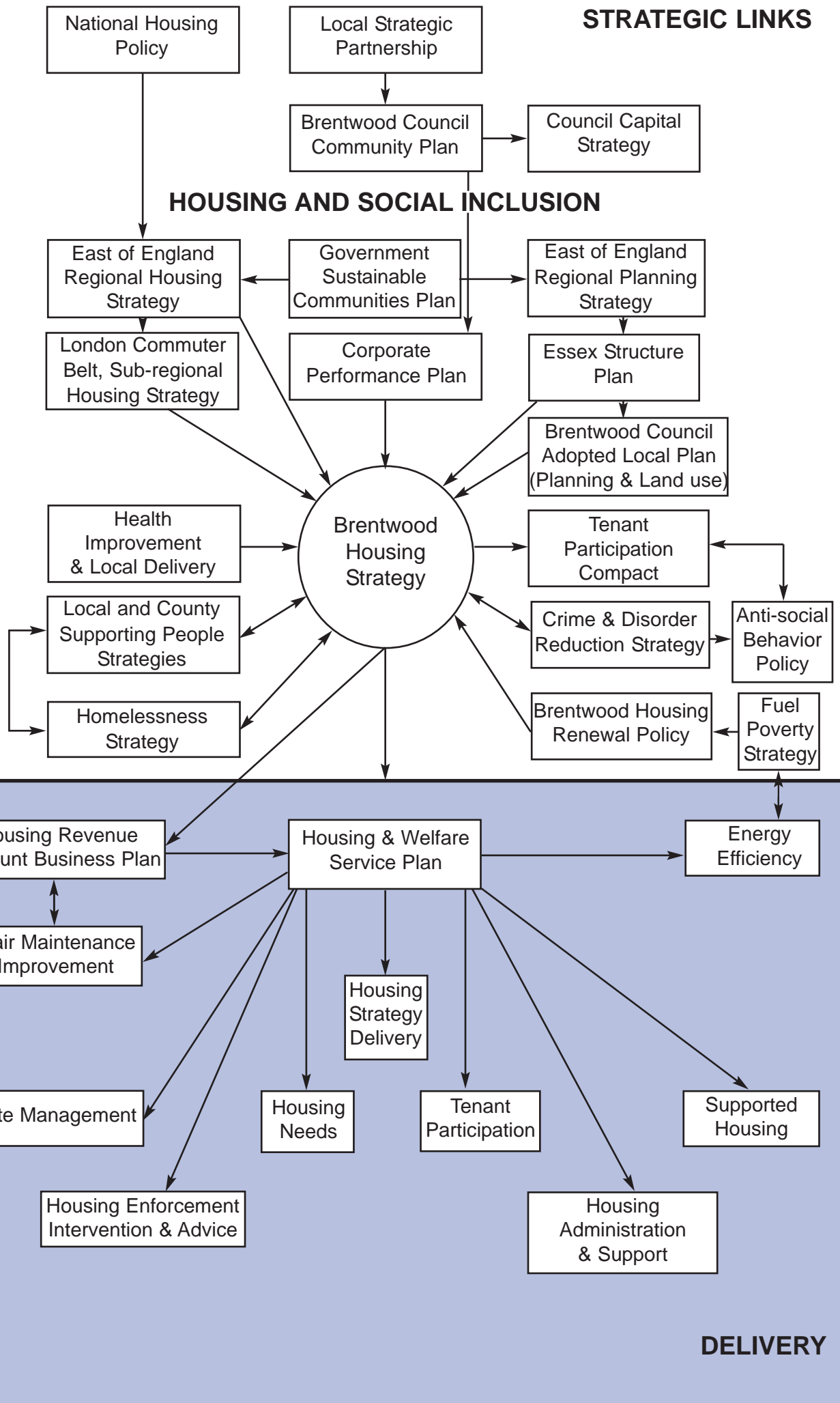
- Continuing to develop links with other care organisations, including Essex County Council Social Services, voluntary organisations and the Billericay, Brentwood and Wickford Primary Care Trust, and Building on existing partnership arrangements and programmes of action.
- Ensuring that rural housing needs are met and recognising the contribution in this respect by small-scale developments.
- Recognising the role affordable housing can play in sustaining balanced, more inclusive communities.
- Seeking to ensure that homes comply with minimum standards of fitness and decency.
- Ensuring that sufficient land is identified and available to meet foreseen local housing needs, recognising the need for variety and environmental sensitivity.
- Optimising the use of land and property owned by the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to produce affordable social housing.
- Seeking to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is available to facilitate housing development.

While the objectives are applicable at both the Borough-wide and the more local level, activity on the scale and intensity of Neighbourhood Renewal are not considered appropriate.

2.4 The Corporate Capital Strategy recognises the role of Housing Strategy as follows:-

"The Housing Capital programme is and will continue to be compiled in line with the requirements of the HIP process i.e.:-

- A Housing Strategy Statement is prepared setting out the main themes of the Council's approach to Housing provision, outlining the problems currently faced and indicating the action undertaken currently and proposed for the near future.
- A detailed programme is produced which translates the actions identified in the Strategy Statement into costed projects.
- The content of the programme is matched to estimated resources.



The Housing Capital Programme is prioritised to reflect a balance between a range of factors, including views of tenants as expressed through the Tenant Participation process, needs identified through the 5 year planned maintenance inspection cycle and wider drivers such as energy efficiency savings targets and the Government's Decent Homes Agenda"

- 2.5 The Asset Management Plan, while dealing with non-housing assets, includes treatment of non-HRA housing assets.
- 2.6 The Corporate Performance Plan 2004/05 also includes a summary of progress against the actions identified in the Best Value Improvement Plans for the Housing Strategy process (pages 34 and 35), and the Private Sector Housing (pages 44-47). The Council's Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing Service has been assessed as "Two Stars", with promising prospects for improvement by the Housing Inspectorate.
- 2.7 In addition, Best Value reviews of Tenant Participation, Sheltered Housing, Housing Needs, Estate Management, and Repairs and Maintenance have also been completed, with the resulting improvement plans now embedded in both the Corporate Performance Plan, the Housing and Welfare Service Plan and the HRA Business Plan.
- 2.8 The Council has introduced a new Corporate Performance Management Framework, the processes of which ensure that the actions identified in Best Value improvement plans, and in strategies such as this, are closely monitored. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, created under the Local Government modernisation review, monitors progress on the improvement plans, including the development of the Housing Strategic process.
- 2.9 The Council's officer Management Board has representation from each of the services, including housing, and enables a corporate approach to major policy and service delivery issues.
- 2.10 Flowing from the Corporate Performance Plan is the individual Housing Services Plan, which forms a bridge between the Borough-wide and housing strategies and service delivery.
- 2.11 Service delivery is carried out under policy determined by a series of member panels community, Environment and Planning, through the Policy Board to Full Council.
- 2.12 The Community Panel of eleven members is responsible for housing, and cross-cutting community issues, involving joint-agency relationships with health, social services and the voluntary sector.
- 2.13 The Council has taken on board the new Government focus on Comprehensive Performance Assessment, and has recognised the particular housing focus on "Decent Homes" and "Balancing Housing Markets". A corporate officer monitoring group has been set up to track these specific areas.
- 2.14 A client/consultant relationship is in place between Housing and the Building Surveying Services in respect of delivery of planned maintenance and capital works, and Environmental Services in respect of management of the Brentwood Operational Services (Building) for responsive works.

- The level of commitment to housing within the corporate strategy is demonstrated by the policy of using housing-generated capital receipts to support the viability of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
- The Council sees itself not only as a provider of services but also as a focus for the views of the community on a range of issues of major concern, for example, the future development of health and social services to residents in the Borough.
- Housing works jointly with Leisure to develop local solutions to needs for improvements to grounds maintenance, play equipment, and other recreational provision.

2.15 A corporate approach has also been taken by addressing the following issues:-

#### 2.15.1 Community Safety

Senior housing staff attend the multi-agency group now well-established in the Borough, and are assisting in developing strategies for tackling neighbourhood nuisance and other community safety issues in particular the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy. There is close liaison with the Council-appointed link to Brentwood Police, the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator. A multi-agency task group produced an Anti-Social Behaviour Policy during 2002. The Billericay, Brentwood and Wickford Primary Care Trust has identified a local focus in the Hutton Clinic area. Police, residents, ward members and housing staff have worked closely to tackle nuisance in specific areas of the Borough. An active residents group, cross-tenure, emerged and CCTV was installed in one location, a full environmental refurbishment with CCTV installation achieved at another, and provision of a youth shelter using Home Office funding.

#### 2.15.2 Employment and Training

Corporately the Council recognised the need for combining employment, training and housing needs of young single people. The Brentwood Foyer, Blackwater Housing Association is a tangible outcome of that aim. It is now in its fifth successful year. The strategy has been to develop and co-ordinate "move-on" opportunities. £350,000 was committed from the LA Social Housing Grant budget for this purpose. This produced 10 move-on homes via purchase in the open market. Blackwater supported by the strategy was allocated £715,000 from the Housing Corporation ADP in 2001/02 in respect of 14 affordable rented homes at the centrally located Sawyers Hall Lane site. 9 of these are one bedroom flats with the potential for "move-on" and these were completed in 2002. The need for further "move-on" continues to be monitored.

The Council facilitated "Friends of the Foyer" meets quarterly, drawing representation from across the community looking at training through a range of local training organisations; Training, work experience and work through local employers; Support for young people via local voluntary and statutory agencies; Linking with local youth partnerships.

#### 2.15.3 Housing and Planning

The Council believes it achieves an appropriate balance between the need for housing and planning policies to work closely at both a strategic level and on a practical level with regard to individual potential sites, and for the planning function to exercise the degree of independence required in considering housing alongside other community and environmental interests.

Integration and co-ordination of strategies is facilitated by:-

- Joint involvement in the preparation for, participation in and analysis of outcome of the Annual Housing Forum.
- Planning staff are involved in the preparation of the specification for Housing Needs Surveys, and have a full set of data informing the Replacement Local Plan review.
- An internal protocol is in place for the application of core principles to the provision of affordable housing on residential sites.
- Full participation of Planning staff in the preparation and review of the Housing Strategy.
- The Local Plan adopting the principles of sustainable development, including the encouragement of re-use of previously developed land, achieving a mix with affordable housing on larger sites, and taking into account transport, infrastructure and education requirements.
- The involvement of Housing staff in the Replacement Local Plan Review.

#### 2.15.4 Housing and Environmental Health

Environmental Health functions are carried out in the Environmental Health and Public Protection Service, with the private sector housing and health related items being reported and considered alongside other housing matters at the Housing and Health Panel.

Effective outcomes to the joint approach are:-

- Promotion and achievement of the flats over shops initiative. This has in addition drawn on corporate resources such as Architectural advice, Building Control and Planning.
- Environmental Health staff were involved in the preparation and analysis of the Housing Needs Survey.
- The Borough-wide House Condition Survey process was used to carry out simultaneously a Council stock condition validation exercise.
- Full involvement in the preparation for, participation in and analysis of outcome of the Housing Forum.
- Encouragement of access to private sector rented accommodation, through targeted grant activity linked to nomination arrangements.
- Joint strategies with housing estate management on tackling noise and neighbour nuisance including links with Community Safety initiatives.
- Joint housing, environmental health, finance and other services on tackling empty homes.
- Joint housing and environmental health liaison with Social Services Occupational Therapy Service in developing agreed approaches to assessing and delivering adaptations for the disabled across all tenures. Highly adapted Council properties are re-let to disabled applicants if demand matches the timing of vacancies.
- Objectives/policy for private sector housing are dealt with by Environmental Health Services in conjunction with Housing Services and reported to Housing and Health Panel.
- Joint production of the Fuel Poverty Strategy.
- Joint approach to taking up issues of concern with the London Borough of Newham with regard to out-borough estates in Brentwood.
- Joint working on complaints alleging illegal eviction and/or harassment.

#### 2.15.5 Housing and Health and Social Care

The Local Strategic Partnership is now the over-arching multi-agency means of setting and tackling cross-cutting objectives.

- Health issues are of major concern in the Borough, and the Council aims to continue playing an active role in co-ordinating and representing the community's views to the Health Authority and to the relevant Trusts. The links between good health and adequate housing are now well documented. The Council has played its part in developing and monitoring of Health Improvement Plans, the Brentwood-focused Local Delivery Plan. The advent of the Brentwood Primary Care Group into the Brentwood, Billericay and Wickford Primary Care Trust in April, 2001 has been significant in the delivery of health services in the Borough, and has provided a more local focus for joint-working with Borough Council officer co-option available. A multi-agency Health Improvement Team meets regularly to monitor needs and delivery outcomes and to plan future joint working.

- At a County level, Essex Housing Officers Group has well-established machinery to facilitate housing involvement in the development of core strategies jointly with Health and Social Services e.g.
  - The Essex Strategic Reserve procedure of allocation from the Housing Corporation to supported housing schemes.
  - The Supported Housing Index aimed at giving a statistical need base to resource distribution between client group and areas (currently subject to review).
  - Better Care Higher Standards publication.
- Supporting People -The Council works jointly with the County Commissioning Team on taking forward the Supporting People agenda, via the Local Core Strategy Group. A local as well as County Supporting People Strategy is in place. The chairman of the Community Panel is a member of the County Commissioning Body.
  - Flowing from the Supporting People Strategy, the Council has expanded the Floating Support to tenants in partnership with Cygnet Housing Association by 30 tenancies. This includes to those vulnerable through mental health, and potentially homeless.
  - The "Essex Links" partnership meets quarterly. A County Social Services Manager with specific responsibility for Brentwood, a Social Services Locality Co-Ordinator, the Chief Executive of the local PCT, and Heads of Housing and Environmental Health discuss cross-care issues in Brentwood.
  - The Council is represented on the local client specific delivery teams such as:-
    - Local Action Group - Learning Disabilities.
    - District Implementation Group - Older People.
    - Children and Young People Group.
- The production of the Homelessness Strategy has involved significant input via a multi-agency working group.
  - The Council has been exploring jointly with the Older People's Mental Health Team and the Older Peoples Commissioning Team, ways in which better use can be made of certain sheltered housing units.
  - Jointly agreed protocols are in place for hospital discharge from general, acute and mental health settings.

