

FOREWORD

Melton Borough Council has substantially reviewed its Housing Strategy during 2005. Much has happened during the past year. The Best Value review of repair and maintenance and the resultant improvement plan has focused our attention on a key element of the service. We embarked on a Stock Options review in partnership with our neighbours in Rutland and Harborough. The stock options appraisal is now nearly complete and we are in discussions with the Government Office for formal sign-off. Melton's Community Strategy has also been agreed.

Underpinning both the Community and Housing Strategies is the objective of providing good affordable housing in areas of identified need. This applies to work which the Council does directly and in partnership with others. We want to achieve first class housing provision throughout the Melton area. This means working to provide affordable housing for those who need it. It also means investing in the existing housing stock to make sure that it is in good repair. We also want to see the provision of an excellent housing service to tenants in the homes managed by the Council and local housing associations. We are committed to achieving these objectives and will work with our partners in the local community to achieve them.

Chair of Community & Social Affairs

Chair of Local Strategic Partnership

Chair of TFEC

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Other Formats

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Glossary of Terms

BCA	Basic Credit Approval
BVR	Best Value Review
BME	Black & Minority Ethnic
CAB	Citizen's Advice Bureau
CRE	Council for Racial Equality
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
HIP	Housing Investment Programme
HIMO/HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
HHRS	Housing Health and Safety Rating
LOTS	Living Over the Shops
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MCP	Melton Community Partnership
MRA	Major Repairs Allowance
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
RAGE	Residents Action Group (Egerton)
RTB	Right to Buy
SCA	Supplementary Credit Approval
SSP	Sub Regional Strategic Partnership
TFEC	Tenants Forum Executive Committee

1. Introduction

Melton Borough is an attractive rural area in the north-east part of Leicestershire and at the heart of the East Midlands. It covers an area of 48,138 hectares and is one of the 50 most sparsely populated districts in the UK.

The population of the Borough at 2001 was 47,866 (2001 Census). It has increased by 1.6% over the past ten years and is expected to grow to about 52,000 by 2016 (Leicestershire County Council).

The main activities of the Borough are centred on the single market town of Melton Mowbray which has a population of about 25,000. There are some 70 small villages within the surrounding rural area. Bottesford and Asfordby are the two largest villages each with a population of about 3,000. The other villages range in size from small hamlets with 20 persons to villages where up to 700 people live.

Unemployment in the Borough has continued to fall over the past ten years and in March 2005 it was 1.1%. The economic activity rate for the Borough at 92.3% (ONS Labour Market 2003-2004) is higher than the figure for Leicestershire (83.5%) and the East Midlands (79.0%).

Whilst average annual household earnings in Melton (£25,100) are higher than Leicestershire (£21,800) and the East Midlands (£23,200), the average gross weekly wage (£301.82) is less than the East Midlands (£329.33).

The Borough has an ageing population. According to the 2001 Census, 21.2% of the Melton population was aged 60 or over compared to 20.6% in Leicestershire and 21.0% in the East Midlands.

The proportion of resident black minority ethnic groups in Melton is small at 1.2% compared to Leicestershire (5.2%) and the East Midlands (6.5%).

There were 20,825 households in Melton in April 2005 with an average household size of 2.4. The majority of houses were owner occupied (76.5%). About 12% were rented from the Council or a housing association, and 8% rented from a private landlord. The remaining 3.5% were a mixture of other tenure types.

The Borough's housing market is buoyant and the average price of a property during 2004 was £158,394. There are more detached houses (40.9%) in the Borough than any other type. This proportion is significantly greater than Leicestershire's (37.2%) and the East Midlands (32.2%).

During a Citizen's Panel consultation exercise on key issues, 75% of respondents considered the range of local housing as very good or fairly good.

2. Corporate and Community Vision

The National Context

Melton Borough Council welcomed the Housing Policy Statement and the Communities Plan. These documents have been fundamental in guiding housing policy.

The Council has recently re-organised its housing service. This includes separating the strategic housing role across all tenures from operational management. A stock options appraisal is underway and a private sector stock condition survey is nearing completion. Melton also gives a high priority to encouraging balanced housing markets and sustainable communities. This was a key driver in the recent Council re-organisation which has created a Community Support Directorate which brings together; social and economic development including housing; customer services; environmental services; physical environment; revenues and benefits.

Overall objective:

To develop the housing strategy in line with national and local priorities.

The Regional and Sub-Regional Context

The Regional Housing Board has set the following priorities for the East Midlands:

- By 2010, to bring all social housing into a decent condition.
- The impact of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area.
- Ensuring that public investment in housing supports urban renaissance, rural development and sustainability.
- The wider aims of the Sustainable Communities Plan to ensure social inclusiveness through a focus on rural housing, the housing needs of black and minority ethnic communities (BME) and housing for vulnerable groups.
- Regeneration of urban communities and working towards the 60% target for the utilisation of previously developed land.
- Targeting of HIP resources towards the decency standard for local authority stock, private sector renewal, aids and adaptations and all other relevant activities.

Within the East Midlands, Melton is part of the Eastern Sub-Region. Melton is a member of the Welland Housing Partnership. This also includes: East Northamptonshire; South Kesteven; Market Harborough and Rutland Councils together with the preferred housing associations who work with them. The Welland Partnership area is predominantly rural with a buoyant housing market. The Welland is the only rural partnership in the East Midlands recognised by the East Midlands Development Agency as a Sub-Regional Strategic Partnership (SSP). The Eastern Sub Region includes lower cost and lower demand areas. On the other hand Melton's partners, Harborough and East Northamptonshire are part of the Southern Growth Sub-Region.

Recent work conducted by DTZ Piedad Consulting, commissioned by the ODPM, positions Melton as belonging to three sub-regional housing markets: Leicester, Nottingham and Peterborough. It also acknowledges that Melton has its own self-contained local housing market.

Melton has contributed to the sub-regional and regional strategies and has contributed specific points to the development of the Regional Housing Strategy:

2. Corporate and Community Vision

- The recent announcement from the Housing Corporation on future developments that they will support has shown an overwhelming emphasis on proposals in the Melton Mowbray area with all the proposed general need developments being successful.
- To achieve this, Melton is reviewing its Local Development Framework, so that it addresses the need for affordable housing on adequate housing land.
- Melton developed an action plan to apply the CRE code of best practice for rented housing in January 2004 and will be able to confirm application by May 2005.
- Melton has already begun exploration to work towards choice-based lettings, by working with Harborough Home Search; this is an action point for the Allocations and Homelessness Task Group.
- The Welland Partnership has been recognised as a Sub-regional Strategic Partnership through the creation of a Welland SSP supported by emda. The Housing Corporation has encouraged partnership working and acknowledged the input the Welland Partnership has made into the Regional Housing Strategy.

The Welland Housing Partnership has produced a joint Housing Strategy. Its vision for 2010 is at Appendix 2. The overarching objective is to seek solutions to shared problems and to pool resources to make them go further. The joint Strategy is a vehicle for:

- Assessing needs.
- Enabling the development of affordable housing.
- A joint approach to supported housing.
- Achieving decent homes.
- Exploring the potential for joint service delivery.
- Sharing initiatives, for example Stock Options Appraisal.
- Joint working to address problems in the private sector.

The Welland Partnership Housing Strategy Action Plan is at Appendix 3.

The Local Context

The Council recognises the key role which housing can play in delivering better health and reducing crime. The East Midlands Assembly's public health strategy for the East Midlands explicitly recognises the link between health and the provision of adequate and affordable homes. "Affordable Warmth" is given as a specific example where a contribution can be made to the wider aims of social inclusion. In Melton, this aspiration is translated into action locally, for example through the "Energy Sense" partnership. In November 2004, Melton Borough Council and the Melton Rutland and Harborough Primary Care Trust (MRHPCT) hosted a seminar on Improving Health through Warmth for health care professionals who visit residents at home. The Community Safety Strategy (2002-2005) produced by The Melton Safer Communities Partnership also recognises housing's role, for example, in addressing the concerns of elderly and vulnerable residents one of the Partnership's priorities.

2. Corporate and Community Vision

Throughout the Housing Strategy links with other local strategies and plans are made. These include: the Leicestershire Learning Disability Strategy and work with the County Council to improve services for older and disabled people. The new customer service centre is seen as an opportunity to help deliver the Better Care Higher Standards Charter.

Two key commitments underpin Melton's Community Strategy and Housing Strategy - equal opportunities and sustainable communities. Melton Borough Council has developed a race equality statement and strategy that covers gender and disability. The Melton Community Strategy also outlines its commitment to build on the responsibility of the council under legislation to promote equal opportunities and ensure equality is an important part of its work. Melton Borough Council is committed to take a lead role in helping to produce 'sustainable communities'.

The Community Strategy for the Borough of Melton has been developed through the Melton Community Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership) to promote the economic, environmental and social well-being of the Borough. The strategy brings together the views of the local community to create a long-term vision for the area, an action plan that identifies the short-term priorities and a shared commitment to implementation of the strategy. Its vision is ***"to enhance the quality of life for everyone in the borough of Melton to achieve a sustainable, prosperous and vibrant community..... a place where people want to live, work and visit."***

Partnership working is a central principle behind many of the elements of the Housing Strategy. Melton is already involved in inter-authority working through the Welland Partnership, and with other Leicestershire districts and the County Council for Supporting People. But also, within the Borough there are a variety of inter-agency partnerships that assist community development and which operate between a variety of partners such as statutory agencies, private sector, community and voluntary groups, resident groups and specific hard to reach groups such as seniors. Most recently this includes the Melton Community Partnership.

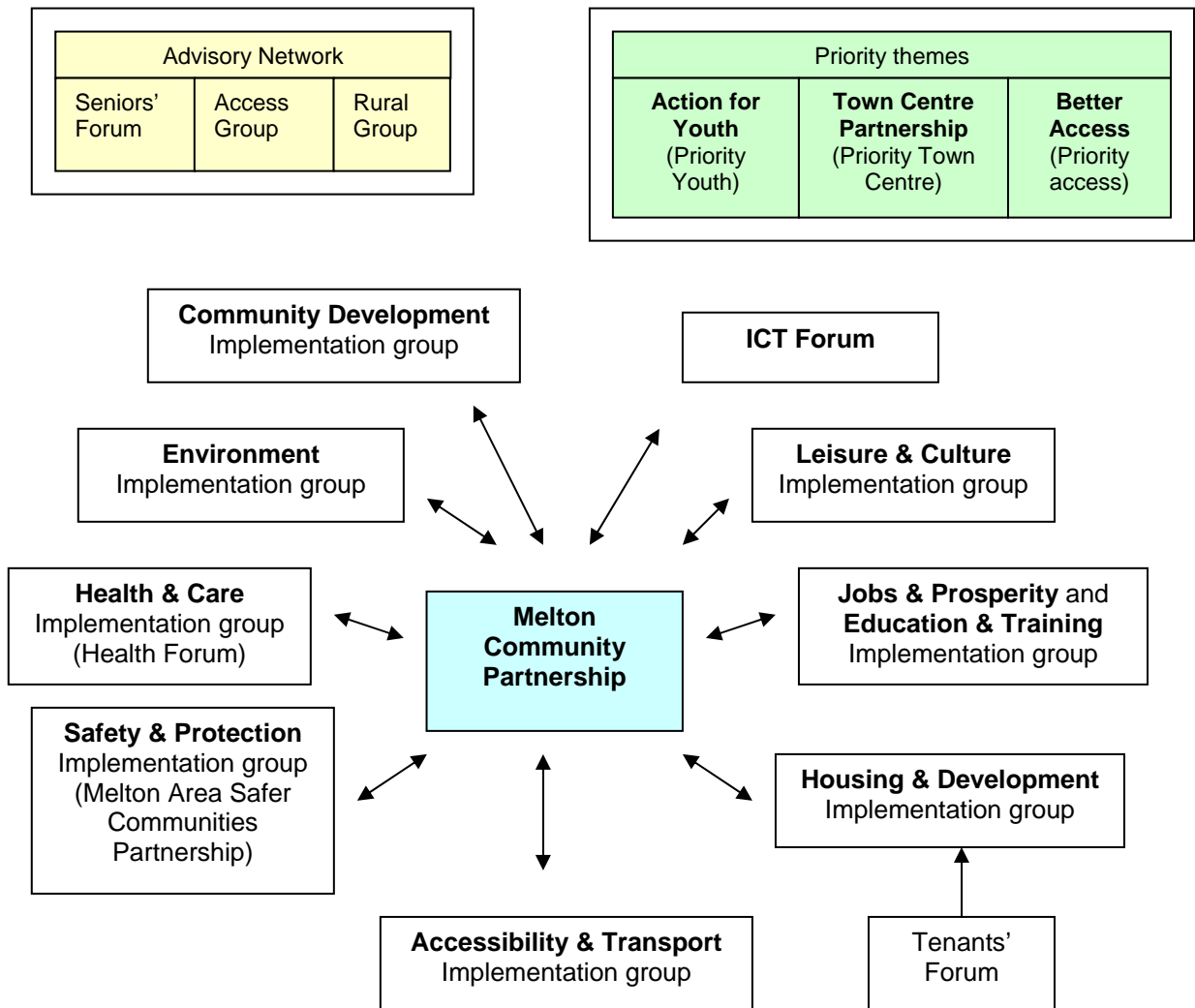
Locally, these voluntary agencies include the CVS, Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Melton Volunteer Bureau, and the Council helps with funding for these.

The Council supported the setting up of the Tenants' Forum Executive Committee, as the cornerstone of the Tenant Participation process. This enables the Council to consult with tenants about improvements and their funding.