#### 2.15.6 Homelessness and Housing Advice

The Homelessness Strategy was produced through the joint working of a multi-agency team, and the action plan includes prioritisation of action points agreed within client groupings. The Strategy takes into account the national March targets with regard to householders with children in bed and breakfast via a specific temporary accommodation action plan. It also sets out how the Council is developing housing advice as part of its approach to homelessness prevention.

The forward to the Homelessness Strategy, summarises the Council's strategic approach as follows:-

"On average each year one hundred households in the Borough become homeless and the experience can be incredibly stressful for those involved. This strategy has been developed through a multi-agency working group as it is recognised that the problem of homelessness cannot be resolved by one organisation alone. Most importantly the views of the people who use the homelessness service will play a key role in the future development of the service.

The provisions outlined in the strategy are aimed at shifting away from managing homelessness as a crisis event and placing greater emphasis on homelessness prevention. Providing accommodation will not by itself be the answer to the problem so we need also to ensure that support services are available for homeless people.

Our challenge over the coming years will be to implement the improvements set out in this strategy, and to make a positive difference to the lives of homeless and potentially homeless people in the Borough".

While the prioritised actions in the action plan represent the positive options for delivery, there are some options which are not pursued. There are no plans to develop a Women's Refuge within the Borough, as the access arrangements to others via the County network is sufficient, and local numbers would not be sufficient to justify.

It is not considered necessary to target specific resource to deal with rough sleeping, as, while it occurs occasionally, it is not a significant problem as it is in some urban areas.

The Homelessness Strategy refers to developing advice both through in-house work and in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau, which receives significant financial support from the Council. A separate housing advice centre, is not considered necessary.

In setting out ways to tackle the use of bed and breakfast, the strategy does not refer to a homeless hostel as a viable or suitable option. Alternatives using council, RSL and private sector individual properties are preferred.

In 2003/04, 80% of homeless applications were decided within the 33 working day target. The aim is to achieve 90% in 2004/05 and to be "upper quantile" at 97% by 2005/06.

The average number of households in bed and breakfast grew from 4.9, to 15 in 2003/04 and the average length of stay from 5.16 weeks to 9.92 weeks. The target maximum 6 weeks for households with children by March 2004, have, however, met. Homeless acceptances increased by more than 50% during 2003/04.

Progress on targets and monitoring of the Homelessness Strategy implementation is carried out via the multi-agency and user involvement groups developed during the Strategy production. A full review of the strategy is planned during 2004/05. Members monitor via the corporate performance management framework process, i.e. quarterly reports to Policy board and via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with follow up where required.

Officer monitoring is via the monthly section officer meetings.

### 3. Housing Strategy and Consultation

3.1 The Council has endeavoured to consult a wide range of organisations and representatives of the community who might have an interest in local housing strategy. This approach has been incorporated and developed first within the Best Value and now within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework.

3.2 The following processes are in place:-

- Discussing and reviewing housing strategic objectives via the Local Strategic Partnership.
- Circulating the Housing Strategy document and inviting comment as part of the review process.
- Holding an Annual Housing Forum, including workshops on current relevant issues, with wide invitation and attendance by RSLs., builder developers, the voluntary sector, the Housing Corporation, Parish Council representatives, private letting agents, local health commissioner and social services.
- Holding a Private Sector Landlord Forum on an annual basis.
- Targeted consultations on specific issues, such as how to tackle housing for young single people, an issue identified through previous general consultations as a priority for the Borough. The "Friends of the Foyer" Group is taking on board, and carrying forward where possible, the views obtained.
- A MORI survey of residents views on priorities for the Housing Strategy was carried out between October and December 2000. By far the two most important issues are:-

- Making sure new housing is built on previously developed land, rather than greenfield sites where possible and
- Help to older and disabled people to maintain their own homes.

The least important issues were seen to be

- A registration scheme for houses lived in by a number of families (HMOs)and
- Promoting the best use of spare space in under-occupied homes.

A further MORI Survey was carried out in 2003/04, the outcome of which will inform the next review of this Strategy.

3.3 The Council has well-developed strategies for encouraging the participation of tenants and leaseholders in the management of their homes. Policies are in place for tenant representatives from individual groups and associations to meet with members and officers at a consultative committee known as "Tenants Talkback", for discussion on relevant issues. Two nominated tenant representatives are able to attend the Housing and Health Panel in a speaking, non-voting capacity. There was full involvement of Talkback Group representatives in the production of the first Tenant Participation Compact and its first reviews in 2002 and 2003.

3.4 Officers also meet on both a formal and informal basis with tenants groups to progress individual issues.

- A Tenants Satisfaction Survey was carried out independently by the National Housing Federation in 2000. 83% expressed satisfaction with the overall housing service; only 7% expressed dissatisfaction. This was repeated in September - November 2003, when similar high levels of satisfaction resulted..
- A number of consultations were carried out with stakeholders during the Best Value Housing Reviews.

3.5 The Council also aims to continue the level of general consultation and to develop more effective mechanisms for targeted consultation with interested groups in specific issues, e.g. parking issues affecting both tenants and leaseholders.

3.6 Examples of how the Strategy has changed as a result of consultation are:-

- The MORI survey identified help to older and disabled people to maintain their own homes as the second highest priority for residents. As a result, in addition to continuing to part-fund the Home Improvement Agency, additional funding has been sought and obtained through partnership for a small repairs "handyman" service. This will remain a priority.
- Conversely low priority is being given to the promotion of best use of space in under-occupied homes, which, while a potential housing resource, was seen as the least important by residents in the MORI survey.
- Appendix 4 shows how a specific set of objectives and actions has resulted from consultation with stakeholders via the Local Strategic Partnership. The inclusion of an assessment of Key Workers needs in the 2004 housing Needs Survey was particularly emphasised by the Primary Care Trust, and there was general agreement that service providers should receive housing projections for the borough, to help them produce their own service-related projections.

3.7 Annual Housing Forum

The Annual Housing Forum was held in July, 2003 at which a speaker from the Local Primary Care Trust addressed Housing and Children and Young People issues. The following key issues emerged from the four workshops:-

3.7.1 Children and Young People - Links with Housing

- The difficulty of young people taking "A" Levels accessing benefits enabling them to sustain Foyer tenancies. Amendment to regulations required.
- Local research required to assess the demand for young people needing extra supported accommodation, other than Foyer, to help in preventing their entering the criminal justice system.
- Liaison with schools to enable easier placement access for children living in bed and breakfast - an example of the need also to reduce its usage.
- Recognise the transport issue for young people in rural areas, by examining affordable rented location, and transport provision.

3.7.2 Assistance in the Private Sector - the Council's new approach

- Awareness of the Council's new "Interim Housing Renewal Policy".
- How the new policy could be applied to empty homes to procure additional temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- Renewed focus on affordable warmth grants to improve energy efficiency in the home of vulnerable clients - link to local Fuel Poverty Strategy.
- Explore possible partnership with utility company to "stretch" availability of grant.
- Re-launch of Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to coincide with next Private Sector Landlord Forum in February, 2004.
- Further examine the validity of interest free loans and equity release schemes as an alternative to grants.

### 3.7.3 Housing and Community Safety

#### Anti-Social Behaviour

- Education required for young people at risk of causing ASB, but also for wider community on limits to what constitutes ASB.
- Educate young people on "good citizenship" rights and responsibilities (link via local children and young peoples strategic partnership).
- National anti- ASB campaign similar to drink drive to lead to culture change.
- Need for adaptable facilities for young people to respond to fashion changes.

#### Fire Safety

- Increased attention to properties for particularly vulnerable people at greater risk from accidental fire.

### 3.7.4 The problems and challenges of developing brownfield sites

- The context of Brentwood as a Green Belt Borough, and the pressure for development, particularly residential, was recognised.
- Even the relatively low, in structure plan terms, level of provision of 1450 homes between 1996 and 2011 presents significant challenges if it is to be on "previously developed land" not in the Green Belt.
- There was a need to balance achieving higher densities without compromising the character of areas, the provision of adequate public and private amenity spaces, parking provision, and without putting adverse strain on local services (e.g. schools and hospitals).
- There was concern about increasing loss of local jobs and services as a result of residential development on former employment sites.
- The higher costs often associated with developing brownfield sites could compromise the quality of development and place pressure on the supply of affordable housing.
- Getting the right development where it is needed, particularly in rural areas, is important.
- The good practice examples of the Chindits Lane Foyer Scheme, the recent redevelopment of Fox Hatch House, the Warley Hospital and Sawyers Grove Sites were identified.
- Notwithstanding the problems and challenges, development of brownfield sites was preferable to releasing green belt land.

## 4. Factors Impacting on Brentwood's Housing Strategy

### 4.1 The Borough's Location in the Metropolitan Green Belt

4.1.1 The Borough of Brentwood is situated in the south west of the county of Essex, immediately to the east of the Greater London Metropolitan area, and is located entirely within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Brentwood's location close to London, together with other factors such as its good road and rail links and the quality of its urban and rural environment, has resulted in the town and the surrounding villages being highly desirable places in which to live. Demand for new housing has, and will continue to be high. However, the Metropolitan Green Belt places a constraint on the availability of land for development.

### 4.2 Development Plan Policies

#### 4.2.1 Government Policy Guidance

Government policy guidance on housing is set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 3 "Housing", published May 2000. It emphasises a greater choice of housing and better mix in terms of size, type and location, recognising the needs of all in the community, including those in need of affordable or special housing, and creating mixed communities. Sustainable patterns of development and the better use of previously developed land, in preference to greenfield sites, are promoted, as is good design. The Council requires that account will need to be taken of the outcome of the review of the PPG3 guidance, currently subject to consultation.

#### 4.2.2. Essex and Southend RSP

The Replacement Structure Plan (RSP) recognises that sustainable development supports making the best use of existing land and building. Brentwood, together with the rest of South Essex, is identified in the Core Strategy, as a heavily urbanised areas close to London where strong emphasis will continue to be given to safeguarding the stated purposes of the Metropolitan Green Belt and protecting the area's natural and built environment. The RSP sets out a housing provision figure for the Borough of 1450 additional dwellings between 1996-2011.

#### 4.2.3 Brentwood Local Plan

The adopted Brentwood Local Plan (1995) is currently being reviewed.

The Draft Replacement Local Plan sets out a number of housing policy objectives within the overall aim of meeting the housing needs of the Borough's population, of which the following are relevant to the Housing Strategy:

- To ensure that sufficient land is allocated and available to meet foreseen locally generated housing needs.
- To encourage the provision of an appropriate range of house types, sizes and tenures which best meet the housing needs of the population, particularly through increasing the availability of low cost private housing and affordable rented housing.
- To encourage the retention, improvement and efficient usage of the existing housing stock and, where appropriate, the reuse and conversion of existing buildings for residential purposes.
- To make best use of previously developed land and buildings, whilst protecting the existing amenities and character of the area, and to avoid the development of both urban and rural Greenfield sites.

The Replacement Local Plan identifies sufficient land and specific sites to provide for the RSP housing figure of 1450 new dwellings. An urban capacity study undertaken (April 2001) concludes that this level of housing growth can be achieved without requiring the release of green belt land.

#### 4.3 House Prices/Rental Levels and Incomes

4.3.1 Property prices are generally high, even for the smallest residential units. The average house price (all dwellings) in Brentwood was £149,478 in 1999/2000. Whilst Brentwood is a relatively affluent area (the mean income being £27,600 in 1999/2000), the median income was £13,900 (Essex and Hertfordshire Housing market Study 2002 associated with the production of the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy). These figures give a price to income ratio of 5.42 and 10.75 respectively, significantly above the "affordable" ratio of 3. Indeed Brentwood is ranked the 5th highest authority in the East of England in terms of the severity of affordable housing pressures in a report commissioned by the Housing Corporation (characterised by a shortage of land for RSLs to build on, high land prices, high house prices and rents, a "key worker" problem and rising homelessness and housing waiting lists).

4.3.2 Likewise, the study stated that average weekly private rents were £106 in 2000/2001, which would require an annual income of £22,048 and, therefore, clearly beyond the affordability of many households.

4.3.3 Our own more recent market enquiries in 2003 revealed a significant increase in private house prices and rentals. The average private sector rental of a 2 bed flat was £155 per week. The typical cost of a 2 bed house is about £170,000 and a three bed semi-detached house was £245,000.

#### 4.4 Stock Condition

4.4.1 The major tenure by far is owner/occupation, representing 88.37% of the private sector stock or 78.87% of the total stock compared with a national average of 70% (English House Condition Survey 2001). The size of the private rented stock at around 9.12% is smaller than the national average (10%). The Pie chart at Appendix 3 shows a complete tenure break down.

4.4.2 Just 15% of private sector dwellings in Brentwood are over 80 years old and less than one third (29%) were constructed before the Second World War. In construction terms this indicates that Brentwood is a relatively modern town. Traditional houses (inc, caravans) account for 82.51% of the private stock, the remainder comprising purpose built flats (14.22%) and other types of flat at 3.27%.