We will seek to develop these partnerships further and in the future. The Melton Community Partnership will act as the umbrella body for many of the local partnerships and ensure that a more 'joined-up' way of working is promoted. This is shown in the following diagram:

2. Corporate and Community Vision

Melton Community Partnership Arrangements

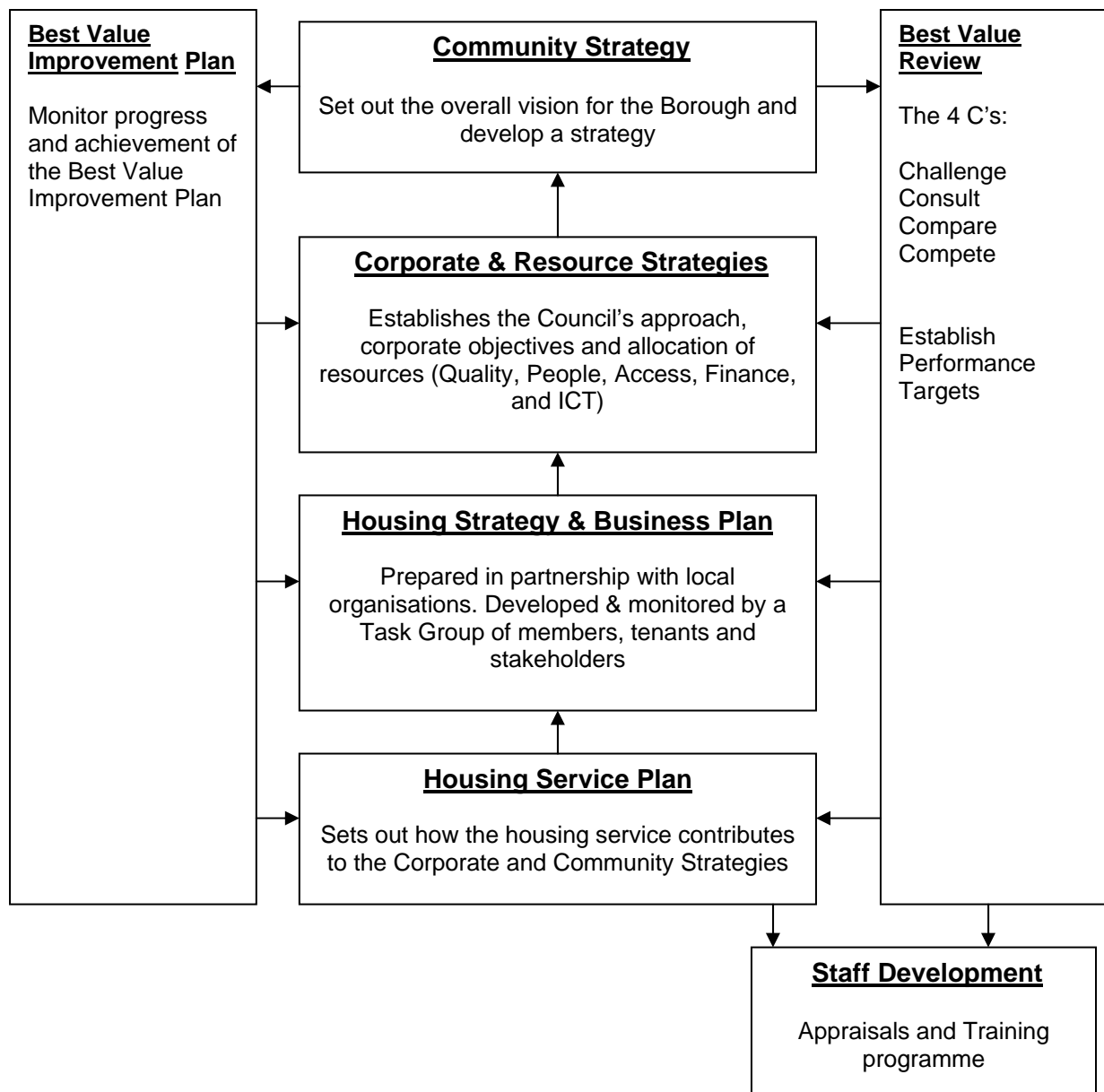


In relation to housing needs in the Borough, the Community Strategy has an objective to 'provide good – affordable housing in areas of identified need' which relates to issues such as reducing vacant properties, waiting lists and homelessness. Within the action plan that sets out the short-term priorities, actions include securing affordable homes through the local plan process and producing a homeless strategy. These issues are inextricably linked to other areas of the strategy where actions relate to issues such as healthy home environments, vulnerable people in poor housing and housing being developed in relation to transport provision.

Housing Strategy

The diagram below shows the links between the Community Strategy, Corporate Strategy, Housing Strategy and the Housing Service Plan. It also demonstrates the crucial importance of customer involvement and staff development to the process.

2. Corporate and Community Vision



In Melton, the Housing Strategy and the Business Plan are monitored and developed by a Task Group comprising members, tenants and stakeholders. Currently, Nottingham Community and East Midlands Housing Associations are members of the Group. The Task Group meets at least once every three months. Its role is evolving. Since its inception, its main objective has been to put in place a “fit for purpose” Strategy and Business Plan. It is expected that the role in the future will be more of a monitoring and development one and the membership of the Group may change to reflect this. Even in the relatively short time it has been in existence, it has exerted a very positive influence. Both the Strategy and the Business Plan have been considered by TFEC. It is expected that the influence tenants and stakeholders exert will become greater as the Group evolves. Occasionally, Task Group meetings will be devoted to specific topics with a view to driving forward particular aspects of the Strategy, for example, affordable homes.

2. Corporate and Community Vision

The Community Strategy has helped inform the Council's Corporate Plan. Indeed the Council has adopted the Community Strategy's vision as one that it shares. Taking into account national priorities, local intelligence, partner's priorities, community views and internal requirements, as well as the Community Strategy, the Council has identified its priority objectives. The Capital Strategy states that Melton's Mission Statement is translated into a series of corporate and key strategic objectives. Based on these corporate objectives the Council's current priorities inform the Capital Strategy.

One of the corporate objectives is to provide healthy and safe accommodation for all members of the community and improve the condition of the Council's own housing stock. The Housing Strategy therefore informs the priorities of the Capital Strategy which makes resources available through the Capital Programme. The project appraisal system ensures that all capital projects are consistently and properly dealt with, including the housing service.

Best Value

A major Best Value Review of Melton's Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements Service was undertaken during 2002 and was the subject of a Housing Inspection in early 2003. The Inspectorate also considered factors which affected the Repairs Service but which were common to all landlord services. The Review and the Inspection highlighted major weaknesses in the way in which the Repairs Service was organised, procured and managed. The Inspection highlighted that practices were outdated and identified major challenges for us in developing a proactive and positive approach to involving tenants and in demonstrating customer care. The service was rated "poor with uncertain prospects for improvement".

Following this Review, the Council has made the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service one of its top priorities and a lot of work has been undertaken in developing an up-to-date Improvement Plan and we are continuing to closely monitor its implementation, in partnership with the Housing Inspectorate and our tenants.

The Improvement Plan developed in response to the inspection is regularly updated to ensure that actions and tasks identified are completed. However, we have ensured that we have not lost some of the good work highlighted in the Plan developed prior to the inspection and an exercise to identify those areas of service delivery not included in the new plan was undertaken and fed into the revised Improvement Plan.

As the Repairs, Maintenance and Improvement Service was rated 'poor' by the Housing Inspectorate, it was the subject of a re-inspection in January 2004. The Housing Inspectorate noted the progress made since their last visit and accepted that many actions within the Improvement Plan were being delivered. The outcome of the re-inspection was that the service was rated 'fair with promising prospects for improvement.'

A lot of progress has been made since the Housing Inspectorate's visit and an Improvement Plan Working Group has been established to oversee implementation which includes representation from the Tenants' Forum.

These improvements have been based on:

- Issues raised by stakeholders (eg: customers, Tenants' Forum, councillors)
- Issues raised by staff as we have examined our services and the way we deliver them

2. Corporate and Community Vision

- Issues raised through our work with partners (eg: other councils and housing associations in the Welland Partnership)
- Issues raised corporately, for the benefit of all our customers
- Issues raised in our discussions with the Housing Inspectorate.

The Improvement Plan contains the key priority areas for us, which are:

- Improving access to the Housing Service.
- Improving the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service, including earlier completion of works, an appointment service, a more effective and efficient repair request process and a faster emergency response time.
- Consulting the Tenants' Forum Executive Committee (TFEC) for their approval before reports are submitted to Committee.
- Advising and communicating with our tenants and staff through newsletters, regular meetings and updates and the internet, of improvements to the Housing Service, performance targets and achievements and their views on future initiatives and their subsequent involvement.

A copy of the Improvement Plan: part of the Housing Strategy and Business Plan pack.

The Improvement Plan will remain a priority for the Council and the Working Group will continue to monitor its implementation. To date, 47 of the 53 recommendations in the Improvement Plan have been implemented.

After the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in May 2004, Melton Borough Council was rated 'fair' overall, according to the Audit Commission report published on 16 September 2004. Based on our current plans we are likely to continue to make improvements.

The CPA result is the beginning of an improvement planning process to raise the standard of services we provide. Below is a summary of the key issues that we now need to address:

- Our new priorities and direction have yet to be translated into robust plans for action and effectively communicated to our stakeholders.
- We need to develop our focus and management of performance.
- Many of our corporate systems are new or developing. These need time to become established and deliver sustained improvement that is visible to the public.
- Improvement in service delivery has been mixed and un-sustained.
- There is some uncertainty around our future plans.

The Decent Homes Diagnostic section within the CPA assessment was scored as 'C' (high risk service failure and poor outcomes) on a scale a-d. The areas of weakness have been included into the improvement plan and 10 of the 12 identified weaknesses have been addressed.

3. Understanding Housing Markets and Housing Need

Sub-Regional Housing Needs Assessment

The Welland Partnership now provides us with opportunities for joint working with other authorities on assessing housing requirements. The Welland Partnership's Housing Strategy 2002 includes a Housing Market Mapping and Analysis, and this was produced by the partnership in May 2003. Its purpose was to understand the many influences on housing markets in the partnership area. One of the conclusions is that:

- Melton occupies a middle ground in wider housing markets, with Melton Mowbray itself providing some reasonably priced housing. This provides a source of entry level properties for buyers both moving out from the cities of Nottingham and Leicester, and reaching Grantham to some extent, but also for households who cannot afford the higher priced rural areas, especially to the south of Melton Mowbray. To formulate its housing strategy across the most relevant boundaries it appears that Melton should mainly be talking to Rutland, greater Nottingham authorities and Leicester City, while still working together with the Welland partnership to develop viable rural and market town solutions.

The Welland Rural Housing Investment Project is funded by the Welland Partnership authorities, housing associations, and the Countryside Agency. The project which is being undertaken by the Centre for Comparative Housing Research at the De Montfort University looks at rural housing markets through an investigation of environmental and land market constraints, housing demand and local housing opportunities at a ward level. It is the intention to develop a policy framework that will establish priorities for action across the sub region.

Melton in the Sub-regional housing market

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published its draft final report titled 'Identifying the Sub-Regional Housing Markets of the East Midlands' in January 2005. The study was undertaken by the consultant DTZ Pieda with the intention to inform the Regional Housing Board and local authorities throughout the region of the way in which housing markets operate and their spatial extent. In this respect, one of the studies core objectives was to identify the boundaries of sub-regional housing markets in the East Midlands region.

The study suggested that Melton's travel to work area is exclusively contained within its administrative boundary. As with cross-district travel to work patterns, it suggested that cross-district household movement was highly restricted. Given this the study concludes that Melton District displays the highest degree of individual self-containment of all the districts within the study area (the East Midlands Region). However, DTZ also acknowledged that travel to work patterns revealed commuting flows from Melton into Leicester although they believed these to be limited. Therefore while acknowledging the presence of a fairly self-contained housing market the study suggests that the Melton area relates best to the Leicester sub-region.

The findings of this study are not entirely consistent with our previous understanding of Melton's housing market. The Welland Partnership Housing Market Mapping and Analysis (May 2003) suggested that Melton provides a source of entry level properties for buyers moving out of Nottingham and Leicester, but also for householders that cannot afford the higher priced rural areas (in the Welland) particularly to the south of Melton Mowbray.

The Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council's Household Survey 2000 provided us with information on the relationship between where people live and work, suggesting that commuting out of our administrative area was as high as 40%. Whilst the strongest pull for

3. Understanding Housing Markets and Housing Need

the town and surrounding rural area is towards Leicester, the rural area to the north of Melton Mowbray, including the Vale of Belvoir, provides a commuter belt for Nottingham.

We have always believed that pressure is exerted on our housing market from households seeking to in-migrate from Leicester and Nottingham owing to the draw of marginally cheaper housing and attractive countryside balanced against commuting times of around half an hour to an hour to the two cities. This has often been cited as a contributory factor to our general housing need whereby households working and living in Melton (especially concealed households) are unable to compete effectively against prospective in-migrants who enjoy higher earnings from city based employment.

The ODPM's study recommends that sub-regional housing market assessments should be undertaken to advance their regional findings. It is likely that we will work with the Leicester Housing Market Assessment partnership. Although there is unlikely to be any further work on this before the ODPM's report is finalised, a Housing Market Assessment for Leicester is likely to be pursued in the next three years. This will provide a vehicle to establish whether Melton is self-contained or part of a wider housing market.

[We believe that an understanding of our housing market will help us to make better and more timely decisions for managing our own housing stock and for releasing land for new housing through the Melton Local Development Framework. As part of our Housing Needs Assessment undertaken in 2004 \(see below\) we also commissioned a Dwelling Stock Balance Analysis that looked at the supply of, and demand for, housing within the Borough. This work was not too dissimilar to the requirements set out in the Housing Market Assessment guidance produced by ODPM in December 2005. We have recently commissioned an update to the Dwelling Stock Balance Analysis that takes into account the emerging guidance on Housing Market Assessments. We also expect that this work will be able to feed into the Leicester Housing Market Assessment.](#)

Borough Wide Housing Needs Assessment

The Council commissioned research from David Couttie Associates into housing need in the Borough in 2004, with the findings published in 2005. This included a Housing Need Survey Report and a Balancing the Housing Market Report. This survey provided a comprehensive update on previous housing need surveys undertaken in 1994 and again in 1999. The completion of these surveys at regular intervals has enabled the Council to develop an excellent understanding of the changes in the local housing market.

Consequently, we are well placed to play a role in balancing the housing markets in the Borough, and to communicate relevant information concerning these markets to key players and partners in the development sectors.

The recent research was conducted in accordance with the Good Practice Guidance (2000) to ensure that it is rigorous and able to withstand scrutiny, as outlined in Circular 6/98 and in the Revision of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (March, 2000).

The study was undertaken through:

- A postal questionnaire across the Borough
- A housing market survey utilising Land Registry and Halifax House Price databases, and a telephone survey of local estate agents on the supply and cost of private rented housing

3. Understanding Housing Markets and Housing Need

- Secondary data analysis drawing upon HIP and Housing Register data, the 2001 census, and other national research.

The Housing Needs Survey 2004 was based on analysis of postal questionnaire survey of 6,650 of the borough's households (2,232 questionnaires returned, an overall response rate of 33.6%), a housing market survey and other secondary data.

In broad terms, the research found that 92% of households live in accommodation that is suitable for their needs. The remaining 8% either need alternative housing or can have solutions provided in-situ. The largest single issue where an in-situ solution can be provided is for properties in disrepair (86%). For those requiring a move, the largest single reason was that the dwelling was too small (67%).

The survey identified that less than 22% of the housing stock consists of smaller units, i.e. flats and terrace houses. Compared with the national figure of 45% this implies that there are fewer opportunities to gain entry to private market housing than would normally be expected. 19.7% of newly forming households expressed a need for a flat. This is much higher than the stock level of 6.8%, and given that flats account for only 1.7% of sales, terraced houses are currently the greatest source of supply of entry-level owner-occupied housing.

The annual rate of house price inflation recorded in the Halifax Index for the East Midlands Region at 30 June 2004 was 23.4%, slightly above the UK average of 21.5%. The Land Registry data for average price for all dwellings in Melton Borough during the year was around £158,394. The largest volume of sales was for semi-detached dwellings (40.1%) selling at an average price of £129,961.

The local housing market study revealed that average house prices in Melton ranged from around £88,500 for flats to around £223,500 for detached properties.

Entry price levels to the private housing market are less than the average in some areas of the Borough, but more in others.