4.4.3 Approximately 150 dwellings are believed to be in multiple occupation, forming a very small percentage of the stock. One major residential mobile home site is present within the Borough, comprising 32 pitches.

4.4.4 A House Condition Survey of the private sector was carried out in 2000 on a sample basis. The main purpose of the survey was to identify the condition of the stock in relation to unfitness, missing amenities, disrepair and the likely costs of repairs and improvement. The survey also estimates the number of vacant properties, energy efficiency of the stock and socio-economic factors.

4.4.5 The Survey has provided a huge amount of data that has been used to inform the housing need and the strategy designed to meet that need. Key findings of the survey are summarised below: -

- The vast majority of houses are occupied as single households.
- There was estimated to be 657 empty houses (2.4%) of which a third have been vacant for over six months. The national estimate of empty homes is 3.9%.
- The estimated number of unfit dwellings in the private sector was 2%, representing 560 dwellings compared with the national position of 4.2%.
- A further 8% of properties were identified as fit but seriously defective and on the borderline of descent into unfitness, representing 2217 dwellings.

4.4.6 Further analysis of unfit by tenure and by building type is shown at Appendix 3.

- (a) Private rented tenants are much more likely to live in unfit conditions than owner-occupiers.

Unfitness as a general rule is more prevalent in older dwellings. Brentwood is a relatively modern town and this is one reason why unfit is much lower than the national picture.

- (b) Unfitness in flats above shops/offices is much higher than other forms of construction.

The most common reason for poor housing (unfit and defective) is disrepair, which is the same outcome on a national basis.

It is estimated that 4.9% of premises suffer from condensation problems to varying degrees but private rented tenants are four times more likely to experience problems than owner-occupiers.

4.4.7 The overall repair/renovation costs to make fit, repair and maintain the stock is as follows: -

(Figures based on construction costs in the year 2000)

	Total (£'s) m
Make fit only	3.4
Urgent repair	0.4
General repair	30.0
Comprehensive repair (10 years)	79.2
Long term (30 years)	444.3

- Dealing with unfit properties is the highest priority. The average cost of dealing with an unfit dwelling is £6087.
- 5.3% of households interviewed included a person with a disability or long-term illness.
- 6% of the private sector stock has a SAP rating under 30 indicating poor energy efficiency. 2.3% of owner-occupiers live in homes with poor energy efficiency compared with 20% in privately rented dwellings.

4.5 Public Sector Housing Stock

4.5.1 The Council has a detailed knowledge of the condition of its own housing stock. Under the Planned Maintenance System, all properties are inspected and works carried out on a 5 year cycle. This has operated since 1981, and a clear picture of their condition is available, and updated on the cycle. In 2001, as part of the Borough-wide Stock Condition Survey, a validation exercise was included for Council-owned stock. The results were close to those obtained from the in-house processes, with 19.8% of properties requiring "catch-up" repairs, at an estimated cost of £8M to bring them to the desired standard, which the Survey consultant equated broadly with the then emerging "decent homes" standard. The Council's estimate of properties yet to reach the decent homes standard at that time was 26%, with "catch-up" costs of some £8.5M. The major works programmes applied since, will have reduced that to 18% by March, 2004.

The average SAP energy efficiency rating for the Council's stock at 2003/04 is relatively high for existing dwellings of varied age at 65.4, i.e, in the upper quantile nationally.

The make-up of the stock is as follows:-

Age	%	Type	%	Size	%
Pre 1944	8.7	Houses	38.7	Bedsits	6.4
				1 Bedroom	28.9
1945-1964	57.7	Flats	46.5	2 Bedrooms	36.1
				3 Bedrooms	27.8
Post 1965	33.6	Bungalows	14.8	4 Bedrooms	0.8

4.5.2 There are concerns about the relatively low level of capital investment in the 400 properties owned and managed by the London Borough of Newham in Brentwood and Hutton. They have not been subject to the same level of investment as this Council's stock. London Borough of Newham have been in continued consultation with their tenants about different ways of achieving this, particularly through consideration of the routes normally available via Options Appraisal.

4.5.3 A further Borough-wide cross-tenure housing stock condition survey is to be carried out in 2004, which will include assessment using decent home standard criteria.

#### 4.6 Demographic Trends

4.6.1 Brentwood's population has risen steadily up to the 1970s. In the period 1961 to 1971 the population of the Borough rose by approximately 14,100 or 23.4% (59,200 to 73,300). However, since that time the population has been decreasing. Between 1971 and 1981 there was a small decrease of approximately 900 (-1.23%) to 72,400. That trend continued with a decrease of approximately 1600 (-2.2%) to 70,800 between 1981 and 1991, and a further decrease of some 2,300 (-3.3%) to 68,500 by 2001.

4.6.2 Population projections previously based on 1991 census figures forecast a steady increase in population for the Borough to 2011. However, the continuing decrease in population over the period 1981 to 2001 requires new projections to be undertaken before any meaningful conclusions can be made in the Borough's future population trends.

4.6.3 Notwithstanding the decline in the Borough's population, the number of households has continued to increase as household size has reduced and, therefore, the demand for further housing in the Borough will continue.

4.6.4 In addition, a number of identifiable population trends can be discerned from the Census figures:

- Whilst there was a drop in the under 15 age group between 1981 and 1991, a small increase occurred in 2001. However, this is still slightly below the national average.
- The reduction in the 16 to 29 age group has continued through to 2001. There is a concern that the price of properties within the Borough and the uncertain state of the home buying market may act as a deterrent to young first time buyers, forcing them out of the Borough.
- A steady increase in the over 65 age group, particularly in the 75 and over age group, has continued to 2001. This trend has been more marked in Brentwood than in other Essex authority areas or indeed when compared with the national situation and will continue to have implications for housing and welfare services.

#### 4.7 Housing Needs Survey

4.7.1 The 1998 Housing Needs Survey has supplied a wealth of data which, as can be seen at a number of points within the strategy statement, is informing aims and approaches to its various elements. A new Housing Needs Survey is to be carried out in conjunction with the Housing Stock Condition Survey in 2004. In the interim Housing Needs Survey information is supplemented by annual evaluation of trends in demand, both in terms of quantity and household types. This is achieved by examining the Housing Register and Transfer waiting lists, and exit surveys of those leaving Council accommodation. Regard is also had to information arising from assessments of supported housing needs through the Core strategy Group for the Local Supporting People Strategy.

4.7.2 The following is a summary of how the survey is informing the core needs assessment.

#### Key Factors

- The survey was based on 3,013 responses which included 514 personal interviews, and checked against Census variables for sample validation.
- Property prices for all sizes of accommodation are approximately twice the average of those in other areas, which is matched pro-rata by a comparison of annual income. 52% of existing households in Brentwood could not afford to buy or rent a property in the area, if they needed to move to a different home.
- 1,604 households (5.6% of total) are estimated to be in unsuitable housing of whom 1,231 (76.8%) are unable to afford the market cost of property to rent or buy. The income gap between medium/high income households, and lower income households is significantly higher than in other areas.
- In addition there is a significant number of concealed households (4,021) the great majority of whom are single adults, and of whom 468 (10%) are in housing need.
- The overall level of need, defined with regard to households, in unsuitable housing unable to afford market solutions and including homeless households is 1,751, higher than that indicated by previous means of assessment.
- By using rates of change on the Council's Housing Register, the survey projects that 275 households per year will fall into housing need, but whom it will not be possible to rehouse from the available supply of affordable housing.

4.7.3 There was extreme concern that the redirection of resources proposed in recent Housing Corporation and ODPM Regional Strategies to areas of major growth such as Cambridge, or the Thames corridor will be to the disadvantage of the areas of severe need in Brentwood as evidenced by the survey. The Council was pleased to see the recognition of such need in South East commuter areas such as Brentwood, through the 2001/02 ADP allocation for the Sawyers Hall Lane site. The Council would urge the Housing Corporation to continue to recognise this in future allocations as informed by both the Regional Housing Statement and the Local Housing Strategy. (see also the section on Distribution of Need)

4.7.4 The following emerged as characteristics of Existing Households in Need.

#### By Tenure

<u>Tenure</u>	<u>Percentage of whole Group</u>
Private Rented	19.1
Housing Association	12.4
Local Authority	10.3
Owner Occupied	1.9

This provides a strong confirmation that needs lay elsewhere than in the owner occupier sector:

#### By Household Type

<u>Household Type</u>	<u>No in Need</u>	<u>Percentage of whole Group</u>
Single Pensioner	138	4.0
2 or more Pensioners	13	0.4
Single non-pensioner	114	2.8
2 or more childless adults	246	2.5
Lone Parent 1 / 2 Children	220	24.8
Lone Parent 3+ Children	17	11.2
2 or more adults 1 / 2 children	330	5.9
2 or more adults 3 + children	82	8.5

## By Bedroom Requirement

<u>Bedroom Requirement</u>	<u>No in Need</u>	<u>Percentage of Whole Group</u>
1 Bedroom	344	2.2
2 Bedrooms	311	6.2
3 Bedrooms	314	6.3
4+ Bedrooms	221	10.5

Note - 4 bedrooms will include families with 3 children under the survey definition, for whom a 3 bedroom 5 person home would normally be considered to satisfy need.

The following extracted from the Section C Statical Appendix shows through comparison how far the Housing Register under-states the level of need:-

On the Housing Register in 2003	461
of which, requesting 2 bedrooms	423
3 bedrooms	30
more than 3 bedrooms	8

- 4.7.5 6.1% of households across all tenures, compared with 18.6% of all Local Authority house holds were found to be overcrowded. This is a reflection of many Council tenant households being in one and two bedroom accommodation, awaiting transfer to larger accommodation.
- 4.7.6 The additional concealed household need is associated substantially with single people and couples, and the 468 are therefore assumed to require 1 bedroom accommodation.
- 4.7.7 The relatively low number of Black and Minority Ethnic households in the Borough, as confirmed in the 2001 Census, makes it difficult to make meaningful statistical statements about the needs of particular groups. The County-wide Essex Housing Officers Group recognised the need for better information about the needs of BME households, and commissioned research which was in its county-wide form in September. Disaggregated detailed Borough statistics are expected during 2004. Headline outcomes, however, confirm the general low numbers, but point to the need for service providers to be sensitive and responsive to very minority needs, through isolation and communication problems.
- 4.7.8 A travellers survey is being carried out in 2004, to provide more precise information about the numbers and needs within that group.

## 4.8 Influence on supply priorities

- 4.8.1 Analysis of the proportionate need for affordable rented housing by bedroom size, alongside the potential vacancy flow from Council re-lets and nominations to housing associations, has resulted in a prioritisation for new rented housing in the following broad proportions.

1 bedroom flats	66%
3 bedroom houses	34%

- 4.8.2 The control the local authority has on allocations enables the significant overcrowding identified in the survey in Council homes to be addressed in part by transfer to the new three bedroom rented homes, enabling the resulting one and two bedroom vacancies to contribute to the need identified. This formula is more readily applied to larger new build sites, but the Council will aim to achieve a similar balance overall in combinations of smaller sites.

## 4.9 Distribution of Need

- 4.9.1 Housing need has been revealed by the survey to be concentrated mainly in the urban areas, with Brentwood (North, South and West Wards), Pilgrims Hatch, Hutton (East, North and South Wards) and Shenfield accounting for over half of the Borough's needs (57.6%), and the balance divided between the parish areas. This accords with the Local Plan policies, which incorporates projected use of urban and brownfield sites, along with preparedness to consider small development under the village affordable housing exceptions policy.

- 4.9.2 More specifically, the wards of Brentwood West, Brentwood South and Hutton North contain areas of high deprivation according to the "Jarman" indicators (+6 to +19).
- 4.9.3 The Council, corresponding to identified national priorities, has been actively addressing the need for key worker housing. The existing Allocations Policy includes key worker criteria, but in addition support has been given to the bids made by Estuary Housing Association, in conjunction with County Education, the Police and Local Health Trusts under the key worker initiative. The Council has negotiated with local schools to make specific accommodation available for this purpose. The local PCT has, through the Local Strategic Partnership highlighted a need for key workers housing for a wide range of income groups, from doctors to lower income health workers.

#### 4.10 Supported Housing Needs

- 4.10.1 The Housing Needs Survey gave the following client supplied information.

There are some 2,500 households (8.7%) in the Borough with one or more special needs. 59% of these households contain an older person, 12.6% are in unsuitable housing compared with 5.6% overall. 43.3% of special needs householders are in Registered Social landlord housing and 18.7% in Local Authority. Special needs households are 3 times more likely to be in housing need, and generally are on incomes 39% lower than average. The client groups are represented in households as follows:-

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percentage of All households</u>
Frail Elderly	875	3.0
Physically disabled	1,504	5.2
Hearing Disability	194	0.7
Mental Health	243	0.8
Vulnerable young		
Incl leaving care	21	0.1
Sensory Disability	498	1.7

- 4.10.2 It has been recognised county-wide that more robust information is required, and Essex Housing Officers Group is examining how the County Supported Housing Index can be further developed in this respect, as the initial results were limited.
- 4.10.3 Through the development of the Local Supporting People Strategy, however, more detailed local work has been carried out via a Local Core Strategy Group, and the projected needs within each client group have been more closely defined. The Supporting People Strategy links with the County-wide Strategy, and sets out local targets within the wider county and national context.
- 4.10.4 Floating Support in particular has been developed further locally during the implementation of the first phase of the supporting people scheme, with additional support now available to prevent homelessness, to those with mental health needs, and to help older people remain in their homes via the Older Peoples Mental Health Team.
- 4.10.5 Rough sleeping is at a very low level, with only one or two known individuals. These are addressed through the homelessness service, and the level is way below the threshold of 10 to trigger an annual cost.

#### 4.11 Conclusions

- 4.11.1 Brentwood's Green Belt location places a constraint on development land and therefore the level of new housing development. This is reflected in the relatively low housing provision figure required for the Borough in the Replacement Structure Plan (1450 new dwellings (net) for the period 1996 to 2011). The opportunities for additional new housing are, therefore, limited and greater emphasis is in place on the most effective use of existing development land and of the use of the existing housing stock, both public and private. See Summary at 4.11.5.
- 4.11.2 The high cost of development land and the attractiveness of the Borough as a place to live is reflected in the high price and rental levels of private housing in the Borough and there is a significant gap between house prices/rental levels and incomes. The relatively recent age of construction of the housing stock, the significant level of owner occupation, and the preponderance of 3+ bedroom family housing and the corresponding lack of small private rented flats, exacerbates the problems of insufficient affordable housing availability. See Summary at 4.11.5.

- 4.11.3 The increasingly elderly population of the Borough will continue to place greater pressure on the need for particular types of accommodation, particularly to cater for special needs groups, as well as social, welfare and community facilities. It also has a consequence for asset rich/income poor elderly residents maintaining their own properties.

All these factors mean that first-time buyers in particular, and those on lower incomes generally, find difficulty in securing suitable accommodation within the Borough and may be forced to move out of the Borough or remain in unsatisfactory housing within the Borough. In the long-term an increasing imbalance between the demand for supply of housing could have wider implications e.g. the local economy may be affected if firms are not able to maintain skilled labour or key workers are unable to find accommodation. There is, therefore, a need to direct both housing and land use planning policies towards making the best use of both land that is available for housing and the existing housing stock, and to ensure that an appropriate mix of housing types, sizes, tenures and affordability is available within the Borough to meet all needs.

- 4.11.4 The House Condition Survey revealed an unfit rate of 2% which is well below the national average. Brentwood's relative affluence is reflected in the general condition of the stock. It is clear, however, that unfitness, disrepair and poor energy efficiency ratings are more significant as a percentage within the private rented sector.

4.11.5 Summary of supply and demand, projections, incomes and costs

Replacement Structure Plan Additional dwellings 1996 - 2011	1450			
Households in the Borough 1996 - 2011 projections	1996	29,000	2001	29,500
Average income	£27,500			
Medium income	£13,900			
Typical costs on open market	£170,000		2 Bed House	
	£245,000		3 Bed semi-detached house	
Households in housing need (1998 Survey)	1,751		A further 275 per year falling into need. projected to 2011	

## 5. Housing Need and use of Housing Stock

5.1.1 As described earlier, the Council has a corporate approach to developing the Housing Strategy, and this includes measures to maximise the use of the stock available in the Borough.

This is achieved by:-

- Cross departmental awareness of the empty homes strategy.
- Measures to encourage residents to move to smaller accommodation and so release under-occupied property e.g. the under-occupation allowance scheme for Council tenants, private leasehold sheltered schemes for the elderly, provision of "extra-care" homes via joint projects with Social Services and RSLs.  
  
It is, however, recognised that there is an inherent tension here, with the option being given to residents via "Staying Put" schemes and enabling of suitable care packages in partnership with other agencies to remain in their long-term homes for as long as they wish. Awareness of options is the key.
- Enabling "Living over the Shop" where possible.
- Encouragement to residents with spare rooms to take in lodgers.

5.1.2 The Council does not experience difficulties with letting its general needs stock, either through demand or property conditions, although there are of course differences in relative desirability between property types and locations.

5.1.3 The Council, in common with other housing authorities and RSLs, has experienced difficulties in letting bedsitter sheltered accommodation with or without shared facilities and upper flats not served by lifts.

5.1.4 One of the aims of the Best Value review of the sheltered housing service was to address this low demand phenomenon. A low-demand sheltered scheme in a rural location has been closed, with the land redeveloped for general needs housing. Groups of bedsitter flats and bungalows in two other locations have been identified to be let to younger people. The Scheme Manager Service has been reconfigured, the number being reduced from 14 to 8, and sheltered properties being grouped to allow for greater management flexibility in the future.

5.1.5 A sheltered scheme with bedsits in a location of relatively high demand is being refurbished in 2004/05 to self-contained flats.

### 5.2 The Council's Housing Stock

5.2.1 The HRA Business Plan now deals substantially with the Council's future strategy regarding its own stock, so this will not now be covered in detail here. A summary of the action plan is, as follows, and resource projections are shown at Section 6.2.

#### Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan

##### Key objectives and action points

The HRA Business Plan is delivered under the "key housing strategy priorities 2 and 4, as shown on page i.e.

- |                |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|
| Key priority 2 | - | To seek to ensure that homes comply with minimum standards of fitness and decency.                   |
| Key priority 4 | - | To develop our service to tenants and applicants for housing through the approved improvement plans. |

Objective	Key action(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Time Table
Monitor Business Plan.	Compare out-turn to annual projections.	HoHWS	Annual
Independent evaluation of Business Plan.	Carry out Options Appraisal via independent consultant.	HoHWS	Completed 2002 July 2005
To improve and monitor Council stock to at least the National Decent Home Standard.	Carry out appropriate Capital Programme in accordance with Business Plan.	HoBSS HoHWS	2010
Maintain up to date information on condition of housing stock.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue in-house inspection of properties on 5 year cycle via Planned Maintenance.</li> <li>2. Use new Housing Management IT system to store relevant information from 1.</li> <li>3. Carry out independent housing Stock condition Survey and review Options Appraisal.</li> </ol>	HoBSS  HoHWS HoBSS  HoHWS HoEHPPS	On-going.  March 2004  2004
Consult with tenants and leaseholders on content of and progress on Business Plan objectives.	Continue on-going feedback on tenants views and priorities from a range of contact processes e.g. Post Building Control Surveys, Tenant Talkback Group, Repairs and Maintenance Working Group.	HoHWS	On-going
Ensure optimum use of Housing Assets.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redevelop sites with low-demand and/or poor design where refurbishment not appropriate.</li> <li>2. Refurbish low demand/poor design.</li> <li>3. Using Council stock as temporary accommodation to bed and breakfast.</li> </ol>	HoHWS	Fox Hatch House Site 2002/03  On-going  March 04

An Options Appraisal for investment in the housing stock was carried out by an independent consultant in 2002 in the context of the Business Plan, the Best Value review, and advice from the Government Office (East). The review of the Repairs and Maintenance Service, the most relevant housing function in this respect was also completed in 2002, as part of the year 2 Best Value Review Programme. It was agreed with the District Auditors during consideration of the Review Programme, that the Options Appraisal would most appropriately be completed in tandem with the outcome of the Repairs and Maintenance Review. Soon afterwards the Government published guidance on how to carry out Options Appraisals.

5.2.2 The four main Options considered were stock transfer, arms length management, the private finance initiative (PFI), and stock retention. The stock transfer option would involve the transfer of ownership and management of all or part of the stock and service to a new or existing registered social landlord (RSL). The RSL would pay the Council a capital sum dependent on a negotiated valuation. The arms length management organisation (ALMO) option would involve the setting up of a separate company with its' own joint management board.

Ownership of the stock would, however, remain with the Council, and tenants would retain their current tenancies. Opportunities to increase investment via bids to government arise dependent on performance levels.

The private finance initiative would involve the Council entering a long term (say 25-30 years) contract with a private contractor to manage the service, with the possibility of increased investment funding being accrued via the private finance sector.

The stock retention option would involve the Council continuing to own and directly manage the stock in accordance with the HRA Business Plan, having recourse to resource currently, directly available to local housing authorities.

These were against the background of a viable HRA Business Plan. Stock transfer would have a minimal impact on the provision of new affordable housing, as the projected capital receipt was relatively low. While there would be a chance of some additional government funding via the arm's length company route, the uncertainty of this, along with its link to Best Value performance assessment, made this undesirable in the context of a viable business plan. There were also significant uncertainties relating to the PFI and securitisation routes.

- 5.2.3 The Options Appraisal therefore recommended stock retention, confirming the projections in the HRA Business Plan as viable providing the Council continues to prioritise housing capital and HRA resources to the repair, maintenance, and improvement of its properties, and particularly in the context of the Major Repairs Allowance. The Options Appraisal used assumptions from the Council's already detailed knowledge of its stock, as validated by an independent Stock Condition Survey in 2000. A further survey is to be carried out cross-tenure in 2004, along with a Housing Needs Survey. The Options Appraisal will be revisited in consultation with tenants, as the assumptions are further tested, and regard being given to the published guidance.
- 5.2.4 The Council's commitment to optimising resources to manage its own stock corresponds to the strategic objective, under Housing and Social Inclusion, in the Community Plan:- "ensuring the proper management of a comprehensive housing service to tenants and applicants for housing".
- 5.3 The Enabling Role with Registered Social Landlords and the Private Sector
- 5.3.1 The assessed needs for affordable housing set out in Section 4.7 above feed directly into the strategy for its delivery via RSLs. The Council works closely with the Housing Corporation both in advising on the affordable housing needs of the Borough, and in the selection of appropriate RSLs from those interested in working locally, on the value for money and quality criteria. On site estate management arrangements are crucial in considering the quality of RSL schemes and their future on-going management. That liaison continues beyond the allocation stage of particular projects, and extends to joint evaluation of progress in order to address in advance any potential difficulties on complex sites. Our work on the Warley Hospital Site (Clements Park) and the Anglia Polytechnic (Sawyers Grove) sites are examples.
- 5.3.2 The Council is prepared, with the Corporation, to consider joint commissioning to facilitate the development of larger, complex sites. It is envisaged however that some market testing for the affordable rented housing provision will continue to be required, following the establishment of land values on marketed private sites. Indications are that these have increased considerably recently, and are a significant factor in the ability of affordable rented housing to be achieved on private sites at a rate of construction, which anywhere near matches the identified needs.
- 5.3.3 All parties involved in the provision of housing are included within the statutory Local Plan process, which incorporates extensive consultation with interested parties, including the House Builder's Federation, individual private builders/developers and the Government Office. The adopted Brentwood Local Plan (March 1995) and its adopted First Alteration (July 1997) include the following broad statements summarising the Plan's position on housing in the Borough:

1. More than enough land is available within the built up area to meet the structure plan requirement for new dwellings within the Borough. There is no justification, therefore, for the releasing further land from the green belt for residential use.
2. There is currently an inadequate supply of small units being developed to meet the requirements of the increasing number of small households being formed, and there will need to be an emphasis on small unit accommodation in new residential development.
3. There is insufficient affordable housing to meet the needs of all stages of the family cycle, particularly the young, single and very frail elderly, but there is also a shortage of cheaper family sized dwellings.
4. The existing level of residential provision should be retained if the long term future needs of the Borough's population are to be met, without encroaching further into the green belt.

- 5.3.4 A full review of the adopted Local Plan is currently being undertaken to cover the period to 2011, and the above summary remains valid for the replacement plan. There has been close liaison between housing and planning on the housing elements of the Draft Replacement Local Plan, particularly with regard to affordable housing and PPG3. The detailed analysis of the Housing Needs Survey has also helped to inform the plan review.
- 5.3.5 The Local Plan policies envisage consolidation of the existing settlement pattern. Future house building is to take place, in line with a sequential approach, on land already identified for development, concentrated within the main urban area of Brentwood, but with some provision for the rural areas, within those villages excluded from the Green Belt. Policies seek to retain existing residential accommodation; to make best use of land allocated for residential purposes, while having regard to maintaining the character and amenities of residential areas; to encourage conversions and to support the re-use of premises for residential purposes. In the new developments a mix of units should be provided, with an emphasis on smaller 1 and 2 bedroom homes on suitable sites.
- 5.3.6 In specific regard to affordable housing the Adopted Local plan seeks to negotiate a mix of tenures and affordability on larger sites (30 units and above) with 15-20% affordable units as a reasonable guide. However, with the level of need identified in the Housing Needs Survey, the limited amount of affordable housing that is likely to be achievable through mechanisms other than new build, and the constraints on new housing land, it is essential to maximise those opportunities that do come forward. The Draft Replacement Local Plan, therefore, proposes to reduce the threshold of suitable sites to 15 dwellings or more (or 0.5 hectares) within Brentwood and 5 dwellings or more (or 1.16 hectares) within the other defined settlements and to seek up to 40% affordable housing. The outcome of the public enquiry stage of the consultation is awaited. Following receipt of the local plan inspector's report, further considerations will be given to the appropriate percentage of affordable housing for the Borough.
- 5.3.7 The Council has previously made available housing land in its ownership at nil value for RSL housing schemes, but that supply has effectively been used up. It has been possible to negotiate on some private sites, through S.106 agreements for affordable housing land to be made available at less than market value, 60% being achieved, for example, on the Clements Park and Sawyers Grove developments and nil value at the most recent Heybridge Hotel Site. Again, however, in order to maximise the opportunities for affordable housing, the Draft Local plan will seek to negotiate on the basis of the full cost of the affordable housing being paid by the developer less the borrowing that the RSL would be able to obtain based on the rental stream. Clearly each development will need to be considered on its merits, and a successful and viable housing scheme will need to be achieved. Where scheme viability can be shown to be an issue, the Council will look to maximise the amount of affordable housing by considering the use of other funding sources, including, in addition to Housing Corporation grant, Local Authority Grants S.106 monies, RSL reserves etc.



#### 5.4 Private Sector solutions to Need

5.4.1 In general terms the responsibility for maintaining and repairing the private sector stock must lie with the respective owners. The Council will provide encouragement, information and assistance to owner-occupiers and the private rented sector to maintain, improve and adapt the stock to:

- meet short-term aims of providing safe and healthy housing for the present occupants
- meet long-term aims of maintaining and improving the stock for future generations.