Property Type	Melton Town	Rural North	Rural East	Rural South	Rural West	Borough-wide
1-bed flat	73,950	96,950	no data	127,500	no data	99,466
2-bed flat	76,300	no data	no data	127,800	no data	102,050
2-bed Terraced	90,650	156,350	125,000	153,500	95,950	124,290
3-bed Terraced	105,650	160,000	132,500	175,000	116,500	138,050

Source: DCA House Price Survey August 2004

A household income of £23,400 is required to buy a one bedroom flat in Melton Mowbray, rising to £40,040 in the rural south of the Borough. But given that terraced properties are more abundant than flats, especially in the rural hinterland, the income figures rise to £28,700 and £49,500 respectively.

The survey identifies that the local relationship between house prices and incomes is such that home ownership is beyond 75% of newly forming households, even though 24% of them earn in excess of £25,000 per annum (the national average income).

Average rental property prices vary according to the size of dwelling, and average costs range from about £73 to £112 per week.

3. Understanding Housing Markets and Housing Need

There is pressure on the private rented sector to meet the level of demand. Based on a rent of 30% of net income, annual earnings of £10,560 to £16,800 are needed, depending upon the locality of the property, to rent the cheapest possible one bedroom flat. To rent a two bedroom flat the income needed rises to £16,800 to £20,400. On this evidence, 30% of newly forming households cannot afford to rent privately.

Social housing stock accounts for only 11.5% of housing in the Borough, compared to the national average of 19.3%. The availability of rented stock through re-lets is relatively low (179 per year). This level of need is seven times the amount of units being delivered annually (23 units a year over the last three years) resulting in growing levels of unmet need. Section 6, Balancing the Local Housing Market, discusses the steps we are taking to balance the housing market bearing in mind the findings of the Housing Needs Survey.

It was estimated that a total of 825 households are likely to be in housing need over the next five years. This figure is made up from:

- 64 households per annum over five years to reduce the backlog.
- 280 newly arising households per annum unable to buy or market rent
- Adjusted for the predicted affordable supply, this gives an annual shortfall of 165 units of affordable housing per annum for the next five years.

The need is differential across the Borough. The location demand analysis revealed that:

Location	Net new/ concealed households	Net affordable need	
		%	Numbers implied
Melton Mowbray	519	60.2	312
Asfordby	154	100.0	154
Bottesford	48	100.0	48
Croxton Kerrial	19	100.0	19
Frisby-on-the-Wreake	14	100.0	14
Gaddesby	36	100.0	36
Long Clawson & Stathern	26	100.0	26
Old Dalby	46	100.0	46
Somerby	10	100.0	10
Waltham-on-the-Wolds	21	100.0	21
Wyndonham	5	100.0	5
Total	898	76.9	691

It is intended that the Housing Needs Assessment will allow the Melton Local Development Framework to:

- define what we consider to be affordable in terms of the relationship between local income levels and house prices or rents;
- indicate how many affordable homes need to be provided;
- within Melton, taking account of rural needs as well as the needs of Melton Mowbray; and

3. Understanding Housing Markets and Housing Need

- identify suitable areas and sites on which affordable housing should be provided and the amount of provision that will be sought.

Currently, the Council requires affordable housing to be provided in suitable housing developments. However, because most new housing development is likely to take place in and around Melton Mowbray, this method of provision is unlikely to meet housing needs in the rural areas. Consequently, the Melton Local Plan also allows for planning permission to be granted for land within or adjoining villages which would not normally be released for housing, in order to provide affordable housing.

[The Melton Local Development Framework Core Strategy \(Issues and Options\) Development Plan Document was published for consultation in April 2006. It addresses the issue of meeting housing need and sets out what we understand the key issues to be and what key stakeholders and the public have told us they want us to do. The results of the consultation on that document will help us to develop the policies for the MLDF.](#)

What type of accommodation is needed and where

a) Key worker

The Housing Needs Survey 2004 researched the need for key worker accommodation, using a definition of a key worker as “any person who directly provides services that are essential for the balanced and sustainable development of the local economy, where recruitment or retention difficulties apply”. In fact, the survey found evidence of key worker need only amongst public sector services.

It found that the following percentages of public sector workers could not afford to owner-occupy:

- 53% of health workers
- 41% of education employees
- 40% of local authority employees

Police service employees had incomes above the threshold for qualifying for owner-occupied entry-level housing.

All existing key workers preferred owner occupation except for 26% of local authority employees who preferred council rented accommodation. Amongst concealed key workers there was no demand at all for social rent or housing association shared ownership. Private rent was the most popular choice with 65% of concealed households, with 35% preferring owner occupation.

b) Adapted housing

It was found that 19.2% of households did contain someone with a disability, suggesting 3,925 households in the Borough.

These numbers were broken down by housing tenure, indicating that the largest numbers of households affected live in owner-occupation, followed by Council rented, private rented, then housing association rented.

3. Understanding Housing Markets and Housing Need

The highest percentage of households with a disabled member is in the Council rented sector. This would be due to the relatively high level of properties designated for older people, who represent the highest incidence of households with a disabled member.

The largest group was those with a walking difficulty (52.9%).

8.5% of households contained a member who was a wheelchair user, suggesting 517 households in the Borough. Wheelchair users occupying properties adapted for wheelchair use accounted for only 30% (165) of those in need.

The breakdown of adaptations by tenure reveals that the highest percentages of adapted properties are in the social rented sector with housing association properties having the highest percentage (46.8%), followed by the Council sector (23.4%). Only 11.7% of owner-occupiers with no mortgage, and 7.1% of owner-occupiers with mortgage lived in adapted properties. The private rented sector accounted for 9.9%.

The major types of adaptations were ground floor toilets (52%), followed by, in descending order, handrails/grabrails (50.5%), bathroom adaptations (41.1%), access to property (33.6%), wheelchair adaptations (22.8%), stairlifts (14.8%) and extensions (6.1%).

Types of adaptations needed for a current household member were, in descending order: bathroom adaptations (32.7%), handrails/grabrails (31.8%), stairlifts (25.7%), ground floor toilets (23%), wheelchair adaptations (14.2%), access to property (12%), and extensions (8.5%).

In total, an implied 3,996 households are in need of an adaptation of some sort.

c) Supported Housing

1,843 households indicated a need for care or support. Of those, 91.2% felt that they received enough support, implying that 8.8% (167 households) had outstanding support needs.

Of those receiving support, 24.4% were in receipt of Social Services or voluntary sector support, with 87.9% reporting support from family, friends or neighbours. Some, therefore, received support from more than one source.

Existing households moving were asked if they were interested in supported housing. 73 implied units were identified of independent accommodation with floating support; 10 units with a live-in carer, predominately for those with a walking difficulty.

d) Older People

There is a clear differential to be made between the data capture of children projecting the potential in-migration of older person households into the Borough and the data capture of existing households within the Borough.

This gives a projected requirement for sheltered housing of:

	Private Market	Affordable Sector	All Sectors
Existing Households	59	160	219

3. Understanding Housing Markets and Housing Need

In-migrant Households	476	384	860
Total	535	544	1,079

The in-migration figure is likely to be lower as many older people do not in-migrate as expected.

Also, the requirement for sheltered housing will be reduced if suitable floating support services can be provided for existing households in-situ.

The Housing Needs Assessment 2004 looked at population growth and household formation. The forecasts set out in the Assessment suggested that 'the most significant feature here is the growth of 32.5% in the population in the over 65 age group.' This is likely to have a significant impact in terms of the services we offer and the way we seek to address housing need. For this reason we will commission an Older Persons Housing Strategy during 2006/7.

e) Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

There were 9 returns from BME groups, implying a population of 96 households, in the survey. The 2001 census identified less than 600 people from BME groupings living in the Borough. Recalculated to reflect the average household composition of 3.7 people, this equates to around 160 households.

68% of respondents in the survey indicated that their accommodation was adequate. The 32% reporting inadequacy were separated between possible in-house solutions, and those requiring a move. About one-fifth opted for an in-house solution. All respondents stated that they needed to move because the current accommodation was too small.

None of this sub-sample had a family member with a disability.

No concealed households were found requiring housing in the next five years.

f) Gypsy and Traveller Needs

We are working in partnership with Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, Rutland County Council and the Leicestershire District Councils to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment. The University of Birmingham has been commissioned to complete the report by March 2007.

The assessment will produce detailed information about Gypsies and Travellers including their travel patterns and social, economic and demographic data. It will also look at the accommodation needs of the travelling community.

Local Housing Needs Assessments

As at March, 2005, there were 1,143 live applications on Melton's waiting list, of which 155 were transfers (existing tenants wishing to move to another property). There were 341 deferred applications.

Demand, in descending order, was for: 2 bedroom houses, 3 bedroom houses, 2 bedroom flats, one bedroom flats, 4+ bedroom houses, and lastly 3 bedroom flats.

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3. Understanding Housing Markets and Housing Need

Many properties have already been sold under the Right-to-Buy scheme, and the new build by housing associations is not currently sufficient to replace the lost stock.

Appendix 10 sets out the reasons for homelessness in Melton. It would appear that there has been an increase in young people requiring accommodation and people fleeing violence. These trends are being monitored and the Homelessness Strategy will be adapted accordingly. Priorities for Supported Housing include young people, teenage mothers, victims of domestic violence, older people and people with learning difficulties. Information relating to these groups has been assembled within the Melton Borough Homelessness Strategy.

The Homelessness and Allocations Task Group has discussed the possibility of a choice-based lettings scheme and has consulted with members of the Tenants' Forum Executive Committee, who want to progress this. A revised allocation policy will be implemented in 2005 incorporating more choice for applicants.

4. Key Priorities For Action

The review of Melton's Housing Strategy includes:

- The Best Value Review of repairs and maintenance in April 2003
- The Housing Stock Options Appraisal due for completion in April 2005
- The Council's Stock Condition Survey completed in 2003
- The private sector condition survey which is updated annually in house. However a more comprehensive stock condition survey with Rutland and Harborough councils will be available in April 2005.
- The Housing Needs Study 2004
- The Melton Community Strategy finalised in 2002
- Progress on the Melton Local Development Framework, the replacement for the Melton Local Plan

The six overarching priorities in Melton's Housing Strategy are derived from:

- The national, regional and sub- regional contexts
- Its Corporate and Community Vision
- The local housing market
- Housing need within the Borough

The order of the key priorities in this chapter has been agreed by the Housing Strategy and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Task Group and subsequently approved by the Community and Social Affairs Committee.

Key Priority One (Chapter 5)

To improve housing services in Melton.

Overall Objective:

In partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, to provide excellent housing services which compare with the best in the country and to constantly seek to improve those services.

Melton has recently reorganised its housing service and has separated the strategic role from operational management. A Task Group of members, tenants and partners has been established to develop and review the Housing Strategy. The Best Value review made a number of recommendations covering tenant involvement, customer care, access and delivery, value for money and performance management. Our revised strategy takes full account of those recommendations. The Best Value Improvement Plan sets out Melton's targets for improved performance. The Council is embarking on an ambitious change programme over the next 3-5 years that will see us systematically challenge and re-engineer services to maximise the potential of new technology/flexible working arrangements, with a view to delivering significant improvements in service standards for the benefit of customers. The services, which the Council provides, are complemented and enhanced through the close partnership working which is a central principle of the Community and Housing Strategies.

Key Priority Two (Chapter 6)

To contribute to balanced housing markets

4. Key Priorities For Action

Overall Objective:

To ensure that all those involved in the provision of local housing have a clear understanding of the amount and type of housing required to meet the needs of local people.

Our objective is guided by the aspirations in the national Communities Plan with its emphasis on balanced housing markets and sustainable communities. These themes are further developed at the regional and sub regional levels where the Regional Housing Board and the Welland Partnership Joint Housing Strategies focus on the themes of social inclusiveness and enabling the development of affordable housing particularly in the rural areas, a key issue highlighted in the Community Strategy

Key Priority Three (Chapter 7)

To meet the housing needs of Vulnerable Groups

Overall Objective:

To enable everyone in the Borough to have the opportunity of a decent home.

In Melton, Supporting People is delivering changes in the way existing services are being delivered, for example, the review of sheltered housing, and the provision of new services, for example, priorities identified in the homelessness strategy.

The Welland Partnership Homeless Review has identified the need to address increasing levels of homelessness including the specific requirements of young people, care leavers, people suffering domestic violence and single people. The Regional Housing Board's priorities include the need to focus on the housing needs of black and minority ethnic communities (BME) and housing for vulnerable groups. The Melton Community Partnership with its emphasis on partnership facilitates connections between the housing and other strategies. For example, the Leicestershire Learning Disability Strategy has informed local priorities for housing people with learning difficulties.

The Anchor Staying Put Home Improvement Agency (HIA) has been expanded from Rutland and Harborough to operate in the Melton Borough. Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) are seen by the Government as having a particularly important role to play in taking forward the decent homes agenda in the private sector. HIAs provide a valuable service to help elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to remain living independently in their own home for as long as they wish. They assess the client's needs for improvements and adaptations, arrange the best funding option and provide support during the stress and disruption that work in the home can cause. This enables the client to remain in a safe, warm and secure environment. Funding for HIAs is through the Supporting People programme. ODPM has agreed to match fund £20k for Anchor Staying Put to expand into Melton Borough Council area. This is provided through the grant funding from the renewal budget and from Social Services. 2005 will be the second year of operation in Melton and the partnership is developing. They will add value because of their supportive role and by seeking additional funding into the area from charities, PCTs and other grant assistance. Anchor is also to commence investigations into the provision of loan assistance and equity release schemes.

Key Priority Four (Chapter 8)

To meet the Decent Homes standard for council housing, and extend this to aim toward the Government target that "70% of vulnerable households in the private sector should live in decent accommodation by 2010".

4. Key Priorities For Action

Overall Objective:

To ensure that everyone has access to housing which is in safe and decent condition and which is as energy efficient as possible.

The Communities Plan sets out a requirement to undertake a stock option appraisal and the objective of bringing all social housing into a decent condition by 2010 is a Regional Housing Board priority. Achieving the Decent Homes Standard is a Welland Partnership priority. Melton and two of the partners, Rutland and Harborough, jointly examined the options for their housing stock. This is the first time that a cross-boundary, sub-regional approach was taken to such an appraisal. In addition to the main options: retention, stock transfer, the private finance initiative and Arms Length Management, the following were also considered:

- Shared service delivery: this would involve even closer working arrangements with one or more of the other two Councils involved in the options appraisal process.
- A mixed approach: this could involve some combination of the available options, again in conjunction with Rutland and/or Harborough Councils.

In Melton, the Stock Options Appraisal process began in 2002 with the commissioning of a comprehensive Stock Condition Survey. Consultants were appointed to assist the partners analyse the data and advise on critical factors, such as the impact the various options might have for the three councils both separately and individually. An Independent Tenants Adviser was appointed to work with both the Tenants Forum Executive Committee (TFEC) at Melton and the equivalent groups at Rutland and Harborough to ensure that all tenants receive the information they need. A Task Group of Councillors and tenants oversaw the process. The final consultant's report was issued in January 2004. Following further consultation and consideration the report recommended retention, which was approved by full Council in December 2004.

The capital programme has been developed to address those properties that need the improvements, as identified by new reports we are able to produce from the stock condition database.