5.4.2 Private housing is the major component in meeting the overall housing needs of the area. Most residents are in a position to secure their own housing, either as owner-occupiers or in the private rented sector. However, the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2000 revealed 560 dwellings deemed to be unfit for habitation and 2217 dwellings in a defective condition. The survey revealed that approximately 10% of residents are either on benefit or very low income. There is therefore a significant proportion of the population that cannot meet the financial burdens associated either with maintaining or improving their homes to an acceptable standard. The Council's renewal strategy role is therefore based upon three precepts:

- encouraging and providing advice to those who are in a position to assist themselves
- providing practical help and assistance, where possible, to those owner-occupiers who are unable to maintain, improve or adapt their homes, and;
- encourage the private rented sector to provide satisfactory accommodation and management standards via a mixture of advice, intervention and enforcement.

5.4.3 The condition of the private sector stock and the relative affluence of the local population do not lend itself to area action. The House Condition Survey did not identify particular areas of poor housing although it may be relevant, where circumstances support it, to consider small-scale block repair schemes but the opportunity to do so will be limited. The Council's renewal policy is not therefore based on geographical criteria but on the fitness and decency of the dwelling and the circumstances of the applicant.

5.4.4 The priorities are therefore client-based, property-based or based on a theme.

Client-based priorities are directed at the elderly, disabled and vulnerable members of the community. This client group has been identified by the Council as receiving the highest priority for aid. This grouping tends to comprise the lowest income residents and has also been identified by the Supporting People, Fuel Poverty, and Crime and Disorder Reduction strategies as requiring most assistance. This assistance may not in all cases be financial but could consist of advice or the services of a Home Improvement Agency. This priority also accords with the local priorities for Health and Social Services.

5.4.5 To this end the Council has formed a partnership with Anchor Trust to provide a Home Improvement Agency - Brentwood Staying-Put. The Agency has been operating since 1993 and has been very successful in targeting help and assistance to those most in need. Their client group coincides with the Council's own highest priority group above.

5.4.6 A number of priorities based on themes have been established, notably

- provision of affordable warmth grants and promotion of energy efficiency initiatives such as Warm Front.
- provision of security and crime prevention measures to vulnerable persons in partnership with the Home Improvement Agency, Essex Police and the crime and disorder reduction strategy.
- home safety audits undertaken by Brentwood Staying Put with funding from Social Services.

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- encourage the private rented sector to provide satisfactory accommodation and management standards via a mixture of advice, intervention and enforcement.

5.4.7 There are also a number of property-based priorities designed to address some of the more over-arching objectives such as: -

- reduction of the number of unfit homes in the Borough
- provision of assistance to bring into use empty homes and vacant space (living over the shop) for habitable purpose at affordable rents.
- provision of assistance to responsible landlords of homes in multiple occupation in order to provide a safe means of escape in case of fire and essential amenities.
- enforcement of the minimum statutory standard in private rented accommodation generally with consideration of assistance to landlords who can demonstrate that financial assistance is necessary to undertake the relevant works and the subsequent rent is significantly below market rent (e.g. old controlled rents, social housing etc).

5.4.8 As resources are limited it is necessary to place the Council's priorities in order of importance. Rather than debate, which of two priorities of roughly equal importance is the most important, the priorities have been classified as high, medium and low.

## 5.5 Finance Available

5.5.1 The private sector house condition survey revealed an immediate need for £3.4m to bring the stock up to a fit standard and £30m to deal with the making fit, urgent repair and general repair over a ten year period. Thus one would expect an investment of £3m per year. As stated earlier in this document the bulk of this expenditure will fall to respective owners. However, it has been estimated that at least approximately 10% of owners would qualify for grant aid. This would relate to a home improvement grant budget of £300,000 per year. The budget in 2001/2 for discretionary grants was £132,000. As a result of the best value review it became the intention of the Council to increase this budget to £300,000 in steps. It was thought that changes in grant policy would take some time to filter through as increased expenditure and a sudden increase in workload would have a human resource impact which may cause delays in the system. The budget was therefore increased in 2002/3 and 2003/04 to £200,000 and the actual expenditure on completed grants was £150,000 and £107,000 respectively. The budget for 2003/4 and 2004/05 was therefore kept at £200,000.

## 5.6 Types of Assistance Available

5.6.1 Assistance can take many forms from simple advice to direct financial help. The Council's Interim Housing Renewal Policy was adopted and issued in July, 2003. This document details the type of assistance the Council makes available, the criteria for eligibility and the conditions which pertain to the giving of assistance. The following types of assistance are being made available:-

- Home Repair Assistance - Direct grant assistance for residents on low income, elderly or disabled to deal with small scale works of repair, improvement or adaptations.
- Affordable Warmth Grants - for the provision of insulation measures and heating improvements to deal with fuel poverty.
- Provision of equipment, in partnership with Essex Police, to provide security measures for victims of crime and other vulnerable residents.
- Renovation Grants - for more substantial works to render dwellings fit for habitation, provision of means of escape in case of fire at HMOs and for the bringing back into use of empty properties and "Living over the shop" schemes.
- Mandatory and discretionary disabled facility grants.
- The Council is investigating the future use of loan and equity release schemes to replace certain types of grants in particular situations.
- Small Repairs Service - for the provision of small repairs and minor adaptations for the elderly and disabled in the Borough.
- Advice - Brentwood Staying Put, a Home Improvement Agency has been operating in Brentwood since 1993 and besides facilitating works for elderly, disabled and other vulnerable residents provide advice about benefits, energy efficiency and carries out home safety audits.
- Supported Purchase and Relocation - in limited circumstances where appropriate this will be considered for adaptations which prove to be impractical or uneconomic.
- Enforcement - used in instances when properties fall below acceptable standards to protect the health and safety of occupants.

## 5.7 Houses in Multiple Occupation

- 5.7.1 Until recently the number of HMOs in the area was believed to be approximately 150. However ongoing proactive inspection of likely HMO's has revealed that this is probably an over estimate. The area does not contain large numbers of three and more storey properties, which are prone to contain the worst problems, especially with regard to means of escape in case of fire. The recent House Condition Survey did not reveal any significant number of HMOs although it was not designed to specifically search them out.
- 5.7.2 HMOs provide a valuable source of accommodation within the Borough as they are often the cheapest form of housing and are suitable for single persons. However, tenants often comprise vulnerable members of the community and this sector seems to attract a number of the less responsible landlords (although many HMOs are adequately managed). Access to carry out inspections can be difficult and subsequent enforcement can be frustrating and time-consuming. However, because of the nature of the accommodation, and the tenants, and the level of housing management, this type of accommodation presents a higher risk of fire and subsequent injury/death than conventional family residences.
- 5.7.3 The Environmental Health and Public Protection Service currently uses the following standards: -

- a) Chartered Institute of Environmental Health - Houses in Multiple Occupation - Formulation and Implementation of Policy Including Standards. These standards are used for space and amenity standards in the different types of HMOs.
- b) Provision of Means of Escape from Fire and Other Fire Precautions in Houses in Multiple Occupation a Code of Practice agreed by the Essex Chief Officers Specialist Housing Group and the Essex County Council Fire and Rescue Service. This Code is used as a basis for designing means of escape schemes from various types of HMOs.

Both these documents are used flexibly to agree minimum standards appropriate to the risk presented by individual properties.

- 5.7.4 A desktop exercise has been undertaken to identify the numbers and location of as many HMOs as possible from the electoral register, historical information on file and officers' local knowledge. To date 246 potential HMOs have been identified. This list is not exhaustive and a significant number will not constitute HMOs. The only method of confirming whether a property is an HMO or not is to visit and interview the occupants.
- 5.7.5 Some types of HMOs provide a higher risk than others. It is therefore logical to base an inspection strategy on assessment of risk. Additionally some HMOs have traditionally not been dealt with as HMOs at all because they present no greater risk than normal family housing (converted houses to form self-contained flats) so long as they comply with Building Regulations. Houses which are registered under the Registered Home Act 1984 are subject to inspection by the National Care Homes Commission and are subject to management control and therefore inspection by this Council would constitute a duplication of effort.
- 5.7.6 A risk assessment form has been devised in order that a quantitative assessment can be made for each HMO so that an inspection frequency can be set which is appropriate to the level of risk. The form takes into account the type of dwelling, number of storeys, number of occupants, vulnerability, compliance with fire safety standards and confidence in management.
- 5.7.7 A two-year programme has been initiated whereby all potential HMOs will be visited and risk-rated in order that a robust proactive inspection programme can be established. In the meantime, approximately 1/5th of known HMOs are programmed to be inspected per annum.
- 5.7.8 Enforcement is currently delegated to officers in consultation with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Housing and Health Panel. Enforcement needs to be flexible in order to be able to deal with the various circumstances which occur in the most appropriate manner. Due to the potentially serious consequences of non-compliance with standards (particularly means of escape in case of fire) the needs of the tenants are considered paramount. The wide range of powers available are considered and enforcement action pursued as a matter of priority. With non-compliance of notices there is a presumption that the responsible persons will be pursued via prosecution and due regard will be had to the practicalities of carrying out works in default.
- 5.7.9 The grant policy as it relates to HMOs is detailed within the Housing Renewal Policy. In general terms, grants may be available to landlords to provide means of escape in case of fire if the landlord can demonstrate the need for assistance. However, if the works were subject to a prosecution or works in default where a Notice has been served, then the landlord would not be offered financial assistance.
- 5.7.10 A consultation with private sector landlords and feedback from the Landlord Forum produced no support for an accredited landlord scheme. A local HMO registration scheme has been considered but is not thought to be appropriate at this time. However, this will be reviewed once the information from the risk-rating exercise is obtained.
- 5.8 Empty Homes
- 5.8.1 The most recent figures indicate that, of ... empty properties, 375 have been vacant for more than six months. This represents 1.4% of the stock. This is a significant increase on figures from recent years. It is intended that some research will be undertaken to ascertain the accuracy of the statistics. The figures for empty homes are reliant on information from Council Tax who, in turn, are reliant on information from householders and owners. There is therefore a distinct possibility that the number of empty homes is an over estimate.
- 5.8.2 It is also apparent that a significant number of properties remain empty for up to a year quite legitimately as it takes in excess of six months to effect sales, especially where the property is subject to probate.
- 5.8.3 The longer a property is left unoccupied, the greater its potential to cause problems within the community. It is therefore the Council's intention to concentrate its efforts on the proportion that have been empty the longest. The following table indicates the breakdown of empty properties by length of vacancy: -

Greater than 5 years:	80
4 to 5 years:	8
3 to 4 years:	37
2 to 3 years:	61
1 to 2 years:	78

5.8.4 In exceptional circumstances, the Council will consider using its wide range of powers to intervene statutorily where there is no justifiable reason for the owner allowing them to remain vacant. This will include the use of compulsory purchase powers with properties being sold on to a Registered Social Landlord.

#### 5.9. Energy Efficiency Issues

5.9.1 The Council's "Energy Conservation Report and Strategy" first produced in 1996 details the measures required to improve energy efficiency over the whole of the residential housing stock over a period of 15 years. An associated Fuel Poverty Strategy was published in August 2000 and revised and re-issued in September, 2003. Reference should be made to these documents for detailed information on the Council's approach to energy efficiency, the action already implemented, achievements made and future intentions and targets.

5.9.2 In the six years since the inception of HECA the Council has reported total overall improvement in energy efficiency of 11.17%.

5.9.3 The implementation of energy conservation measures is split into two clearly defined areas:-

- Carrying out energy conservation measures either directly in the Council's own stock or indirectly via grants (including Warm Front) to private sector residents.
- The provision of information, advice, education and promotion of energy conservation measures across all tenures.

5.9.4 The Council has been and will continue to be proactive in the investment of resources for energy efficiency improvements to its own stock, details of which are included in the HRA Business Plan and the Fuel Poverty Strategy.

## 6. Performance and Resource

### 6.1 Performance

The Appendices include three sets of tables relating to performance. These are all contained within the Council's Corporate Performance Plan 2004/05 "Facing the Future", and are grouped and reproduced with the Housing Strategy for ease of reference.

Table Set 1 - Best Value and Local Performance Indicators (BVPs and LPIs)  
Past performance to 2000/01 latest performance out turn 2003/04 and targets to 2006/07 are included.

Table Set 2 - Best Value Improvement Plans - Monitoring of Performance.  
These relate to:-  
Sheltered Housing  
Tenant Participation  
Housing Strategy Process  
Estate Management  
Housing Needs  
Repairs and Maintenance  
Private Sector Housing

Table Set 3 - Performance against Housing and Social Inclusion Strategic Targets set for 2002/03.

Also at Appendix 4 is a summary of strategic actions achieved during 2002/04.

Recent performance or key indicators together with a short commentary are detailed below:

1.	Proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority	2001/02	1.3%
		2002/03	1.4% Target 1.4%
		2003/04	1.5% Target 1.4%
		2004/05	1.4% Target

This indicator is actually an average of each year following a house condition survey. The unfitness rate in Brentwood is 2% which is well below the national average and gives little scope to make a significant impact.

2.	The number of private sector dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority	2001/02	1.8%
		2002/03	6 Target 6
		2003/04	3 Target 6
		2004/05	6 Target

This BVPI was redefined in 2003/03 and therefore comparison of performance over a number of years is difficult.

3.	The number of Home Improvement Grants completed during the year and the number of those that were Disabled Facilities Grants	2001/02	100/36
		2002/03	87/15
		2003/04	130/30
		2004/05	95/28

To a certain extent it is inappropriate to have a target for the number of grants as it is demand led. DFG's in particular are reliant on Occupational Therapy referrals. Overall, however, there has been increased grant activity since the policy was first reviewed in 2001. A new policy was issued in July 2003.

4.	The number of jobs completed for clients via the Anchor Home Improvement Agency	2001/02	340
		2002/03	645
		2003/04	330
		2004/05	715

The demands on the Staying-Put HIA have increased year on year, with most of the extra demand coming from the Small Repairs Scheme. The HIA is also vital for delivery for complex schemes of adaptations attracting DFG.

5.	Energy Efficiency - the average SAP rating of local authority owned dwellings.	2001/02	62.7
		2002/03	63.2 Target 61.5
		2003/04	65.4 Target 63.7
		2004/05	66

Good progress has been made in energy efficient works, with the performance well into the upper quantile. Further improvement, once the window replacement programme is complete will be limited.

6.	Local authority rent collection and arrears - rent arrears as a proportion of the authority's rent roll.	2001/02	2.7%
		2002/03	2.45% Target 1.6%
		2003/04	2.37% Target 1.6%
		2004/05	Target 1.55%

The arrears reduced in 2002/03, but the peak in 2001/02 arising from changes in Housing Benefit processing, and difficulties has not yet returned to the upper quantile performance of 2000/01. With a new IT system now in place it is aimed to achieve this over the next year.

7.	The proportion of homes meeting the Government's "Decent Homes" standard.	2001/02	74%
		2002/03	76% Target 67%
		2003/04	78% Target
		2004/05	82% Target 84%
		2005/06	82% Target 89%
		2009/10	100% Target

This represents satisfactory performance to date in line with the HRA Business Plan projections.

8.	Average re-let times for local authority dwellings let in the financial year.	2001/02	29 days
		2002/03	49 days Target 25
		2003/04	24 days
		2004/05	24 days Target 24

The increase in 2002/03 was due to an unprecedented high number of voids flowing from nominations to a major new development of 80 homes within one year. The performance returned to previous levels in 2003/04, with targets for further improvement in 2004/05 and 2005/06.

## 6.2 Resource

The following table sets out the capital resources projected to be available for housing purposes from 2003/04 to 2005/07:-

	2003/04 (£000)	2004/05 (£000)	2005/06 (£000)	2006/07 (£000)	Total £000
Capital Grants	95	75	76	324	78
Useable Capital Receipts	180	404	457	1493	452
Approved Borrowing	510	306	312	1437	309
Major Repairs Allowance (2004/05 and 2005/06 assumed)	1590	1661	1681	6634	1702
Revenue contributions to Capital outlay	206	50	50	356	50
*Housing Corporation ADP	<u>106</u>	=	=	<u>106</u>	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>2687</b>	<b>2496</b>	<b>2576</b>	<b>10,350</b>	<b>2591</b>

\* Note the above does not include any Housing Corporation Approved Development Programme funding which might be made available for new build, RSL refurbishment etc from 2004/05 onward.

The Council has given assurance corporately, most recently in the 2003 Medium Term Financial Strategy, that Right to Buy receipts will be used as a minimum supplement to other resources to fund the requirements of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. The table at Appendix 5 an extract from the Corporate Performance Plan, shows the extent (79%) to which the Council is prioritising housing expenditure within the corporate programme.

In advance of the annual Council budget cycle, a corporate senior team receives detailed information on individual proposed capital projects, including housing. The team has regard to priorities sets out in the Local Strategic Partnership, Community Plan Capital Strategy, Asset Management Plan, Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan in deciding how the available capital resource shall be prioritised, and recommended to Policy Board for adoption. These plans and strategies will, in turn, have been informed by the wider consultative process. Clearly the priority given generally to the HRA Business Plan, supported as it is via the Major Repair Allowance, results in the high proportion of capital resource directed by housing activity. (See section 5.2.3 p 23).

The following table gives a summary of out turn on capital expenditure from 1999/00, and projections to 2005/06.

	1999/ 2000 Outturn	2000/ 2001 Outturn	2001/ 2002/ Outturn	2002/ 2003 Planned	2002/ 2003 Outturn	2003/ 2004 Planned	2003/ 2004 Outturn	2004/ 2005 Proposed	2005/ 2006 Proposed
Housing within the HRA	809	1097	1671	1,992	2,009	2,030	2,306	1,961	2,030
Social Housing Grant (LASHG)	0	485	100	1,000	120	200	0	200	200
All other housing	144	174	236	320	257	361	275	333	346
<b>Total</b>	<b>1058</b>	<b>1756</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>3,312</b>	<b>2,386</b>	<b>2,591</b>	<b>2,581</b>	<b>2,494</b>	<b>2,576</b>

- (a) The outturn for 2002/03 was less than planned due mainly to the decision not to allocate local social housing grant to Registered Social Landlords in that year.

A invitation to RSLs to submit proposals to use the funding resulted in:-

1. Schemes which, while acceptable in themselves, were not ready for spend within 2002/03.
2. "Purchase and Repair" options which required, nearly £100,000 per unit, unacceptable at that time.

The funding is, however, being carried forward for use in future schemes. As the experience with Warley Hospital site has shown, with relatively few larger sites becoming available in an authority of Brentwood's size, and not in a regular time pattern it is considered more effective to consolidate several years' local grant funding to more substantial schemes associated with those sites, than to spend within years for its own sake.

It can be seen that it is the Council's intention to sustain investment in the foreseeable future, subject to the continued availability of the major funding sources.

- (b) Renovation Grant expenditure, included in "other" expenditure in the table, is demand led, with Disabled Facilities Grants in particular reliant on Occupational Therapy referrals. Overall, however, there has been increased grant activity since the policy was first reviewed in 2001. The effects of a new policy approved in July, 2003 are still to be ascertained.

The following table gives a summary of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan outturns and projections:-Summary of Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Outturns and Projections

	2001/02 Plan £000	2001/02 Actual £000	2002/03 Plan £000	2002/03 Actual £000	2003/04 £000	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 £000	2005/06 £000
Income (Rents, charges, major Repairs Allowance)	9,581	9,178	9,714	9,268	9,891	10,478	10,069	10,249
Expenditure (Repairs, Management, Capital Charges, Rebates etc)	14,704	21,747	14,803	28,009	14,898	21,264	14,995	15,092
Net Cost of Service Capital and other charges - interest	5,123	12,569	5,089	18,741	5,007	10,788	4,925	4,843
Net operating expenditure	-5,115	-12,712	-5,056	-18,634	-4,997		-4,937	-4,878
Net operating expenditure	8	-123	33	107	11	-171	-12	-35
Appropriations Capital Financing set aside RCCO	117	293	139	246	136	231	133	130
(Surplus)/Deficit	125	170	172	353	147	60	121	95
Unscheduled Items	Heating Credit	-180	IT system	229				
Revenue Balance 31 <sup>st</sup> March	1012	1354	840	772	694	712	573	478

It will be seen that the outturn figures for 2002/04 reflect the change to the Resource Accounting HRA format, whereby capital charges relating to property value are included above and below the line.

Apart from this it will also be noted that the outturns follow closely the planned, apart from the unscheduled items of a heating charges credit in 2001/02 and the purchase of the new integrated housing management IT system in 2002/03.

In the fully detailed plan which includes the projections to 10 years and 30 years, the marginally small deficit moves to a marginal surplus, with the working balance being maintained at a satisfactory level. A copy can be obtained by contacting Gill Matthews (01277 - 261111 Ext 263).

### 6.3 Developing and Updating the Housing Strategy

The strategy will continue to be updated annually, normally between May and September. However, as in the past, the document may not be fully rewritten, but be subject to an update report on key areas of activity and performance.

Full strategy revision will take place every third year, unless significant changes in direction arise in the interim. Work associated with the development of the Strategy will be continuous, particularly where it interlinks with other strategies and plans e.g. LSP plans, Local Health Delivery Plan.

A range of feedback mechanisms are in place from the performance management framework (PMF), and consultative processes to inform future service planning. The PMF includes quarterly reporting on action and targets to the officer management board, the member Policy Board, and by referral to the Housing and Health Panel and Tenant Talkback Group. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is developing a role for internally independent monitoring of action plans, and Best Value improvement plans.

The Housing News published three times yearly, and the Borough News published monthly are media vehicles for distributing and inviting comments on performance information. The outcomes are fed directly into the teams monitoring and reviewing the relevant parts of the service.

Examples of post-scheme evaluation are:-

Anti-Social behaviour action - as a result of evaluation of feed back from tenants via satisfaction surveys and local groups, it was clear that in certain locations eg Hutton (North), more intense action was required jointly with the police. An area was designated under the new 2003 Anti-social Behaviour Act to tackle gathering of threatening groups of young people.

Decent Homes - an evaluation of the recently installed new integrated IT system by a joint officer project team has resulted in the implementation of a more focused approach to updating Decent Homes information via the planned and responsive repair modules.



## The Councils' Key Strategic Priorities

### Key Strategic Priority - One - To Optimise the Provision of Affordable Housing

### Appendix 1

Objective	Key Actions	Priority	Link to Corporate Core Values. See para 2.2	Time Table	Progress to date	Lead Officer /Team	Funding R = revenue C = capital
Optimising the use of land and property owned by the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to produce affordable housing	<p>Encourage new housing building and rehabilitation, particularly by registered social landlords to provide affordable housing.</p> <p>Prepare the local response to the "Balancing Housing Markets" requirements of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.</p> <p>Encouraging and providing maximum use of all housing accommodation within the Borough and seeking to minimise under occupation of dwellings.</p> <p>Progress the increased affordable housing policy requirements through the review of the Local Plan.</p> <p>Implement the Housing Strategy process Best Value Improvement Plan.</p> <p>Annually update Housing Strategy Fully revise Housing Strategy</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>a, b, c, e, f.</p> <p>d, e, g.</p> <p>a, c, e.</p> <p>a, b, c, e, f.</p> <p>a, b, c, e, f.</p> <p>a, b, c, e, f.</p> <p>a, b, c, e, f.</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>By October, 2003</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>By April 2005</p> <p>According to plan</p> <p>Annual 2006/07</p>	<p>See section 5.3.8</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Draft Plan enquiry June 04</p> <p>See section 6.3</p> <p>See section 6.3</p>	<p>Heads of Housing and Planning Services.</p> <p>Heads of Housing and Planning Services.</p> <p>Head of Housing and Environmental Health Services.</p> <p>Head of Planning Services</p> <p>Heads of Housing, Planning and Environmental Health Services.</p> <p>Heads of Housing, Environmental Health, Borough Treasurer</p>	<p>1. Social Housing Grant from Council approx £200K per year.(C)</p> <p>2. Housing Corporation ADP.</p> <p>3. S106 contributions.</p> <p>£16,000 under occupation allowance budget.(R)</p>

Key Strategic Priority - To Optimise the Provision of Affordable Housing

Objective	Key Actions	Priority	Link to Corporate Core Values.	Time table	Progress to date	Lead Officer /Team	Funding R = revenue C = capital
<p>Seeking to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is available to facilitate housing developments.</p> <p>Ensuring that rural housing needs are met and recognising the contribution by small scale developments.</p> <p>To encourage, and where possible enable the expansion of the private rented sector, especially accommodation for young people at affordable rents.</p>	<p>Advise developers at early stage of policy requirements set out in the local plan. Co-ordinate links with other service agencies.</p> <p>Working jointly with the Rural Housing Trust in raising awareness of potential within smaller rural settlements.</p> <p>Hold a private sector landlords forum annually.</p> <p>Re-launch the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme in partnership with local RSL.</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p>	<p>a,b,e,f.</p> <p>a,b,e,f.</p> <p>a,b,c,f.</p> <p>a,b,c,f.</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>2003</p> <p>February, 2004</p> <p>2004</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>Rural enabler contact with Parish Councils</p> <p>First complete</p>	<p>Head of Planning Services.</p> <p>Heads of Housing and Planning Services.</p> <p>Head of Environmental Health.</p> <p>Principal Officer Housing Needs.</p>	<p>£12K (R)</p>

**Key Strategic Priority - Two - To seek to ensure that homes comply with minimum standards of fitness and decency.**

Objective	Key Actions	Priority	Link to Corporate Core Values. See para 2.2	Time Table	Progress to date	Lead Officer /Team	Funding R = revenue C = capital
To secure, as far as is reasonable practical, the reduction of unfit housing and to maintain the stock in a good standard of repair in order to prevent it becoming unfit.	Implementation of the Housing Renewal Policy, in particular applying the priorities determined for the use of mandatory and discretionary grant, and carrying out enforcement and advice.	High	a, c, e.	On-going	See Appendix 9	Head of Environmental Health Services.	£300K annually (C)
To improve Council housing stock to at least the Government national Decent Home Standard	Carry out a cross-tenure House Condition Survey to inform both Housing Renewal Policy and the HRA Business Plan.	High	a, c, d, e.	2004	Consultant appointed May 2004	Head of Environmental Health Services.	£40K (R)
To respond equitably to private and public sector tenant complaints to Environmental Health Services on housing conditions.	Implement the HRA Business Plan relating to the Council's own stock, ensuring the decent homes standard is incorporated.  Provide a responsive complaints service, including maximum 5 day response period according to urgency.	High	a, b, c, e.	By 2010	82% decent 2004	Head of Housing Services.	£2 million annually approve. (Band C)
To seek to secure the effective repair, proper standards of management, means of escape from fire, fire precautions and amenities in houses in multiple occupation.	Inspection of houses in multiple occupation in accordance with approved policy.	Medium	a, b, c, e.	On-going	In place	Head of Environmental Health Services.	-
		Medium	a, c, e.	On-going	2003-2005 Strategy in place	Principal Assistant Environmental Health.	-