We explore all options to maximise the resources, and have been successful in securing over £100K from British Gas, in support of installing central heating in all of our properties by 2007.

The current resources built into the capital programme, should ensure a 'decent' standard by 2008 for all homes. HRA capital receipts are also used in improving the private sector housing and resources have been put into the private sector improvement programme to tackle 'non-decent' private homes.

The private sector renewal policy has just been revised. It develops national aspirations in terms of decent homes for vulnerable occupiers in the private sector and in targeting grant aid to those most in need of assistance and enabling equity release and loans. In both the public and private sectors links are made with the Crime and Disorder strategy. For example, the private sector grants policy addresses the fear of burglary by the installation of appropriate security measures, agreed by the Crime Prevention Officer of the Leicestershire Constabulary. In both the public and private sectors, the importance of dealing with fuel poverty through grants and improvements is recognised.

Key Priority Five (Chapter 9)

To support the Delivery of the Community Strategy

4. Key Priorities For Action

Overall Objective

To ensure that constructive links are made and maintained between housing and partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors to improve the overall quality of peoples lives.

The housing service in Melton is dedicated to the objective of sustainable communities, a national and regional objective. The purpose of the Community Strategy is to promote the economic, environmental and social well being of the Borough. The Housing Strategy makes links with other local strategies and plans. Sustainable communities was a theme of the recent Council re organisation which included the creation of a Community Support Directorate which brings together; social and economic development, housing, customer services, environmental services, the physical environment, revenues and benefits. Work is continuing on the Local Development Framework which will also contribute to the sustainable communities agenda.

Key Priority Six (Chapter 10)

To maximise the use of available resources.

Overall Objective

To ensure that investment funding reflects the needs of local residents and is flexible enough to deal with changes in the level of spending from year to year.

Melton's policies take account of national priorities such as rent restructuring and the new system of capital controls. The Council's HRA capital programme is geared to meeting the decent homes target, a national, regional and sub regional priority. Tenants have been involved in the formulation of the capital programme and setting their priorities. Housing general fund expenditure is also guided by the objectives of decent homes and good quality affordable housing. The Council's Priority Assessment Scheme for general fund expenditure reflects this.

The following chapters set out in some detail how Melton proposes to address these priorities. Each chapter contains a number of priority actions.

5. Improving the Housing Service

Developing the Strategy

Priority 5.1

To involve customers and stakeholders on the development of Melton Borough Council's Housing Strategy.

The Community and Social Affairs Committee has established a Task Group to oversee the development of the Housing Strategy and the Business Plan. The Task Group comprises elected members, tenant representatives and housing associations. Its terms of reference include:

- To advise on the development of the Housing Strategy and to monitor progress.
- To ensure appropriate consultation and recommend a draft Business Plan and a draft Housing Strategy.

The Task Group has agreed a plan of action over the next twelve months to significantly improve local consultation and involvement in the Housing Strategy. This is at Appendix 4.

The priorities in this Strategy have also been developed with the Melton Community Partnership (LSP) and feedback from a Housing Conference held in June 2004, to which a wide range of customers, partners and stakeholders were invited and participated in.

Priority 5.2

To produce action plans to deliver the strategic aims and objectives and to provide sufficient opportunities for monitoring, feedback and review.

One of the objectives of the management structure review was to create a strong enabling team and to provide a sharper focus for monitoring and reviewing strategic targets. Together with the development of the Housing Strategy and Business Planning Task Group, the right mechanisms will be in place to facilitate continuous development and improvement of the Housing Strategy.

Improving Consultation

Priority 5.3

Promote tenant involvement and influence in policy making.

As a consequence of the Housing Best Value Review in January 2003, Melton Borough Council has focused on assessing and improving its existing participation structures. In accordance with our Revised Housing Best Value Improvement Plan, we have implemented an agreed Tenant Participation Compact, which the Council and the Tenants' Forum Executive Committee (TFEC) first signed in July 2003. A revised copy is due to be signed in April 2005 and includes an action plan highlighting the group's aims for the next twelve months. The Compact outlines the areas of the housing service in which our tenants want to become involved with regard to policy making and operational work. The Compact has

Overall objective:

In partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, to provide excellent housing services which compare with the best in the country and to constantly seek to improve those services.

5. Improving the Housing Service

already strengthened the partnership working that existed and was being developed between the tenants and councils of the Welland Partnership and is an important tool in strengthening all the stakeholders' commitment to tenant involvement.

Tenant representatives are members of the Council's Task Group responsible for producing drafts of the Housing Strategy and Housing Business Plan. To enable elected Members and tenants to become involved in such detailed consultations we have and will continue to provide appropriate training. This training is targeted at those areas where the tenants feel they have a need in order to become more involved in the management of Housing Services. The Tenants' Forum Executive Committee have been allocated a budget over which the group have control regarding how this money is spent.

In 2003 the Council began a Stock Options Appraisal in which the Tenants' Forum Executive Committee is very much involved. This Stock Options Appraisal was jointly carried out by Melton Borough Council, Rutland County Council and Harborough District Council. The tenants of all three authorities drafted their own briefs for the appointment of their Independent Tenants Advisor and appointed DWA as their consultant. A tenant representative and a local Councillor were also on the selection panel for the appointment of the Consultant to carry out the Stock Options Appraisal on behalf of the councils of Harborough, Melton and Rutland. The Tenants' Forum Executive Committee visited all Council properties throughout the borough during the Appraisal to ensure that all tenants were informed and consulted effectively.

The Housing Best Value Review Improvement Plan, which resulted from the Audit Commission's Inspection, commenced implementation in April 2003 and the tenants and their representatives have taken an active part in this process. The Tenants' Forum Executive Committee is actively involved in the policy review process.

The Council is committed to making the processes of providing council housing more transparent and democratic, and to give its tenants greater control in the way that their homes are managed. Tenant representatives are actively involved in the Wardens' Review process and regularly carry out tenant inspections on void properties to assess the standards and service provided.

Priority 5.4

Develop a range of tenant groups, supported by the Council, responding to local needs.

Tenants are increasingly becoming involved in a variety of ways. The Tenants' Forum Executive Committee meets monthly and deals with issues relating to the whole Borough such as service standards and Best Value scrutiny. Other groups who are not linked by location but have similar interests, such as sheltered housing tenants and leaseholders are forming other focus groups.

The Council recognises that some issues may be very specific to a particular neighbourhood. Here a single-issue group is set up simply to resolve problems affecting a small number of people. It is important to use the full range of different participation methods such as meetings, questionnaires and local information leaflets, in order to try to resolve the issue to be dealt with.

Improving Service Delivery – Council Housing

5. Improving the Housing Service

Priority 5.5

Streamline rent collection so that tenants are given further choice over their preferred method of payment.

The way that rent is collected can have a major impact on how easy it is for tenants to keep up to date with rent payments. Melton already has:

- payments at the cash office
- payments by standing order
- payments by debit card – at the cash office or by telephone
- payment at any Welland partner office
- 24-hour touchtone service

To offer further choice, and to meet the Government's targets on electronic provision of services, we have introduced payment by direct debit from May 2004.

Priority 5.6

Improve the time it takes to re-let empty properties, so that they can be brought back into use in the shortest possible time to secure affordable housing.

Work has begun on developing an Empty Properties Strategy for Melton. There are two strands to our approach in dealing with empty properties. One, which deals with the standard of the empty property before it is available for rent, the other in ensuring we provide a professional and efficient letting procedure. We have implemented the following actions:

- The introduction of the agreed Void Property Standard (VPS), which includes, wherever possible, for the completion of works after occupation has commenced.
- Deliver a staff training programme to ensure successful implementation
- Produced an Allocations Protocol which sets out the standard for applicants when selected for viewing, including escorted viewings.
- Introduced a tenant inspection process, to ensure empty properties do meet the VPS.

Priority 5.7

Continue to develop the debt recovery procedure, to reduce our arrears, so that income can be redirected to improve our services.

The way we collect the rent and how effective that process is, impacts on the money we have available to provide other housing services. Similarly, we know we have to ensure that we continuously strive to reduce the arrears. To enable us to work to reduce the level of arrears, we will:

- Continue to build on our good performance on rent collection
- Provide more choice and variety of payment methods including the introduction of direct debits
- Continue and build on offering welfare advice and support to tenants who find themselves in debt, in order to minimise the need to take corrective action against arrears cases and possible homelessness cases.
- Introduce a computerised recovery system

5. Improving the Housing Service

- Introduce a new recovery process, including new recovery letters in consultation with the Tenants' Forum Executive Committee

Improving Service Delivery – the Private Sector

Priority 5.8

Ensure that the residents who are at greatest risk from poor-quality housing are helped to improve their homes.

The system of grant funding is largely demand led. The Council recognises the need to maintain a balance between funding for the public and private sectors, through the renovation of existing stock. The current house condition survey, which was carried out with Rutland and Harborough councils, will help to assess potential premises. We try to ensure that we are targeting grant funding to the elderly and to those most likely to be at risk from poor housing conditions. A significant element of this priority is therefore to ensure that part of the funding available goes to those with the greatest need. Our Private Sector Renewal Policy is designed to address this. The expansion of the Home Improvement Agency into the Melton area is also a significant development toward meeting this priority.

Target Action	Priority	Target Timescale	Baseline	Outcomes	Resources
To consult with customers and stakeholders on the Housing Strategy and Business Plan at least twice every year in a manner previously agreed with them	5.2 and 5.3	Completion: March 2005; final document June 2005	Previously no formal mechanism in place to consult with tenants; now tenants have members on the group that is tasked to develop and monitor the strategy	Improved ownership of the strategy and active involvement in monitoring its implementation	<u>HSED</u> ; SCDO, TPO
Promote tenant involvement and influence in policy making.	5.3	Review 01-June-2005	TFEC receive all reports presented to elected members. Regular quarterly newsletter is produced. Questionnaires have been sent out and tenants are being encouraged to voice their views in as many ways as possible	Ensure that all housing initiatives are reported to the TFEC and to tenants through meetings and newsletters. Tenants are informed of all initiatives through questionnaires, newsletters, letters etc and are given a voice so as to be able to be involved in every issue. Develop and consult on the draft Tenants' Participation Strategy.	Housing Revenue Account - £47,000 for Tenant Involvement; TPO
Develop a range of tenant groups, supported by	5.4	Review annually	Six Resident Groups have been formed in addition to TFEC. Focus	Tenants and their representatives receive all the appropriate training.	Housing Revenue Account – £47,000

5. Improving the Housing Service

<p>the Council, responding to local needs.</p> <p>In order to achieve this, tenants and their representatives must receive quality training in order to be conversant with the subject area and be able to converse and contribute meaningful benefit to the groups they are on.</p> <p>Information must be effectively disseminated using leaflets, newsletters, meetings, surveys and resulting data outcome.</p>			<p>Groups have been established and TFEC have representatives on every group</p>	<p>Through the TFEC and tenants develop Tenant Groups, which includes focus and inspection groups, relating to service areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rents • Estate Management • Tenant Participation • Stock Condition including: - Responsive Repairs; Planned Maintenance; Voids • Capital Programme and Investment • Allocations Policy • Homelessness • Supporting People; • Sheltered Housing; • Leaseholders; • Housing Improvement Think Tanks • Single Issue Groups <p>Additionally, TFEC and tenants must be encouraged to be part of Task Groups dealing with how the service will be delivered in the future by getting jointly involved in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy; • Housing Business Plans; • Stock Option Appraisals; Improvement Plans. 	<p>Tenant Participation Budget. <u>SCDO</u>, TPO</p>
<p>Streamline rent collection so that tenants are given maximum choice over their preferred method of payment.</p>	<p>5.5</p>	<p>Review annually</p>	<p>Standing order or rent collector only</p>	<p>Continue to provide choice through the existing methods of rent collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Offices cash office payment – Customer Service Centre; • Standing order; Debit card at cash office or by telephone; • At any of our Welland Partners cash offices. <p>Investigate additional</p>	<p>Housing Revenue Account;</p> <p><u>Head of Revenue Services;</u> Senior Revenues Services Officer</p>

5. Improving the Housing Service

				methods of payment particularly those connected with electronic provision: Direct debit.	
Achieve a 25 day turnaround on voids	5.6	March 2005 [February 2005: 27 days]	Former BVPI 68: 65 days in 2002/3	Continue with the Void Property Standard, including, wherever possible, for the completion of works after occupation. Ensure that Escorted Viewings are undertaken. Achieve a 25 day turnaround on voids.	SHSEO, SRIO; In 2004/5, specific voids budget in HRA of £89,125
Achieve an arrears target of 1.3%	5.7	March 2005; review monthly	Arrears at 1.2% end of 2002/3	Continue to provide choice through the existing methods of rent collection. Explore additional methods of payment, particularly those connected with electronic provision, e.g. Direct Debit. Provide welfare advice and support to tenants who find themselves in debt. Arrears of 1.3%.	Revenue Services rent staff.
Carry out repairs to dwellings at risk to health and safety of occupants by enforcement and grant assistance. Respond to complaints within 3 working days and follow up with appropriate enforcement action; visit people on grant waiting list as funding available, and approve 60 grants for repairs	5.8	Review annually	In 2004/05, 50 repair grants approved, budget £130,000	A Council objective ranked: medium importance "Ensure the provision of clean and safe accommodation for all members of the local community"	Enforcement Officer Plus part of the Grant budget £140,000 (2005/06).

6. Balancing the local housing market

Planning policy and affordable housing

Priority 6.1

Provide sufficient housing land to meet strategic requirements.

One of Melton Borough Council's roles is to ensure that new homes are provided in the right place and the right time, whether through new development or the conversion of existing buildings. The aim is to provide a choice of sites that are both suitable and available for house building. This is important not only to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of a decent home but also to maintain the momentum of economic growth.

In order to give everyone the opportunity of a decent home there must be sufficient homes to house existing households, to meet household growth and to replace dwellings that are demolished.

In Melton, around 2,500 new houses are needed over the period 1996-2016 to meet the requirements of the existing population. This is largely because of changes in the composition of households and the projected growth in one-person households in particular.

The actual number of new houses to be provided is set by the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan, adopted in March 2005. The Structure Plan requires 4,200 houses to be provided between 1996 and 2016.

The Melton Local Plan (1991 to 2006) gives details of what types of development we will and will not allow in the area. However, the plan is now becoming out of date and we have decided to review it. The new plan will be called the Melton Local Development Framework. It will be in a different format and will be prepared under new legislation to that of the current plan. The Melton Local Development Framework will provide for sufficient new housing to meet the Structure Plan requirement. Taking into account the number of houses that have already been built and granted planning permission, we will need to provide for around 2,500 new houses.

Under new Government proposals, structure plans will be abolished and in future the amount and broad distribution of housing provision will be set by Regional Spatial Strategies.

Priority 6.2

To promote a more sustainable pattern of development.

To create a more sustainable pattern of development, the Melton Local Development framework will provide for most new housing to be built in places that exploit and deliver accessibility by public transport instead of the car to jobs, schools, health facilities, shopping, leisure and local services. This means that most new house building in Melton is expected to take place in and around Melton Mowbray. Priority will be given to re-using previously developed land, bringing empty homes back into use and converting existing buildings (brown field land) in preference to the development of green field sites.

The national target is that by 2008, 60% of additional homes should be provided on brown field land. A target for Melton will be set through the Melton Local Development Framework.

Overall objective:

To ensure that all those involved in the provision of local housing have a clear understanding of the amount and type of housing required to meet the needs of local people.

6. Balancing the local housing market

However, over the period 1998 to 2005, 54.3% of all dwelling completions have been on brownfield land.

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In order to establish how much additional housing can be accommodated within Melton Mowbray and the Borough's larger villages, the Council completed an Urban Capacity Study in 2004. The study suggested that land for approximately 1,500 dwellings within existing urban areas will come forward between 2003 and 2016. [We have recently commissioned an update of the Urban Capacity Study. The update will also take account of the emerging guidance that requires local planning authorities to undertake Housing Land Availability Assessments.](#)

Priority 6.3

To plan to meet the housing requirements of the whole community, including those in need of affordable housing.

The community's need for a mix of housing types, including affordable housing, is a consideration that will be taken into account in preparing the Melton Local Development Frame-work.

A Housing Needs Assessment is an essential tool in researching local housing needs and is the first stage in the planning process. Without a Housing Needs Assessment, housing provision is merely driven by market forces and top-down planning priorities.

The current Melton Local Plan policy for affordable housing reflects the 1994 Borough wide 'Housing Need Survey' which was carried out to determine individual households' perceived needs for future housing, including affordable housing. Information from the survey, along with information on the supply of and demand for existing Council and Housing Association accommodation, was considered in order to identify the Borough's need for affordable accommodation in the Plan period (1991-2006).

From the above information it was apparent that there was a significant need for affordable housing during the Plan period. The Council had to consider this in the context of a rising Council House waiting list, increased numbers of homeless applicants, a depleted housing stock (due to Right-To-Buy sales) and a shortage of building land in its ownership.

In line with the above, the Council considered the scope for the provision of affordable housing on sites allocated for residential development in the Local Plan. The Melton Local Plan therefore sets out a target level of affordable housing provision for specific sites.

Our planning policies also have regard to evidence of need for affordable housing when considering planning applications for residential development on land not allocated in the Local Plan. Where there is evidence of need, the Council negotiates for the inclusion of an element of affordable housing. The Housing Needs Study 2004 suggested that the proportion of affordable housing be increased from the 30% sought previously to 35%. The Council has resolved to negotiate 35% on all sites which meet the national threshold of 25 dwellings or 1 hectare as a result. This is negotiated having regard to the site, the economics of provision and the need to achieve a housing development that incorporates a mix of housing types.

Melton Borough Council has joined with the County Council and the other district councils in Leicestershire to produce a 'Joint Statement for Developer Contributions'. This communicates to developers the scale of contribution that will be required for certain types of applications. This has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The Council was commended for this work in the Best Value Review of Planning.

6. Balancing the local housing market

In recognition of the need identified for affordable housing in the rural area in exceptional circumstances the Melton Local Plan allows housing development on the edge of a village which meets a genuine local need for affordable dwellings which cannot be accommodated within village envelopes.

The findings of the Housing Needs Study 2004 will be fed into the preparation of the Melton Local Development Framework. In particular, we will test the suggestion that the threshold for seeking affordable housing of 25 dwellings or sites of over 1 hectare should be lowered to 15 dwellings or sites of 0.5 hectares.

[The Melton Local Development Framework Core Strategy \(Issues and Options\) Development Plan Document was published for consultation in April 2006. It addresses the issue of meeting housing need and sets out what we understand the key issues to be and what key stakeholders and the public have told us they want us to do. The results of the consultation on that document will help us to develop the policies for the MLDF.](#)

Priority 6.4 Improving the quality and attractiveness of Melton Mowbray and the villages.

Good design and layout of new housing development can help improve the quality and attractiveness of our communities. This is particularly important in Melton where tourism is making a growing contribution to the local economy. The [Melton Local Development Framework will include generic design policies in a Core Policies Development Plan Document and is likely to include a Supplementary Planning Document on design which is more specific in the guidance that it provides. This will help create places and spaces that are attractive, have their own distinctive identity but respect and enhance local character. The Council also supports the preparation of Village Design Statements that also help to promote good quality development. The Council expects to see local building traditions and materials reflected in all new housing developments, including affordable housing schemes and in the maintenance of the Council's housing stock.](#)

Priority 6.5 To regularly review housing requirements and the ways in which they are to be met.

Effective monitoring is needed to maintain an adequate supply of land and buildings for housing and to enable the managed release of development sites.

i Shared ownership

The principle of shared ownership is that the household buys a share of a property (usually 50%) and the remainder is rented from a housing association. It means that people who are unable to afford the full cost of buying a property can part own a home.

We liaise with East Midlands Housing Association to promote the scheme, called 'Homebuy'. This is available to Council tenants, tenants of Registered Social Landlords and those people who are on a housing waiting list who are nominated by their local council as being in housing need. An interest-free loan for 25% of the value of a property is made to a household by a housing association. The householder(s) raise the remaining 75%. No rent is paid, but if the house is sold, 25% of the value of the property is repaid. The housing association can re-use the funds for another household.

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6. Balancing the local housing market

The Council monitors:

- The number of dwellings with planning permission;
- The number of dwellings under construction and completed;
- The proportion of dwellings that are built on brownfield land;
- The number of dwellings built on windfall sites;
- The number of affordable units being provided;
- The density of development;
- The accessibility of new dwellings to a range of facilities and services, and;
- The location of new housing development in terms of a sustainable development strategy for the Borough.

Our Residential Land Availability Study has traditionally been used as a tool to monitor our progress towards the Structure Plan housing requirement for Melton. Local planning authorities are now required to complete an Annual Monitoring Report which monitors the implementation of the local development framework process and policies. In 2005 we submitted our first Annual Monitoring Report to the government. This document included a raft of indicators related to housing. However, we recognise that our monitoring work needs to be further enhanced in order to provide robust information which is relevant to our housing service as a whole. We have identified the additional information to be included in the 2006 AMR as:

- The number of bedroom spaces being provided.

The Council is exploring the option of non HRA Private Finance Initiative (PFI), which could result in approx 500 extra affordable homes being developed in the Borough. This is one way we could meet some of the demand identified in the HNS of 2004.

Priority 6.6

Bring as many empty homes back into use as possible in areas of high housing demand.

Due to the relative buoyancy of the housing market both nationally and locally, empty homes, although an issue, cannot be considered a major problem within Melton district. A number of empty properties in villages have been renovated (or demolished and a new property built) utilising private finance in recent years. The number of properties that have been empty for over two years (and there is no immediate intention of re-use) in Melton district is fewer than 100.

When demand for housing is high and new building is limited, it is important that we try to make better use of existing properties. Homes remain empty for a variety of reasons; but it is important that we ensure there are significant advantages to the owner to bring it back into use.

We have grants available to encourage landlords of empty properties to bring them back into use. The maximum grant is £15,000. Since 1999 we have contributed almost £40,000 bringing 5 empty (and unfit) properties into use.

At the most recent Landlord Forum, 80% of landlords stated that a 50% grant would encourage them to bring empty properties back into use. In addition we will put landlords in

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6. Balancing the local housing market

touch with Registered Social Landlords (RSL) to find out whether they can agree a long lease scheme.

From April 2005 the Council Tax on second homes will be increased from 50% to 90% of the Council tax band value. This may encourage alternate use of such properties. A policy will be developed during 2005 for the remaining empty homes to encourage re-use, this will commence in April 2006.

Target Action	Priority	Target Timescale	Baseline	Outcome	Resources
Encourage grant take up for bringing empty (especially unfit) Private Sector Homes, back into use.	6.6	April annually	9 properties brought back into use in 2004/5	Lower private sector vacancy rates. Bring community back to town centre. Remove boarded up unsightly properties in the Borough. (Improve performance in relation to BVPI 64)	Renovation Grant Budget (£140k 2005/6)
To <u>up date</u> local <u>housing</u> need <u>information</u> through a <u>Housing Market Assessment</u> .	6.3	<u>October 2006</u>	<u>Housing Needs Assessment and Stock Balance Analysis 2004.</u>	That land use planning policies contained in the Melton Local Development Framework are informed by a robust and thorough assessment of housing needs. This consequently will ensure that policies are well placed to secure the provision of affordable housing in accordance with established levels of need.	ADP Developers contributions; RSL contributions; Public sector land subsidy; HPE; SHSEO;

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7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

Homelessness: prevention and solutions

Overall objective:

To enable everyone in the Borough to have the opportunity of a decent home.

Priority 7.1

Target advice and help to those people having problems sustaining home ownership.

Unexpected changes in circumstances can leave owner/occupiers with serious problems in sustaining home ownership. Often, early intervention can help a household manage the change in a way that can allow them to keep their home. It therefore makes sense for the Council to promote its work with owner/occupiers, especially since early intervention is often the key to a successful outcome.

Under homelessness legislation a homeless declaration cannot be taken until the person is within 28 days of being homeless. If people approach the Council before this date staff will give advice and target specific help to try and prevent them losing their home. We liaise closely with the Citizens' Advice Bureau and will try and negotiate with building societies and landlords on their behalf.

Priority 7.2

Seek to work in partnership with private landlords and letting agents to bring more rented accommodation into use for people in housing need.

Privately rented accommodation in the Borough is expensive and people threatened with homelessness, even if working, find it very difficult to provide a deposit, a current month's rent, and to pay a month's rent in advance. To help people in these circumstances, a Rent Deposit Scheme has been set up to loan rent deposits to approved households. This is helping to alleviate some of the pressure on the Council's own housing stock.

Increases in the level of homelessness (particularly among single people) mean that we are trying to work more closely with this sector if we are to assist in providing housing for people who will not get priority for Council accommodation.

We have had a landlords' forum that allowed consultation with landlords and letting agents on relevant issues, including consultation on the rent deposit scheme which has now been implemented.

Priority 7.3

Continue to look for ways to offer advice to young people that may prevent homelessness.

We already liaise closely with Social Services and Connexions, and a local Homelessness Forum is to be set up to 'pool' ideas and publicise prevention measures. This will target local schools, colleges, mental health teams, CAB, Housing Associations, Probation, Young Offenders Teams and any additional stake-holders involved with young people.

Posters have been printed giving information regarding advice, telephone numbers and contacts. These have been distributed to relevant outlets. Bookmarks may also be another means of raising awareness of the help and advice available. Information packs are also to be developed.

7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

Priority 7.4

Continue to minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households.

Melton Borough Council has nomination rights to hostel accommodation owned by a local Housing Association, consisting of 15 units of self-contained 1- and 2-bed flats. The Council accepts that bed & breakfast accommodation is expensive and offers unsuitable living conditions for most people, and that sharing facilities in other temporary forms of accommodation is also unsuitable. Families and pregnant women are therefore placed in self-contained temporary accommodation during the homelessness assessment process before being moved, if appropriate, to settled accommodation. Bed & breakfast is used only in emergencies where placement in other temporary accommodation is not possible.

Melton Borough Council also uses privately leased properties – 5 at present, but with the intention to increase this number as need changes. Non-secure tenancies are also given for some of the Council's own stock, but this has a detrimental effect by decreasing the numbers of properties which can be offered for secure tenancies. It has, however, been a useful way of using a small number of unpopular, though adequate, properties.

Due to the decreasing numbers of Council houses and fewer vacancies, it is increasingly difficult to move people into permanent housing. It is intended that the Tenants' Incentive Scheme and the Rent Deposit Scheme will help to alleviate this problem.

The Homelessness Review highlights the increasing need and demand for housing for young single people.

The issue of rough sleepers has been discussed at the multi-agency Melton Area Safer Communities Partnership. Agencies were unanimous in agreeing that there is no problem with homeless rough sleeping in the Borough. Lacking evidence, it was acknowledged that there is no case to be made for conducting a rough sleepers count in the Melton area.

We wish to make sure that, despite more people becoming homeless, we are able to continue to offer suitable temporary housing. We will therefore continually monitor:

- the number of people in temporary accommodation;
- the reasons they became homeless; *and*
- the make-up of the households affected.

This information is passed to the Council's Allocations and Homelessness Task Group in order to continuously monitor changes in the numbers and nature of homeless households, and consequently, to recommend remedial action.

Supported Housing

The Supporting People initiative provides a focus for joined-up provision of services to those people who require support, and who include some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Examples of services that are now part of Supporting People include sheltered housing schemes, hostels, homeless people, and the delivery of the probation service. Leicestershire County Council is the Administering Authority, which has overall responsibility for Supporting People activity across the county, and there are two key groups that have been set up to

7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

evaluate the work carried out. They are the Supporting People Core Strategy Group and the Commissioning Body. Melton Borough Council is represented on both.

The Core Strategy Group meets every 6 weeks and scrutinises the current work being carried out and evaluates any proposal requiring funds from Supporting People. Whether a service is going to be supported or decommissioned is decided by the Commissioning Body. Melton currently delivers the warden/sheltered scheme service as part of a contract with the County, and the review in 2005 challenges the effectiveness and efficiency of the service, to ensure that the service remains provided by the Council. In the last year, Melton has ensured that key issues, such as people with learning disabilities, have been recognised as an area that requires support, through our involvement in the Melton Locality Planning Group.

Melton is working with Leicestershire County Council to develop and agree the five-year Supporting People Strategy that identifies the housing and related support needs we want to see prioritised. The Supporting People strategy has been adopted by Melton. The priorities for Leicestershire have been set as follows:

Level A

- Generic Provision for Younger People
- Offenders and Mentally Disordered Offenders
- Older People with Support Needs
- People with Learning Disabilities

Level B

- Homeless Families
- Remaining People with Mental Health Problems

Level C

- People with HIV/AIDS
- Women at Risk of Domestic Violence

- ***Young People***

Priority 7.5

Ensure that we consult with young people locally to understand their housing needs.

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What is Supporting People?

Before April 2003, the cost of providing support to residents of supported housing – such as sheltered housing – was met by a mixture of Housing Benefit, funding from councils, and direct grant to housing associations from the Housing Corporation. From April 2003, support charges are met by the new Supporting People fund.

The overall aim is to give people the support they need to live independently, which means that local authorities must identify the extent of need for support, the type of service required, and whether or not new services are required to meet the need.

7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

We already consult with a number of organisations that house young people who are experiencing housing problems. A further route for all 13-19 year olds is via the personal advisor role of the Connexions Service. It is intended that local liaison with Connexions, Youth Services and Social Services be set up to enable joined-up working for youth issues. On a broader basis, Melton's Community Strategy high-lights young people as a top priority, and therefore issues beyond their housing needs will be addressed.

A Youth Forum has recently been created to enable young people to become actively involved in local issues and contribute to the strategic planning of services. The Youth Forum will meet four times a year and will also feed into a County-wide forum. Youth has now been developed as a corporate priority for the Council, and one of the key actions for this priority will be to develop a Youth Strategy which will help address the concerns of young people in relation to housing.

Priority 7.6

To support young and vulnerable people in new and existing tenancies and those with special needs.