**Key Strategic Priority - Two - To seek to ensure that homes comply with minimum standards of fitness and decency.**

Objective	Key Actions	Priority	Link to Corporate Core Values. See para 2.2	Time Table	Progress to date	Lead Officer /Team	Funding R = revenue C = capital
To seek to secure the proper standards in residential mobile home and at residential caravan sites.	Annual inspection of sites with more than 3 pitches.	Low	a, c, e	Annual	Carried out as required	Principal Assistant Environmental Health.	
To seek to enable those who are disabled, frail or elderly to occupy their own homes suitably adapted to their particular needs.	Implement Housing Renewal Policy.  Include Adaptations budget in Housing Capital Programme for Council's tenants.	High	a, b, c, e.	On-going	Due for review 2005 In place	Head of Environmental Health. Head of Housing Services.	£130K annually (C) £90k
	Contribution of the Home Improvement Agency, including Council funded support.	High	a, b, c, e, f.	On-going	In place Due for review 2005	Head of Environmental Health.	£42K annually (R)
	Improve process times on adaptations for disabled, via negotiated agreement with social services.	Medium	a, b, c, f.	By March 2004	Bench marking exercise with ECC Social Services	Head of Environmental Health.	-
To raise awareness of landlords and tenants about their responsibilities for the maintenance of clean, safe and healthy housing conditions.	Hold an annual private sector landlord event.  continue to support the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme, subject to Review.	Medium	a, b, c, d, e.	Annual	First complete	Head of Environmental Health. Head of Housing Services.	-
To make the best use of the housing stock.	Encourage the bringing back into use of empty homes, offering grants under Renewal Policy where appropriate.	Low	a, b, c, e.	On-going	In place  Limited progress, but council Tax database validation carried out	Head of Environmental Health.	£12K annually (R)  Within £300K renovation budget (C)

**Key Strategic Priority : Three : To deal with homelessness in the Borough, with particular emphasis on reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Link to Corporate Cor Values. See para 2.2</b>	<b>Time Table</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>Lead Officer /Team</b>	<b>Funding R = revenue C = capital</b>
To implement the Homelessness Strategy.	Carry out the actions identified in the Homelessness Strategy in accordance with the priorities identified.  Ensure the continued employment of a part-time Housing Advice Officer after the pilot phase, subject to review.  Revise and expand existing housing advice role.	High	a, b, c, f.	As identified in Strategy.  2004-2008	Review of Strategy late 2004  In place	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)  Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	£19K government grant. (R)  £16,000pa (R)
	Revise and expand existing housing advice role.	Low	a, b, c.	2004	Hours of p/t advisor increased	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	Further £9,000pa if full-time post created. (R)
	Explore a partnership approach with CAB for providing housing advice.	High	a, b, c, f.	2003/2004	Initial contact made- further work required	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	Shared existing from each agency.
	Research best practice within other Local Authorities to learn how they have encouraged private landlords to work with them.	Medium	a, b, c, f.	2004/2005	Completed with Colchester Newham	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	-
	Provide six units of furnished emergency accommodation as an alternative to bed and breakfast.	High	a, b, c.	2003/2004	Complete	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	
	Negotiate with RSL partners to provide three of the six units.	High	a, b, c, f.	2003/2004	Complete	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	From RSL

**Key Strategic Priority - Three To deal with homelessness in the Borough, with particular emphasis on reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Link to Corporate Core Values See para</b>	<b>Time Table</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>Lead Officer /Team</b>	<b>Funding R = revenue C = capital</b>
To optimise the use of land and property owned by the public, private and voluntary sectors to produce affordable housing.	Consult with RSL partners to provide single persons accommodation as long term temporary in same way as in existence for families.	High	a, b, c, f.	2004	Consultation started with BHT.	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	From RSL
	Increase the use of "homeless at home" where possible.	High	a, b, c.	2003/2004	In place	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	
	See key actions under "Strategic Aim - optimise provision of affordable housing.	High	a, b, c, e,	On-going	Corporate site-tracking team established	Principal Officer (Housing Needs)	As set out previously.

**Key Strategic Priority - Four - To develop our service to tenants and applicants for housing through the approved improvement plans.**

Objective	Key Actions	Priority	Link to Corporate Core Values. See para 2.2	Time Table	Progress to date	Lead Officer /Team	Funding R = revenue C = capital
To provide an efficient responsive and comprehensive repairs, maintenance and improvement service to tenants, leaseholders and their homes.	<p>Implement the annual programme of works set out in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.</p> <p>Address the government decent homes criteria within HRA Business Plan.</p> <p>Implement the Best Value Improvement Plan for repairs and Maintenance.</p> <p>To carry out a Stock Condition Survey in 2004 to inform Options Appraisal.</p> <p>Improve the energy efficiency of Council homes through a planned programme of capital expenditure.</p> <p>Provide information, advice and education for all residents on efficient use of energy.</p>	High	a,b,c,e.	On-going	In place	Heads of Housing and Building Surveying Services.	Approx £3M (C & R) annually capital and planned works. £0.8M annually (R) responsive and voids.
		High	a,b,c,e.	By 2010	In place	Heads of Housing and Building Surveying Services.	Approx £1.2M annually. (C)
		High	a,b,c,e.	By March 2004	Implemented	Heads of Housing and Building Surveying Services.	-
		High	a,b,c,e.	2004	May to October 2004	Head of Environmental Health Service.	£40,000 part. (R)
To reduce the environmental impact of energy use in the domestic sector and seek to ensure every household has access to affordable warmth.		High	a,b,c,e.	By March 2004	Programme in place	Heads of Housing and Building Surveying Services.	£0.4M on Boiler replacement and double glazing. (C)
		Medium	a,b,c.	On-going	Housing news used	Head of Housing Services.	-

**Key Strategic Priority - Four - To develop our service to tenants and applicants for housing through the approved improvement plans.**

Objective	Key Actions	Priority	Link to Corporate Core Values See para 2.2	Time Table	Progress to date	Lead Officer /Team	Funding R = revenue C = capital
To provide an efficient, caring and responsive service to tenants and leaseholders, to enable the best possible enjoyment of their homes and local environment within the community as a whole.	Implement the Best Value Improvement Plan for Estate Management.  Carry out actions set out in Housing and Welfare Services Plan - Estate Management section.	High	a,b,c.	By March, 2004	Implemented	Principal Officer (Estate Management)	£0.75M (R)
To ensure that tenants and leaseholders of the Council have the opportunity to participate in developing the strategy for and delivery of the housing service to the level they want.	Implement the Best Value improvement plan for Tenant Participation.  Carry out actions set out in Housing and Welfare Services Plan - Tenant Participation section.	High	a,b,c.	Achieved 2002/2003	Implemented	Principal Officer (Estate Management)	£0.11M annually including capital. (C and R)
To provide an efficient, caring and clearly understandable service to those with a housing need in the Borough, including those requiring access to affordable housing and to the Council's tenants with supported housing needs.	Implement the Best Value Improvement Plan for Housing Needs.  Carry out actions in Housing and Welfare Service Plan - Housing Needs.	High	a,b,c,d,f.	2003/2004	Carried out	Principal Officer (Estate Management)	£0.23M (R)
	Implement local supporting people strategy, including delivery of Best Value review and general management of sheltered housing service.	High	a,b,c,d,f.	2003/2004	Carried out	Principal Officer (Housing Needs) Special Needs Officer.	£0.32M (R)

1. To ensure everyone can live in a decent home at an affordable price.

Regional Objective	The Council's Approach
1.1 To maintain and increase the supply of new homes to meet identified needs.	This accords with one of our major objectives, evidenced by seeking to increase the proportion of affordable housing on medium to larger sites via the Draft Replacement Local Plan and Planning agreements on private housing sites.
1.2 To achieve the decent homes standard.	The HRA Business Plan takes into account as a minimum the Government's target for all Council homes to meet the standard by 2010. The Council is confident this can be met.
1.3 To promote strategic working between local authorities, housing associations and other regional agencies on cross boundary issues to increase supply and improve efficiency in the use of resources.	The Council has played an active part in the production of the London Commuter Belt Sub-Regional Strategy, in particular re-enforcing the aim to tackle the common issues of supply and affordability.

2. To contribute effectively to social inclusion with sustainable communities.

Regional Objective	The Council's Approach
2.1 To identify needs and ensure effective provision for people needing additional support, in housing and care.	The council has developed a Local Supporting People Strategy which feeds into the County Strategy, and has worked in cross-boundary partnering with Chelmsford and Maldon Council's to employ relevant staff. The Local Strategy links with the new Homelessness Strategy, for example in enabling Floating support to homeless households.
2.2 To contribute to the long term viability of rural communities.	The Council has and continues to develop new housing in rural communities on previously used council-owned sites, e.g. Airey housing sites, low demand sheltered housing sites. The Local Plan also includes a policy for rural exceptions sites, although none have been developed to date.

2.3 To enhance housing opportunities for people from a black and minority ethnic community.	The Council area does not have readily identifiable specific communities, but the housing needs of BME individuals are being explored as part of the County-wide study.
2.4 To link housing investment with issues arising from structural change to communities.	This is probably more relevant in the wider regional context, although the sub-regional issues of affordability for low income and disadvantage groups in increasingly high value areas is fully recognised in the Sub-Regional and Local Housing Strategy,

3. To enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality.

Regional Objective	The Council's Approach
3.1 To contribute to the reduction in health inequalities.	The meeting of the decent homes target, the implementation of the private sector interim housing renewal policy, and ensuring that housing is a full participant in the Local Strategic Partnership, along with the PCT and Social Services, are examples of how this is applied locally.
3.2 To use stock re-investment to contribute to increasing life spans for both people and dwellings.	The Council's interim housing renewal policy is relevant here.
3.3 To contribute to the needs of an ageing population.	<p>The Council funds the Local Home Improvement Agency, in partnership with County Supporting People.</p> <p>The Council has, with partner agencies, investigated and is continually updating joint care schemes in sheltered housing. Most recently for example introducing support from the Older Peoples Mental Health Team via Supporting People and main stream Health and Social Services funding.</p> <p>The Council has a stated policy and is implementing upgrading bedsit sheltered accommodation to self-contained one bedroomed.</p>

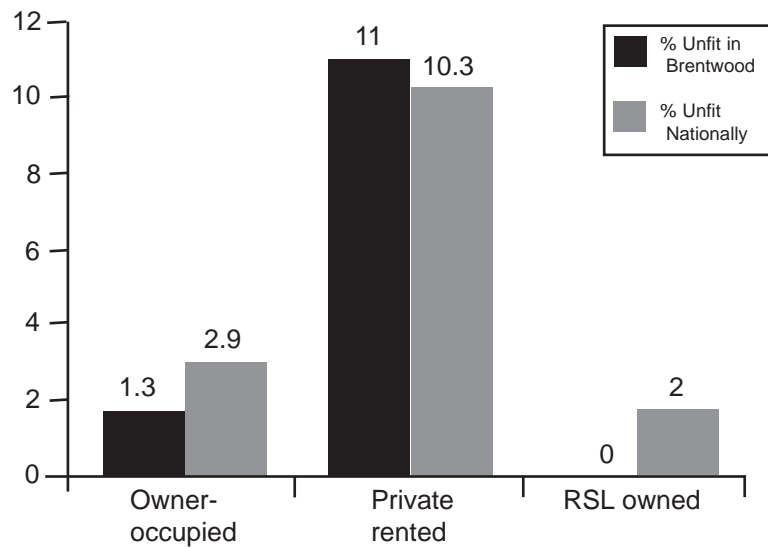
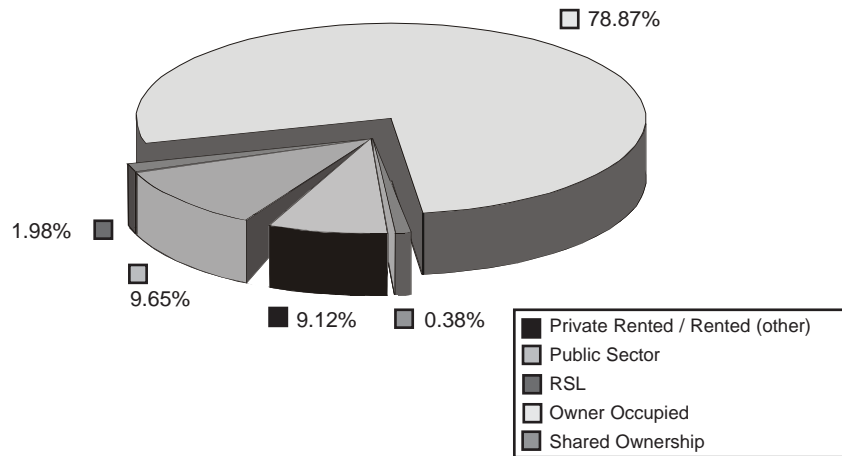
4. To use housing investment to complement sustainable economic development.

Regional Objective	The Council's Approach
4.1 To link affordable housing into plans for economic development to enable the balanced growth of the regional economy.	This is mainly a regional objective, but the principles of balanced growth are reflected in the Council's Local Plan.
4.2 To build a better response to growth pressures within the region.	As a London green belt authority, Brentwood shares the concerns about pressures for over-development in the area. The identified growth areas in the sustainable communities plan are recognised. Brentwood is located between Thames Gateway and the London-Stanstead-Cambridge London.
4.3 To develop a greater understanding of external pressures, especially London	As above , but at the same time the Council needs to address local demand for affordable housing as part of the overall demand. The Draft Replacement Local Plan reflects the issue.
4.4 To ensure the appropriate mix across all tenures.	The Council's policy incorporated into the draft Replacement Local Plan is to seek 40% affordable housing mainly subsidised rented accommodation but including an element of intermediate key workers, on medium to larger sites.  Local planning advice also seeks to and achieves a balanced distribution of affordable housing through larger sites.