Across the Welland area, a Floating Support service, provided by the Muir Group, has been introduced to assist a range of client groups, providing advice and assistance to existing tenants or people moving to new accommodation to help them to sustain their tenancies. Melton Borough Council is aware that those with special needs are not always eligible for help from Social Services so extra support can be arranged when needed and gradually withdrawn when no longer required.

The Muir Group will also be providing support to help vulnerable 16 to 18 year olds in order to implement the requirements of the Homelessness act 2002.

There is a Joint Protocol between Leicestershire County Council and Melton Borough Council for Young People Leaving Care - this ensures that the Leaving Care Team and the Housing Department and any other agencies involved liaise closely to house young people in these situations –this Protocol was agreed in July 2002.

A protocol 'Providing Housing for Homeless 16 and 17 year olds' between Melton Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Youth Offending Service and Connexions Leicestershire is also in place.

These protocols promote and ensure inter-agency working and achieve better and quicker results.

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Teenage pregnancies

As part of our partnership working through the Melton Health Forum, we have obtained funding from the Leicestershire Health Promotion Agency to carry out a research project to evaluate the provision of sex and relationship education in local schools.

This has involved school nurses and health visitors. It has highlighted several issues, for example, insufficient information and teaching on preventing unwanted pregnancies and information on sexually transmitted infection, that need to be developed further. It is expected that this will eventually have an impact upon the demand by young teenage pregnant girls requiring accommodation.

The proposal is to apply for further funding to develop this initiative and to find ways of overcoming the problems identified. This will take place in 2003/04 and beyond.

7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

- **Domestic Violence**

Priority 7.7

Provide expert advice and support to all victims of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence is a key priority for the Melton Area Safer Communities Partnership. The Partnership identified the need for close inter-agency working to raise awareness and provide local services for victims. As a result, an outreach worker was appointed by Women's Aid in October 2003 to cover Melton and Market Harborough districts.

A local domestic violence forum exists, covering the local authority areas of Melton Borough and Rutland County. Amongst others, representatives include Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Constabulary, Melton, Rutland & Harborough Primary Care Trust, Women's Aid, Domestic Violence Helpline and Victim Support.

The forum is concerned with tackling the stigma attached to reporting incidents and promoting services available locally to victims. It has been involved in improving reporting through the Common Monitoring Project, raising awareness through targeted training and publicity campaigns and producing help guides for victims such as the Essential Directory.

- **Older People**

Priority 7.8

Complete the review of sheltered housing for older people.

Melton is aiming to complete an internal review of its sheltered housing service for older people by Summer, 2005. This will enable a better 'match' of resources to need in the Borough area, and provide a focus for high-quality services.

Supporting People will carry out its own external review of the service in late 2005.

Melton has also been replacing older 'hard-wired' community alarm systems with the latest Piper Lifeline telephone units, and this renewal programme is continuing.

Melton is considering introducing a Warden Visiting service to people in receipt of Melton Lifeline. This is aimed at people living in the private sector, and is intended to maintain independent living for as long as possible.

Priority 7.9

Offer services to all elderly householders in the district to help with the repair of housing.

Melton Borough Council submitted a bid through the Supporting People team to engage the services of a Home Improvement Agency in the Borough.

i
Sheltered housing

Sheltered housing is provided for tenants aged 60 or over. It is made up of flats and bedsits within a building, and of separate bungalows, that are linked by an emergency alarm to a 24-hour call centre. Wardens provide security, help and advice when on duty at the schemes.

Leicestershire County Council's Social Services Department is working with District Councils to explore the development of Extra Care Housing Provision in each district. A project partnership between Social Services and Housing Services is looking at transforming Gretton Court from a scheme for the frail elderly into a fully-fledged Extra Care scheme.

7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

Anchor Staying Put began operating in Melton in April 2005 and is proving to be a successful venture.

In 2004/05, 42 elderly householders in private housing were assisted with grants of up to £3,000 for repairs to their homes. This work included re-roofing, with the greatest demand from the Egerton Ward, (the most deprived ward in the Borough).

It also includes energy efficiency measures and replacement windows and doors.

• **Learning Difficulties**

Priority 7.10

To meet the supported housing needs of people with learning difficulties.

In line with the Learning Disability Housing Strategy which has been produced for the Leicestershire as part of the Valuing People White Paper, three needs are being addressed in Melton:

- People with learning disabilities living with older carers in the community.
- People moving out of Gorse Hill long stay hospital.
- Re-housing of people living at Silverdale, a Social Services residential home.

The Council works closely with the Learning Disability Locality Planning Group looking at a range of issues, including housing, which affect people with learning difficulties. The Group has conducted a housing needs exercise to establish the numbers of people requiring housing in the future. It found that there are eight adults living with elderly parents who could become in crisis housing need at any time; two of these people would need level access accommodation. A further four (younger) people have complex needs and multi-disabilities.

The Council, through its review of its housing allocation policy, is to take account of people with learning difficulties.

Melton is working with Social Services and Leicester Housing Association to provide supported housing as an alternative to residential care at Silverdale, and also provision for people living in the community with carers who are ready to move on to more independent living. A site in the County Council's ownership has been identified with the County Council contributing towards the development cost through land subsidy. The Housing Corporation are being kept informed of progress and funding will be sought when plans and costs are agreed.

i **Melton Handyvan Scheme**

In 1999, the 'Handyvan Scheme' was established in partnership with Hanover Housing Association to offer a more flexible service to householders. Over 500 jobs are completed each year. The work includes plumbing and carpentry as well as straightforward tasks like the supply and fitting of replacement light bulbs and smoke detectors. Adaptations such as ramps and grab rails are also carried out under the scheme and security measures are installed in partnership with the local Police and 'Lions' group.

The scheme is being monitored by telephone survey to evaluate satisfaction. The response is overwhelmingly in favour of the scheme.

7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

Adaptations

Priority 7.11

Ensure the Council housing database accurately records the extent of adaptations to existing properties and also details those that lend themselves to adaptation.

The existing database of Council properties has not been fully updated with all the adaptations that have taken place. This is now being addressed by regular updating of the computerised property master files as new works are completed.

When a property with a stair lift becomes void the lift will be removed for reallocation unless a new tenant can be found who requires the use of a stair lift. Social Services are made aware of any change of tenant so that they can update their service user records.

Prior to any major adaptations being carried out to a property, investigations are carried out to see if the tenant wishes to transfer, or would consider transferring to, an already adapted property or one which is more suited to their needs (There is a Tenants' Incentive Scheme to assist with this).

Priority 7.12

Ensure that the best use of resources is made when assessing and arranging adaptations to existing owner-occupied properties.

We spend over £100,000 a year in adapting owner-occupied housing for people with some form of disability. This is on top of funding provided through social services for specialist equipment. Mandatory disabled grants are made to a maximum of £25,000 to eligible applicants, for the purposes specified in legislation. This follows recommendation by an Occupational Therapist. It is demand led and the trend appears to be increasing demand year on year.

Melton Borough Council was successful in securing a bid through the Supporting People team to engage the services of a Home Improvement Agency in the Borough. The Agency is assisting with the process of adapting private sector properties.

The Leicestershire district councils are currently working together with Social Services through 'Better Care, Higher Standards' to try and provide a more streamlined approach to improve the delivery mechanism for adaptations across the county (for owner-occupied and council tenants). The aim is to keep the waiting times at each stage of service provision to a minimum.

In some circumstances, we will offer an additional option of relocation expenses to eligible applicants to move to a more suitable property, where their existing property cannot be reasonably adapted.

Black, Minority Ethnic and Equality issues

Priority 7.13

Ensure that people from minority groups (whether because of their ethnic background, religion, gender, or sexuality) are given equal access to all services and that their needs are taken into account in all aspects of service delivery.

7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

We are reviewing the policies and procedures of the Housing Service to make sure that they meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. An action plan to meet the Code of Practice on Rented Housing was produced in 2004. This is being implemented and monitored through the Equalities Steering Group.

Melton published its Race Equality Scheme, which included disability and gender, in the autumn of 2002, and is committed to a 3-year review of all its areas of service provision.

The recent guidance on sexuality will be considered in relation to housing policies and practices under the guidance of the Equalities Steering Group.

Priority 7.14

Develop clear procedures for multi-agency action in cases of racial and homophobic incidents.

While reports of incidents of this kind are, thankfully, minimal across the Borough, we accept that without a standard way for agencies to report and respond, there are likely to be more incidents than are currently acknowledged.

Melton Area Safer Communities Partnership has part funded a countywide researcher to co-ordinate the development, establishment and maintenance of a common monitoring project, in order to encourage the reporting of racial incidents and to assist in tackling racial harassment. The project will provide support to participating agencies to enable them to collate and unlock data relating to racist incidents. Once it is firmly established, the project incorporates the necessary flexibility to encompass other hate crimes, arising from homophobia, transphobia, ageism and gender discrimination.

Target Action	Priority	Target Timescale	Baseline	Outcome	Resources
<p>Provide early advice to prevent homeless outcomes.</p> <p>Work together with Benefits Agency/ Pensions Service, Revenue Services, CAB to produce leaflets/guides on the service to distribute to local agencies and clients.</p> <p>Produce Resettlement Advice and Maximise your Income packs, plus Welland directory of advice & services across the Partnership area plus available on Melton Online, (eg: accessible via Internet in public libraries) Hardcopy book available through agencies.</p>	7.1, 7.2	July 2005	Current procedure not fully documented	<p>Reduced numbers of homelessness claims.</p> <p>To reduce numbers of people becoming homeless and to sustain tenancies.</p> <p>Provide additional help and guidance to prevent loss of tenancies/homes.</p> <p>Business Process Re-engineering of service</p>	SHSEO; HO's; other agencies. £19k homelessness budget.

7. Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups

To prevent homelessness amongst young people and work with other agencies where young people are homeless. Work with relevant agencies – Connexions, CAB, Shelter, Schools and youth groups, Leics County Council	7.3, 7.5, 7.6	Review 6-monthly	Close liaison with Connexions; '16 & 17 yr olds' strategy due to be signed Feb 2004	Better management of homelessness amongst young people. 16-17 yr old inter-agency protocol.	SHSEO; HO's; £19k homelessness budget.
To carry out a full review of the wardens service in order to provide a cost effective, efficient and proficient Warden Aided Sheltered Housing System by 2005.	7.8	June 2005	Warden Scheme & Community Alarm staffing arrangements dating back before Council Restructuring in 1997	A revised Warden's Service Structure incorporating Best Practice. To be approved as a Supporting People Service provider following Leicestershire County Council's Review in 2005.	Supporting People Grant Housing Revenue Account. SHSEO; CCO; Wardens.
Help older people to stay in their own homes longer by providing additional help. (Handyvan service)	7.9	Review annually	500 jobs completed in 2003/4	500 completed jobs each year	MBC contribute £11,000, Hanover HA contribute £21,000
Ensure that Melton Borough Council implements the Code of Practice on Rented Housing by working towards implementation in April 2004 of the Code of Practice on Rented Housing.	7.13, 7.14	June 2005	Melton has never previously applied the CRE Code of good practice for Rented Housing. The Action Plan was developed in December 2003 and is on target for April 2004 implementation	Compliance with the Code of Practice on Rented Housing	HSED; SHSEO; Equalities Group.
To work with partner agencies to develop solutions for identified unmet need	7.10	Review annually	Insufficient independent supported housing for people with learning disabilities	Provision of supported housing for people with learning disabilities according to current need.	SHSEO; Supporting People; Social Services, Voluntary sector; Users, parents, carers.

8. Improving Stock Condition

Council housing:

• **Needs**

Priority 8.1

To continue to develop the Stock Condition Survey to ensure investment is targeted at those properties that require it.

Overall objective:

To ensure that everyone has access to housing which is in safe and decent condition and which is as energy efficient as possible

It is the Council's policy to achieve the Decent Homes Standard in all of its homes by 2010 in line with Government Policy. Additionally, the Council is consulting with tenants to identify "Decent Homes Plus" aspirations, such as double glazing and new front and back doors which have been incorporated into our capital programme 2004/10. The main conclusions from the stock condition survey are as follows:

- The overall impression is that the stock has been generally well maintained
- High levels of future roof repairs will be needed in years 21-25
- High levels of kitchen replacement within years 21-25
- Re wiring costs are high in years 1-5, 11-15 and 16-20
- There is high average expenditure for bathrooms in the early years reducing in later years
- Other large cost generators are evenly spread across the years

The asbestos survey is to be completed in early 2005/06 and a provisional sum has been allocated in the Capital Programme for asbestos related issues. We are continuing to ensure that 20% of our stock is surveyed every year to track progress in meeting the Decent Homes Standard and to update the stock condition database. Full details are set out in the HRA Business Plan.

The Housing Strategy informs the priorities of the Capital Strategy and the Asset Management Plan. Resources are therefore made available for Council Housing through the Capital Programme, and use of assets through the Asset Management Plan to help fund the following Strategies.

Council housing:

• **Strategies**

Priority 8.2

Continue to develop the planned maintenance programme for all Council properties.

The Council has a 30:70 target for its responsive repairs to planned maintenance ratio by 2010. This will be achieved by applying an annual increase of 10% in the growth of the planned maintenance funding.

A capital programme will be introduced in 2005, which will commit the Council to enter into long-term partnership contracts to bring all of its homes up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2008. The programme will also include the complete double-glazing and replacement of all front and back doors with UPVC units, which is the tenants' highest priority aspiration, which was determined through a recent survey. This target can be achieved from projected current funding levels.

8. Improving Stock Condition

Following a tendering exercise that was carried out by the Council the Housing Direct Services Organisation was identified as the Council's Housing Repairs preferred supplier. However, as a result of an internal review and concerns raised by tenants, it was not felt that the Contract could be awarded at this time. Tenants were concerned about poor performance and quality of work. As a result of those concerns, they asked the Council to improve performance monitoring mechanisms. The current arrangements were extended until June 2005, and an internal improvement team has been set up to carry out the following:

- Identify those characteristics of the new contract that can be adopted now.
- Increase liaison and consultation with tenants' representatives in order to address their concerns.
- Identify areas for review internally i.e. work processes, internal systems and instigate improvements.
- Commence a re-tendering process in Summer 2004.
- Take on board the 'expert' knowledge of the current sub-contractors.
- Review all performance and financial management processes.
- Full consideration of all the partnering options that are available.

The considerable internal and external 'learning' that will be provided as a result of this review will feed into the re-tendering process.

This process is being led internally at a high level and internal resources are being identified to support this process. A Repair Contractor working group has been established, consisting of members, TFEC and staff, to evaluate, scrutinise and recommend the preferred new contractor(s).

Priority 8.3

Ensure that all Council tenants have homes that can be heated at reasonable cost.

Energy Efficiency Initiative grants have been awarded to the Council by Powergen in the sums of £283,000 for 2003/04 and £175,000 for 2004/05. This is to provide a minimum of 250mm of loft insulation and cavity wall insulation to all our electrically and solid fuel heated properties in 2003/04 and all our gas centrally heated properties in 2004/05. This exceeds the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard. The Council's Capital Programme for 2004/10 contains two major heating contracts. These contracts for gas/oil and electric central heating are both of 4 years duration and they will ensure that every Council owned property will have programmable central heating by December 2007. In accordance with tenants' wishes every home will have double-glazing and new uPVC front and back doors by 2010.

In some rural areas gas, which is the main fuel for central heating systems, is not available. In all cases, we will make sure tenants are consulted so that the heating offered meets their needs for affordability and adequate warmth.

In recognition of our work in installing new gas supplies to these properties, we have been successful in securing a grant from British Gas plc for £105,000 to assist in this work.

Priority 8.4

Evaluate all options for improving non-traditionally built properties

The Council's housing stock includes 31 "Airey Houses", 6 "Swedish Timber" houses and 90 pre-cast reinforced concrete – "Wimpey No-fines" houses. These properties have already

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lasted longer than the original intention of the designers and a number have been sold under the Right To Buy scheme.

The Council is committed to exploring all options for their retention and improvement. However, this must be done in consultation with existing tenants and the owner occupiers of previously sold properties adjoining the Council's stock. It will also be dependent on the funding available. In the meantime, the remaining Council owned Airey homes are surveyed by an independent surveyor on a five yearly cycle. Any minor remedial works identified are then carried out. The next survey is due to be carried out in 2006/7.

The Private Sector:

- **Needs**

Priority 8.5

To continue to monitor the standards of properties in the private sector and to try and decrease the number of unfit properties in the Borough.

An updated private sector house condition survey has been carried out in December 2004 – January 2005 by consultants, and in conjunction with Rutland and Harborough councils. The results are awaited. From 2003 information, there were 75 unfit properties in the Borough which was less than 0.5%. These properties did not fall in a single geographical location but were reasonably spread throughout the Borough. Thorpe Road in Melton Mowbray and Wyomdham village had the highest number of unfit properties. However, Saxby Road in Melton Mowbray and Long Clawson village had the highest total of properties that were unfit and in substantial disrepair. The number of unfit properties is decreasing year-on-year, partly from grant aid but mainly with private funding as a result of the buoyant property market.

The number of long-term empty properties is less than 100. Again, these are spread throughout the Borough. The Borough has no areas of low demand.

Both of these issues are addressed in the private sector housing renewal and grant policies but are included within a range of other issues.

Priority 8.6

To assist as many residents as possible to improve the energy efficiency of their homes through grants, discount schemes or providing advice.

A recent survey of 2000 private sector properties was carried out and 29% (575) were returned completed. Some useful information was gathered. Of those returned, 85% of households have complete double glazing. 90% have full gas central heating, and 36% have cavity wall insulation.

i

Grants for renovation and repair

Grants are available to people in private sector housing to help with renovation and repair. **Major Repair Grants** are available if a property is 'unfit' (a term used to describe a home lacking basic amenities or with serious defects) or with major items of disrepair. The grants are means tested and must be repaid if the house is sold within 5 years.

Minor Repair Grants are available if defects are less serious, for some security devices and energy efficiency measures where the occupier is elderly or receiving a means tested benefit.

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However, 95% of respondents do not have the current standard of loft insulation (250mm). 50% of respondents have cavity walls which are not insulated. This is the most effective energy efficiency measure in terms of payback and room comfort. These people will be targeted for assistance to improve these measures.

The Private Sector:

- **Strategies**

Priority 8.7

Private Sector Renewal

Grant funding is not always the most efficient way of using public funds. Grants to private householders and landlords can be inflexible. Most grants have conditions placed on the future use of the property. For example: a grant given to renovate or repair a private rented property is repayable if the house is sold within five years. Beyond that, the landlord does not have to repay.

Following revision of the grants system in July 2003, a further revision is being approved by committee to take on board Government targets for decent homes in the private sector.

The grant availability is augmented by a scheme of equity release and loan in conjunction with the Home Improvement Trust (The Houseproud Scheme). The Home Improvement Trust considers this an innovative partnership scheme, as it operates and is funded jointly with the five Welland authorities.

Priority 8.8

To improve the energy efficiency of private sector housing, particularly the homes of the fuel poor.

It is apparent that many properties could benefit from additional loft and cavity wall insulation. Those eligible for government 'Warm Front' grants have been sent information and others may be eligible for Melton Borough Council grants. These households are being targeted as part of the new private sector housing renewal policy. Eligible applicants (elderly, on benefits especially those with young children) will get a grant for energy saving measures and in some cases full central heating. This aims to improve the internal temperature of the homes of the vulnerable.

The "Energy Sense" partnership comprises seven East Midlands authorities. It presently offers a discount scheme for installation of loft and cavity wall insulation for all owner-occupiers. This is particularly welcomed by householders who are not eligible for any of the current grants on offer.

Priority 8.9

Assist householders living in properties with levels of Radon over the action level.

This Council (along with Harborough District and Rutland County Council) has been running a rollout programme in partnership with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the National Radiological Protection Board and the Building Research Establishment.

Many homes in the district have been offered free tests for radon and those with results over the action level have been offered expert guidance on resolving the problem and in some

8. Improving Stock Condition

cases grant assistance has been available to undertake remediation work.

This will continue to be a priority in the affected areas due to the associated health risk of living with high levels of radon in the long term.

The 10 Council homes which were identified with high levels of radon have now had remedial works carried out as part of a small planned maintenance scheme in 2003/4.

Priority 8.10

To develop good working relationships with landlords of privately rented accommodation.

The private rented sector in the district is relatively small. Only about 8% of the population live in private rented accommodation.

In the rural area there are a number of land owning 'Estates' that provide rented accommodation (formally for employees). In Melton town there are three agents who manage the majority of the rented accommodation. In addition there are a few landlords who provide rented accommodation for Brooksby Melton College students. There are few Houses in Multiple Occupation and there are only two known over three storey. This is accommodation for Ragdale Hall Health and Beauty Hydro staff.

The standard of the rented accommodation is reasonable with only a few complaints each year. The landlords and agents generally respond well on an informal basis. The market is quite buoyant and tenants therefore can pick and choose the best.

We seek to hold a Landlord Forum annually to keep landlords informed of developments and encourage open debate. The private sector renewal policy was discussed at the last forum. In addition we keep an involvement with the student landlords and have the basis of an accreditation scheme with Brooksby Melton College.

There are some grants available for private rented accommodation. These could be repair grants, energy efficiency grants or disabled adaptations. All of these require landlord consent. Landlords could also apply for a grant to bring an empty home back into use, as long as they rent it on the open market for a period of five years afterwards.

The Council has introduced a Rent Deposit Scheme to enable homeless households to access private rented accommodation. The Council will only approve rent deposits for properties in a satisfactory condition with proper legal tenancy agreements.

Priority 8.11

Try to improve the standard of private rented accommodation and the way it is managed.

Private tenants often have little security and little control over their housing conditions. We therefore have an important role in promoting best practice amongst landlords. We recognise that renting out a property can be a risk and that we can take a role in helping landlords.

We have the basis of an accreditation scheme running for student properties in the town. We consulted with our landlords at the most recent landlord forum about setting up a general accreditation scheme. The feeling was that premises were in generally good condition and as the market was so buoyant at the moment, it would not be of any great benefit. We will

8. Improving Stock Condition

review this periodically.

We presently offer grants to landlords for repairs to properties and our major landlords and agents do make use of these. They have accounted for over 50% of the renovation grants awarded in the last four years. We do not offer grants for HMOs in the district to try and restrict the numbers.

Target Action	Priority	Target Timescale	Baseline	Outcomes	Resources
Complete the Council's 2003/2010 Housing Capital Programme in each financial year to budget.	8.1,8.2,	2005/2010	2003/4 BVPI 184a: 60.8% (1288 of 2003 stock at 1 April 2003); March 2005: 39.82%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Achieve Decent Homes Standard in all Councilowned homes by 2010; b) Full consultation with tenants and achieve their aspirations and offer choice c) Achieve the Council's Strategic Objectives. d) Complete catch-up repairs; e) Meet Safety Issues i.e. HRS, Asbestos. 	2004/2010 a) 50% Housing Capital Receipts (£1,711k); b) Credit Approvals (£553k); c) Major Repair Reserves (£9,592k); d) Insulation Grants (£175k).
Raise the Council's housing rents annually to comply with the Government's guidelines and limits in order to achieve this Council's levels of rents in 2010, which are comparable with the registered social landlords.		2002/2010; review annually	Rent restructuring compliance commenced in April 2002; prior to this, rents were set by a simple inflation multiplier on a base figure within the SX3 rent system	Continue to work towards meeting the Government's rent targets for 2010. Achieve the rent levels set by the Government's targets in relation to rent restructuring.	SHSEO; HRS

8. Improving Stock Condition

<p>Continue to develop the planned maintenance programme for all Council properties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the volume of planned maintenance work this Council carries out on its housing stock 10% each year to achieve a 30:70 ratio of Responsive repairs to planned maintenance by 2010; 70:30 ratio planned for 2005/6 from new maintenance contract commencing June 2005. • To carry out the Capital Programme developed to achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, the Egan and Byatt Principles and the Tenants' Aspirations. • Not to exceed authorised budgets and complete all schemes within the appropriate financial year. • Carry out void repairs in accordance with the Voids Policy and procedure ensuring that Decent Homes Standards are always considered for inclusion especially if not allowed by previous tenant. 	8.2	2003/04 onwards; review annually	2003/2004 10% Planned Maintenance as percentage of total repairs budget	<p>Annual Planned Maintenance Budgets as percentage of total repairs budget to be:</p> <p>2003/2004 - 10% 2004/2005 - 20% 2005/2006 - 30% 2006/2007 - 40% 2007/2008 - 50% 2008/2009 - 60% 2009/2010 - 70% 2010/2011 - 70% 2011/2012 - 70% etc.</p>	<p>Housing Revenue Account – Special/ Growth Items budget.</p> <p><u>SRIO</u>; Senior Accountant</p>
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8. Improving Stock Condition

<p>Ensure that all Council Tenants have homes that can be heated at reasonable cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To be achieved through planned and cyclic maintenance programmes in coordination with the Housing Capital Programme. The Decent Homes Standard, which will be achieved by 2010 includes a four year programme for ensuring every Council owned home will have gas / solid fuel or electric central heating by 2007. ● Additionally as part of the Energy Efficiency Initiative, grant aid has been awarded to enable the Council to provide a minimum of 250mm of loft insulation and cavity wall insulation where applicable in every Council dwelling. ● Partly due to the Decent Home Standard and to tenants' aspirations, all homes will continue to be fitted with double glazing but from 2004 by one contractor in a seven year contract worth over £3.5million using Byatt procurement and Egan construction techniques. 	8.3	2003/04 2007/08; annual review	2003/4: 1654 properties have central heating systems (January 2004)	<p>All Council owned homes to have programmable central heating (gas, oil, electric or solid fuel) by December 2007. Choice of heating type offered.</p> <p>All Council owned homes to have 250mm of loft insulation and cavity wall insulation by December 2004.</p> <p>All Council owned homes to have uPVC double-glazing and a uPVC front and back doors by 2011. Choice of double-glazed door type and colour offered.</p> <p>Choice of kitchen design for Decent Homes offered.</p> <p>Security lighting option offered as part of rewiring contract.</p>	<p>a) 50% Housing Capital Receipts. b) Credit Approvals. c) Major Repair Reserves. d) Insulation Grants.</p>
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8. Improving Stock Condition

<p>Evaluate all options for improving non-traditionally built properties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Decent Homes Strategy and the Capital Investment Programme it is proposed to provide all these homes with 250mm loft insulation, cavity wall insulation where appropriate, double glazing, redesigned kitchens and bathrooms and rewired. • A special programme of planned maintenance is being developed to aid repair and remedial work commencing in 2004/5. 	8.4	2004/05 onwards	<p>Swedish Timber (6); Aireys (31) and Wimpey No- fines (90)</p> <p>In the past special surveys have been commissioned for the Airey houses, the last being completed in 2002.</p> <p>A repairs programme was carried out on the Swedish Timber Houses about eleven years ago, which included timber replacement and preservation.</p>	<p>All non traditionally built homes including:</p> <p>Swedish Timber (6); Aireys (31) and Wimpey No- fines (90)</p> <p>will have a programme of continuous survey and monitoring and be given a planned repair and maintenance programme commencing 2004/2005.</p>	<p>Housing Revenue Account – Special/ Growth Items budget.</p>
<p>Energy Conservation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist elderly and vulnerable households to gain access to Warmfront Grants. • Promote discount scheme by London Electricity to all households. • Target MBC grants for programmable heating and insulation measures to vulnerable households. 	8.6	2005/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London Electricity Scheme: 111 referrals in 2004/05 • 3 grants approved in 2004/05 for heating 	<p>To promote energy conservation and reduce fuel poverty.</p> <p>To improve the living conditions of vulnerable households.</p>	<p>Renovation Grant Budget (£140k 2005/6)</p>

9. Supporting Delivery of the Community Strategy

Crime

Priority 9.1

Continue to ensure that crime reduction is taken into account in all new housing development.

In considering planning applications the Council is guided by the Melton Local Plan, which stipulates the need to minimise the risk of crime in the design, layout and lighting of new developments. This stipulation reflects government guidance on Planning and Crime Prevention in Circular 5/94. The Council also recognises that crime is an ongoing concern and is therefore working closely with the multi-agency Safer Communities Partnership to raise and tackle issues. This means input from the Housing Service and the Tenants' Forum in relation to identifying and sharing information, for instance, on individuals targeted with Anti Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.

Overall objective:

To ensure that constructive links are made and maintained between housing and partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors to improve the overall quality of people's lives.

Priority 9.2

Work with the police to identify and publicise best practice to prevent 'bogus callers'.

The number of reported incidents of attempted and successful burglaries made by 'bogus callers' is relatively low, but nonetheless distressing to the victims. This is particularly the case, as victims of such crimes tend to be the elderly and vulnerable. One way of helping to prevent such incidents is to ensure that all agencies operate agreed procedures to assist homeowners to verify the caller's identity.

One such example is booking appointments before visiting and educating homeowners to check identification cards in order to ensure that the caller is genuine. We intend to work with the Police and other social partners to develop best practice, share information on 'bogus caller' practices and provide advice to homeowners on how they can make sure that callers are genuine.

Anti-poverty

Priority 9.3

Continue to promote welfare rights advice across the Borough to all residents.

The recent 'Guide to Social Rent Reforms' issued by the ODPM makes it clear that local authorities and housing associations will no longer be able to decide what rents to charge. The reforms set 'target rents' which social housing providers must meet within ten years. They also limit annual increases to existing tenants, to offset the worst effects where the target rent is higher than the present rent level.

Melton is implementing the rent restructuring process from April 2002, ensuring that no rent rises above the limit set by the ODPM formula.

Advice on benefits is therefore very important, and Council Officers support and give help to residents when discussing Council Tax and Housing Benefit matters. Advice is given as to which welfare benefits they might be entitled to.

9. Supporting Delivery of the Community Strategy

The Council are major funders of the local CAB through an annual grant - at £41,000 in 2004-2005 - and a service level agreement. The Revenue and Benefits Section are working with CAB to promote the uptake of housing benefit and welfare benefits in general. We are currently looking at working with the local Primary Care Trust to ensure we can target the most vulnerable members of our community and the elderly in particular.