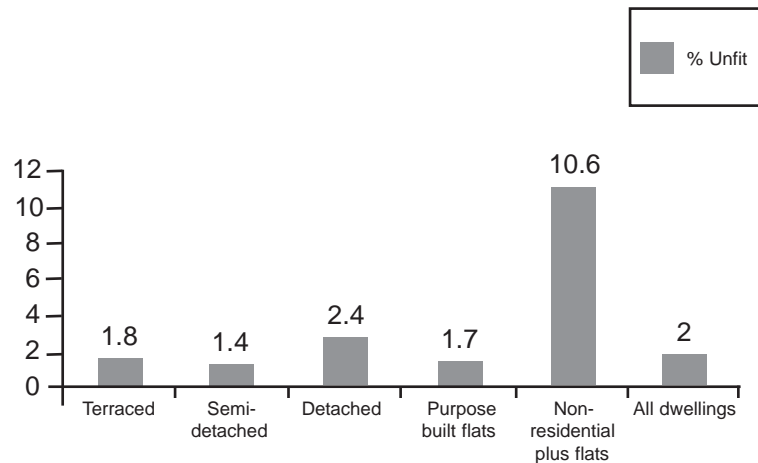
5. To contribute to a sustainable environment.

Regional Objective	The Council's Approach
5.1 To ensure new housing schemes minimise environmental impact.	The Draft Replacement Plan includes policies to address these four objectives.
5.2 To develop new homes that make best use of good practice in design and sustainability.	
5.3 To encourage inter-agency working in key regeneration schemes.	(This is established practice on larger sites e.g. Warley Hospital redevelopment)
5.4 To encourage efficient use of resources, in particular water.	





The percentage of unfit dwellings by building type is as follows:-





- Sub Regional Housing Strategy (London Commuter Belt) produced 2002.
- Independent Options Appraisal on investment in Council's stock carried out in 2002 in tandem with Best Value Review of Repairs and Maintenance. Stock retention recommended subject to on-going monitoring of Government Policy.
- Registered Social Landlords invited to make proposals against available Local Authority Social Housing Grant - 2002.
- Homelessness Strategy produced 2003.
- Local Supporting People Strategy produced 2002, and contribution made to County Strategy.
- Floating Support Scheme substantially extended via RSL partnership 2003.
- Private Sector Landlord Forum held 2003.
- New Supporting People funding regime in place April, 2003.
- Effective liaison with Billericay, Brentwood and Wickford PCT established 2001/02.
- Tenant Participation Co-Ordinator appointed, with significant increase in relevant tenant involvement - 2001-2003.
- Allocations Policy revised in accordance with revised guidance, and "Key Worker" definition revised to include viability of local public services 2003.
- A low demand rural sheltered housing site redeveloped for general needs housing, 2002/03.
- Additional 9 units of "Move-On" accommodation enabled via Housing Corporation ADP.
- Fuel Poverty Strategy revised 2003.
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy produced by multi-agency team 2002.
- Desktop survey of HMOs carried out 2002.
- Proactive HMO risk assessment programme 2003/05
- Private Sector Grant Policy reviewed 2002/03.
- The initial deposit draft of the Replacement Local Plan was published for public consultation September, 2002.
- Optical Appraisal Project Plan and Consultation and Communication Strategy agreed with Go East June 2004
- Joint Housing Stock Consultation and Housing Needs Survey Commissioned 2003/04.



	Estimate 2004/05	ACT 2003/04
Policy Board	0	16
Cultural Panel	480	141
Housing and Health Panel	2,785	2,401
Environment and Transport Panel	<u>695</u> 3,960	<u>731</u> 3,289
Project Preparation	41	48
Total Capital Payments	4001	3,337
2002/2003 Slippage	<u>1,105</u> 5,106	<u>1,55</u> 3,492
Less: Operating Leasing	<u>(220)</u> 4,886	<u>(646)</u> 2,846

Met by:-

CAPITAL RESOURCES

Revenue	422	207
Use of Reserves		
Major Repairs Allowance	1,782	1,590
Capital Receipts	2,168	310
Credit Approvals	415	644
Disabled Facilities Grant	<u>99</u>	<u>95</u>
	<b><u>4,886</u></b>	<b><u>2,846</u></b>



Contacts in the event of queries

Appendix 6

Chris Wainman	Head of Housing and Welfare Services	General Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing Service to tenants and housing applicants HRA Business Plan.	01277 - 261111 Ext 269
Simon Bennett	Head of Environmental Health and Public Protection Services.	Private Sector Housing Strategy	01277 - 261111 Ext 279
Geoff Boyton	Principal Assistant (Planning) Policy and Implementation.	Local Planning Issues.	01277 - 261111 Ext 353
Derek Hince	Head of Building Surveying Services	Major Planned and Capital Works.	01277 - 261111 Ext 287
Richard Farr	Principal Officer (Environmental Health)	Fuel Poverty Strategy, HECA, Housing Renewal.	01277 - 261111 Ext 391
Trudy Frost	Special Needs Officer	Local Supporting People Strategy.	01277 - 261111 Ext 380
Sheridan Keeble	Borough Treasurer	Corporate Capital Strategy.	01277 -261111 Ext 200
John Fry	Principal Assistant	Housing Capital Expenditure	01277 - 261111 Ext 232
Simon Theobald	Accountant	Housing Revenue Expenditure.	01277 - 261111 Ext 231
Steve Summers	Performance & Policy Co-Ordinator	Corporate Links	01277 - 261111 Ext 234



ADP	Approved Development Programme - the name given to all the Housing Corporation Capital Funding allocated to Registered Social Landlords enabling them to build, acquire or refurbish affordable housing.
Affordable Housing	Mainly subsidised housing for rent, where rents are affordable by those on lower incomes. Can sometimes be lower cost homes for sale or shared ownership.
Best Value	The process of ensuring the continuous improvement of public service through service reviews, comparing performance with other providers, consultation and inspection.
Brentwood Foyer	A forty bed-space supported housing scheme for housing and training of young, single people aged 16 to 25.
Brownfield Sites	Industrial or unused areas in towns that may be suitable for an alternative form of development, particularly housing in the context of this strategy.
Corporate Performance Plan	This document, called "Facing the Future" in Brentwood, aims to provide local people with a clear expression of the Council's position and performance in delivering local services, together with its proposals for service improvements. It is closely related to CPA.
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment is the formal process by which local authorities are assessed independently by the Audit Commission.
Decent Homes	The Government's standards by which the suitability of homes is measured under four broad categories - fitness, repair, modern facilities and thermal comfort.
Essex Housing Officers Group	A group of officers of housing authorities and the larger Registered Social Landlords which meets monthly to discuss and examine housing issues affecting the county.
Fuel Poverty	When a household needs to spend more than 10% of its household income to achieve a satisfactory standard of heating.
Green Belt	Areas of countryside that surround towns and villages, on which non-agricultural development is not normally allowed, in order to maintain the character and quality of the countryside.
HECA	Home Energy Conservation Act - the statutory basis on which local authorities address energy efficiency issues in the domestic setting.

HIP	Housing Investment Programme - the totality of the housing authority's programme for the Borough, including projected resource expenditure.
HMO's	Houses in multiple occupation i.e. a house or flat occupied by more than one household.
Home Improvement Agency	An organisation that provides advice, support and practical assistance to vulnerable, especially older people, to repair improve or adapt their own homes, and to obtain available grants.
House Builders Federation	A national body representing the interests of private housing builders and developers.
Housing Corporation	The Government agency that funds and regulates Registered Social Landlords.
HRA	Housing Revenue Account - the statutory account operated by Council Housing Authorities detailing income and expenditure relating to services to Council housing tenants.
HRA Business Plan	The associated plan giving up to 30 year projections on income and expenditure, and detailing service provision.
Key Worker	A person's job which is expected to lead to the creation of new jobs or where jobs might be lost if the opportunity is not made, or there would be significant detriment to services to the public locally.
LA	Local Authority, normally housing authority in the context of this strategy i.e. Brentwood Borough Council.
Local Plan	The formal Council document that sets out all the Council's Planning Policies, on which planning applications are considered and forward plans are based.
Local Strategic Partnership	The overarching partnership of stakeholders providing strategic direction to service providers and agencies in the Borough.
MORI	An nationally based company which carried out independent surveys on behalf of organisations such as the Council.
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister - The Government department which replaced the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions. It has responsibility for making and implementing national housing policy, and allocates resources for different housing programmes, including via the Regional Housing Board.

Options Appraisal	A process by which the Council examines different ways of investing in providing housing services in the borough with the main emphasis on its own stock.
Primary care Trust	The Local Commissioning Body for Health Care covering the Billericay, Brentwood and Wickford area.
Regional Housing Board	The body formed by the Government to be responsible for Regional housing strategy and decisions on resource distribution. It comprises relevant organisations and local authority representatives.
Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)	Non-profit making organisations, usually a housing association, that is registered with, and regulated by the Housing Corporation. They are run by voluntary board of management, and employ professional housing officers to manage their service provision.
Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme	A scheme operated in partnership with a local housing trust to assist people on low incomes/benefits to access private sector rented accommodation, by providing guarantees to landlords on rent payments and deposits at the start of tenancies.
SAP Rating	The scale used nationally to measure the energy efficiency of a home.
S.106 Agreement	Agreements between the Council as planning authority and applicants who want to develop land to satisfy specific requirements relating to sites, alongside formal planning approval.
Supporting People	The national scheme delivered locally whereby different revenue funding streams have been brought together to be distributed to service providers for the provision of housing related support to help vulnerable people sustain tenancies.
Tenants Talkback	A group consisting of tenants, leaseholders, elected members and housing officers of the Council, which meets at least quarterly to discuss housing issues of mutual interest, mainly relating to the service relating to the Council's own housing stock.



ANNUAL HOUSING FORUM  
FRIDAY 25th JULY, 2003  
ATTENDANCE LIST

Appendix 8

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ORGANISATION</u>
Mr. C.Wainman	Head of Housing and Welfare Services - BBC
Cllr Mrs P.Myers	Chairman - Housing and Health Panel - BBC
Mrs V.Thomas	Brentwood, Billericay & Wickford Primary Care Trust
Mr. R.Farr	Principal Assistant (Environmental Health) - BBC
Cllr Mrs Brehaut	Brentwood Borough Council
Cllr M. Taylor	Vice-Chairman - Housing and Health Panel -BBC
Mr. M.Copperthwaite	Outlook Care
Mr. A.Allocca	Manager - Brentwood Foyer
Ms J.Coskry	Blackwater Housing Association
Suzanne Hollingsworth	Brentwood Housing Trust
Mr. R.Masterson	Pilgrims Hatch Community Association
Mrs B.Waltham	Crime Prevention
Mr. D.Taylor	Fire & Rescue Service
Tracey Keay	Estuary Housing Association
Mrs S.Salway	Tenant Participation Co-Ordinator - BBC
Mr. A.Bayless	Herongate & Ingrave Parish Council
Mr. D.White	Railway Square Residents Association
Mrs J. Smith	3 T's Residents Association
Mrs C.Clayton	3 T's Residents Association
Cllr Mrs M.Henwood	Brentwood Borough Council
Janet Tarbun	ECC - Leaving and After Care
Lukman Ahmed	London and Quadrant Housing Trust
Nicola Plumb	Rural Community Council of Essex
Mr. M.Bland	Stondon Massey Parish Council
Maureen Dickens	Social Services
Dawn Shepherd	Senior Housing Officer (Housing Needs) - BBC
Lesley Viner	Housing Officer (Housing Needs) - BBC
Angela Williams	Housing Officer (Housing Needs) - BBC
John Whelpdale	Principal Officer (Estate Management) - BBC
Robin Hill	Senior Housing Officer (Estate Management) BBC
Mr. A.Millard	Chief Planning Officer - BBC
Mr. J.Bower	Our House Tenants Group
Mr. D.White	Railway Square Residents Association
Ingrid Lumsden	Connexions PA
Mr. P.Gardner	Essex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre
Miss A.Hogan	Assistant Town Clerk
Myrna Liles	
Mr. M.Briggs	Inter Church Action Group for the Homeless
Heather Ziervogel	Environmental Health Officer - BBC
Mrs T.Frost	Special Needs Officer - BBC



Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Asset Management Plan

Best Value Improvement Plans-Housing Services

Capital Strategy

Corporate Performance Plan

Community Plan

County Supporting People Strategy

Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy

Draft Replacement Local Plan

Fuel Poverty Strategy

Homelessness Strategy

Housing Needs Survey Summary 1998

Housing Stock Condition Survey 2000

Housing Renewal Policy

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Local Health Delivery Plan

Local Plan - Adopted

Local Strategic Partnership-Housing Priorities and Targets

Local Supporting People Strategy

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister-Annual Housing Statistics

Performance Management Framework

Regional Housing Strategy

Sub-Regional Housing Strategy

Tenant Participation Compact

For copies of this Housing Strategy or any of the above documents, please contact:-

Mrs G.Matthews,  
Secretary/Pa to Head of Housing and Welfare Services,  
Town Hall,  
Ingrave Road,  
Brentwood,  
Essex. CM15 8AY

Telephone - 01277 261111 Extension 263    Fax 01277 261115  
Email - hohws@brentwood-council.gov.uk