The Council refer tenants and other residents to the Bureau for help and advice. With this assistance, local people claimed on average about £180,000 annually in benefits to which they were entitled. The system provides a cross-agency network for service users with other voluntary sector service provider such as the CVS.

A new Customer Service Centre opened in January 2004 staffed by Customer Service Assistants who are trained in a broad range of issues including welfare rights.

Anti-social Behaviour

Priority 9.4

To ensure that the Council continues to take a proactive approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour is an all encompassing term for what is a multifaceted and complex set of problems but for the victim the ordeal is always both unpleasant and frightening. The Council recognises that such behaviour is borne out of a mix of unique local circumstances and strives to develop highly localised solutions. This can involve initiatives to modify the behaviour of perpetrators so that they can live responsibly in the community. Current projects include refurbishing and reopening a former youth club on Dalby Road in Melton Mowbray and augmenting existing equipment in the Country Park. Where perpetrators refuse to modify their behaviour, the Council has no hesitation in taking tough action against troublemakers. Five Acceptable Behaviour Contracts have been taken out and the Council has supported the Police in its successful bid for 6 Anti Social Behaviour Orders against persistent offenders.

A multi-agency approach

Priority 9.5

Identify and concentrate resources in neighbourhoods that need help to build a safe, sustainable and thriving community.

Statistics show that Melton Borough is a comparatively safe place to live. However, there are areas known to have a range of social problems. External evidence – from the ward-level Indices of Deprivation – confirms the impressions of those who live in these areas.

The Egerton Ward in the Borough of Melton shows up in the indices of deprivation as a deprived ward, despite its close proximity to the town centre and therefore a range of

i Target Rents

Recent guidance from the ODPM has changed the way rents are worked out. From 2002-03, rents are based on local income and the price of housing locally.

Councils and housing associations have until 2012 to ensure that rents have moved to a 'target rent'. The policy should mean that neighbouring properties of the same size and value should have similar rents – regardless of whether they are owned by a council or a housing association.

9. Supporting Delivery of the Community Strategy

services. Melton Borough Council set up a task group to assess the extent of deprivation and develop a strategy in consultation with the local residents to address the issues.

The task group carried out some background research on some of the issues that lead to the ward being classified as deprived and used this to develop a questionnaire which was sent to all households in the ward. The results of the consultation led the group to hold a community engagement meeting to look at some of the issues in more depth. Residents who attended helped to identify what they felt were the main issues that needed to be tackled in the ward.

A residents group, 'Residents Action Group (Egerton)' (RAGE) was set up as a result of the meeting and the group has since carried out a number of projects. This includes holding an 'Egerton Day' at which many agencies such as the Council's housing service, Primary Care Trust and other agencies attended to raise awareness and provide information on a variety of services available to residents. At present the time limited task group of the Council has disbanded, however the residents group with the local councillors has continued to exist and Melton Borough Council will continue to support their work when required.

Three Residents' groups and one conservation group have also been formed in Melton Mowbray: serving the South Melton area (Dorian and Warwick wards), Fairmead Estate, Springfield/Mayfield/Brookfield Streets and a conservation group on Melton Country Park (Friends of the Country Park). These groups have seen major community development in each area covered and improvements are clear to see on the ground.

There is also a Seniors' Forum which engages with older people across the Borough. Recent activities have been centred around healthy living, claiming of benefits and tackling the fear of crime. A number of groups have been established recently, which include dancing, walking, games and neighbourhood watch. The Forum meets monthly and comments regularly on issues relating to housing.

A pilot Focus Group has been set up around Beckmill Court (a flats complex in Melton Mowbray). It involves different departments of the Council working together to solve problems. It has given a number of officers responsibility to tackle certain environmental, physical and social problems with regard to the complexes of flats around the town centre including Beckmill Court, Bentley Street and New Street. The Focus Group has been responsible for a number of improvements to date, including clearing of waste ground in the vicinity of Beckmill Court and a re-roofing programme being brought forward by two years, which is now completed.

If these projects are successful, they will be spread across the Borough when similar issues arise.

Target Action	Priority	Target Timescale	Baseline	Outcomes	Resources
The Melton Community Strategy Action Plan to be reviewed (and approved by the MCP) annually.	9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5	December 2005	First Melton Community Strategy was approved by MCP in December 2003	The Melton Community Partnership to progress actions in the Community Strategy Action Plan reflecting the changing needs and wishes of Melton's community	Existing resources – Head of Policy & Performance and Policy Officer - Community
The Melton Community Partnership review	9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4,	December 2004	MCP set up in May 2002. No review of	The Melton Community Partnership to provide	Existing resources -

9. Supporting Delivery of the Community Strategy

existing partnership arrangements to promote joined-up working and reduce duplication	9.5		partnership arrangements to March 2004.	the overarching strategic decision-making and feedback mechanism framework for other partnerships and forums in Melton	Head of Policy & Performance and Policy Officer - Community
The Melton Community Partnership to meet at least 5 times per year to progress the above	9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5	Annually, throughout the year on an 8-week cycle	MCP has had 12 meetings since it was set up in May 2002. Meetings are held at 8 week intervals	The Melton Community Partnership to act as a strategic partnership for Melton's community	Existing resources Head of Policy & Performance and Policy Officer - Community
Focus group to be set up in Town Centre flats area. To encourage other residents to get involved in tackling issues in their area. Each area/project will be reviewed annually and the positive developments highlighted, with any positive actions and successes being used for tackling other areas of a similar nature around the Borough of Melton	9.5	Review October 2005	Focus Group has been established. Measurement of success against outcomes has yet to be seen.	Promote use of good project practice to tackle similar issues around the Borough. Joint working between Council officers. Resident involvement in helping to tackle issues. Improved environment for residents of the Borough	Melton Borough Council staff, TFEC and residents. Part use of £47,000 Tenant Participation Budget (est. £1,000). Use of existing Repairs Budget and Grounds Maintenance Budget (estimated £2,000).

A new system of controls on local authority capital investment was introduced from 1 April 2004. Instead of borrowing approvals (BCA's and SCA's) being issued, the new system is based largely on self-regulation by local authorities. The basic principle of the new system is that the Council can borrow without limit as long as their capital spending plans are affordable, prudent, and sustainable. The CIPFA Prudential Code will set out the indicators that local authorities must use and the factors that they must take into account to demonstrate that they have fulfilled this objective. There is still central government support available for borrowing known as SCE's (Supported Capital Expenditure), which is paid via the Revenue Support Grant.

Overall objective:

To ensure that investment funding reflects the needs of local residents and is flexible enough to deal with changes in the level of spending from year to year.

Due to pressures on the revenue budget the only unsupported borrowing undertaken is in respect of items of equipment previously leased or schemes that generate sufficient income or reduce expenditure to cover the servicing of the debt.

As well as the new system of capital controls other factors which have had an impact on resources since 1 April 2004 are:

- The pooling of Right to Buy Capital Receipts
- The discontinuance of the Minimum Revenue Provision within the HRA
- The loss of Local Authority Social Housing Grant

Priority 10.1

Review the allocation of resources in the light of the new Prudential Code.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA):

The Business Plan provides the level of capital spending for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This is arrived at by adding an agreed proportion of borrowing and capital receipts to the major repairs allowance.

The Council's priority is to meet the Government's Decent Homes Target, and the whole Capital Programme is geared to this end. The Council has involved the Tenants Forum in setting the priority of the schemes within the Capital Programme.

The Council is expecting to receive an official "sign off" from the Government to retain its housing stock, which is the preferred option of a stock options appraisal exercise carried out in 2004 looking at the future management of the housing stock.

i **The Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

Council income and spending on its own housing is held in a separate account to the rest of Council expenditure. This account is called the HRA.

The main items that make up the HRA are:

Income:

- rent (from homes and garages)
- service charges and other miscellaneous income.

Spending:

- cost of management
- cost of repairs
- negative housing subsidy payable to central government
- capital financing costs

General Fund (GF):

Housing General Fund capital expenditure currently includes Home Renovation and Repair Assistance Grants and Disabled Facility Grants. This expenditure is met from the use of HRA capital receipts, DFG grant and reserves. However, if non-HRA capital receipts are received, these are used in the funding. Due to the unreliable nature of these receipts they have been set at zero in 2004-5 onwards.

A Priority Assessment Scheme is utilised for General Fund capital expenditure to determine relative priorities for competing schemes. Since 1 April 2003 responsibility has been allocated to individual Members for overseeing specific capital schemes as a means of monitoring expenditure and performance. Housing General Fund expenditure has been given a high priority.

The Priority Assessment Scheme is informed by Corporate Plan objectives and the top priorities in the Plan include:

- To ensure a well-integrated mix of decent homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes, and in particular provide or facilitate an appropriate supply of good quality, affordable housing within the Borough.

The Council's current priorities informing the Capital Strategy are set out in Appendix 10.

Overall:

A review of the Capital Planning process has been undertaken a fully funded 7-10 year capital programme has been developed and streamlining of internal processes implemented.

Appendix 1 shows the allocation of resources for 2002-2015. The figures for the HRA are based on the Business Plan.

With regard to future borrowing the assumption has been made that for the HRA the Council will receive supported borrowing approval for 2005-06 and 2006-07 of £300,000.

For the General Fund no supported borrowing has been provided.

The loss of Local Authority Social Housing Grant has had little impact on Melton. Loans to Housing Associations have been budgeted at £100,000 per annum in previous years with very little spent in practice. Future help would have to be funded from the Council's own resources.

i **Income from the sale of Council houses**

Right to Buy sales provide a source of income for councils. After the discounts offered to tenants under the scheme, the average income in 2003-4 for Melton from the sale of Council houses was around £51,500 per property. The total income raised was £1,654,000. £1,240,500 (75%) had to be set aside for debt repayment, and £413,500 (25%) was available to fund capital expenditure.

10. Resources

Target Action	Priority	Target Timescale	Baseline	Outcomes	Resources
Monitor HRA revenue expenditure monthly	10.1	2005-06	Monitoring currently carried out	Monthly meetings looking at budgetary variances	DCS, HSED, Chief Accountant, Budget Holders
Monitor housing capital expenditure monthly	10.1	Monthly	Monitoring currently carried out	Monthly reports to SMT, quarterly reports to committee	SMT, CSA Service Accountant, Project Manager
Review management & support costs	10.1	Annually, December each year	Monitoring currently carried out	Efficiency savings where obtainable	HSED, service accountant
Provide support and training to new managers and new starters	10.1	To be given within 2 months of starting	Not previously carried out – new development	Set up new strategy group; adopt project management standards; terms of reference; implement training	Strategy Group, CAMT
To annually review the fully-funded 7-10 year Capital programme	10.1	February 2005	Not previously carried out – new development	Fully-funded 7-10 year programme approved by Full Council via annual review of Business Plan	CAMT, responsible Accountant

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT RESOURCES (£ MILLION)

	Actual Spend	----->	Projected Spend	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Revenue													
Dwelling rents	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8
HRA subsidy	0.2	0.1	0 ¹	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Charges for services & facilities ²	0.6	0.4 ³	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.7	5.8	6.0	6.1	6.2	6.3

Notes:

- 1 Subsidy entitlement ceases with transfer of rent rebates to General Fund
- 2 Includes garage rents, heating and leaseholder charges
- 3 Reduction due to transfer of charges to Supporting People

HOUSING CAPITAL RESOURCES (£)

	Actual Spend	----->	Projected Spend	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->	----->
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
HRA													
Major Repairs Reserve	929,000	593,000	2,342,000	956,000	1,096,000	1,101,000	1,107,000	1,114,000	1,122,000	1,131,000	1,140,000	1,149,000	1,159,000
Credit approvals	230,000	149,000	292,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	0	0	0
Capital receipts	43,000	228,000	347,000	294,000	354,000	301,000	289,000	280,000	280,000	280,000	279,000	279,000	277,000
Energy Efficiency Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,202,000	970,000	2,981,000	1,550,000	1,750,000	1,702,000	1,696,000	1,694,000	1,702,000	1,711,000	1,419,000	1,428,000	1,436,000
General Fund													
Credit Approvals	95,000	139,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Receipts	54,000	0 ¹	188,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000
Capital Grant	80,000	31,000	66,000	70,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Reserves	0	0	0	57,000	90,000	115,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000
Total	229,000²	170,000	254,000	257,000	310,000	335,000	370,000	370,000	370,000	370,000	370,000	370,000	370,000
Total Capital Resources	1,431,000	1,140,000	3,235,000	1,807,000	2,060,000	2,037,000	2,066,000	2,064,000	2,072,000	2,081,000	1,789,000	1,798,000	1,806,000

Notes:

- 1 Capital receipts not reliable-assume nil
- 2 Increase in volume of housing renewal grants



The Welland Partnership Housing Strategy 2005

Vision for 2010

The Welland Housing Partnership is still developing and there is a wide range of issues that all the partners want to tackle. However, taking a longer view allows the real benefits of the partnership to become clear. This vision for 2010 shows where our current rate of progress could take us. It is not prescriptive but gives guidance on what we think is possible.

By 2010:

- There will be a single sub-regional housing strategy covering the five local authorities containing appendices giving any priorities specific to each authority.
 - There will be a Welland Action Plan to deliver the sub-regional housing strategy that will be aligned to priorities in the Regional Housing Strategy.
 - There will be comprehensive information on housing needs and housing markets across the Welland Partnership, identifying priorities across all sectors and client groups.
 - There will be collaboration on the delivery of services such as assistance in the private sector and energy efficiency.
 - The accessibility to all housing services across the partnership will have been maximised.
 - There will be a choice led approach to letting all social housing across the partnership area.
 - There will be a shared five year programme for the development of new affordable homes that will have been agreed by all the local authorities and preferred RSL partners.
 - There will be real community engagement to feed into service improvements and developments.
 - The Welland Partnership will be held up as a model of good practice on how to plan and provide housing services in a rural area.
-



The Welland Partnership Housing Strategy 2002 – Appendix 3

Action Plan – Updated April 2005

Area of Need/Type of Issue	Objective and Measure	Action	Outcome	Update – April 2005
1. Housing Needs				
The study of housing markets within the Welland Partnership area.	Understanding of housing market situation, to address common themes.	Appointments of Bob Line in 2002 to undertake research.	Findings due June 2003.	Completed.
Housing Needs Survey/Study	To carry out joint needs analysis across the Welland. Explore potential use of ENC model.	Commission consultants to undertake study.	Study underway by no later than August 2003.	Melton – completed 2005.
2. Affordable Housing				
A common understanding of the social housing that the Partnership will aim to achieve through the planning system.	Joint working between housing, planning, legal staff and RSL partners.	Complete Section 106 protocol work.	Adopted and endorsed protocol March 2003.	Completed.
A Partnership development programme of new affordable homes through the allocation of SHG to the Welland Partnership area.	Have Welland Partnership fully recognised as a housing sub-region in the East Midlands. Obtain partnership ADP allocation from the Housing Corporation. Sharing planning of LASHG.	Submission of 3 year Welland Housing Strategy. Further discussions with the Housing Corporation.	Allocation of ADP on a Welland basis – October 2003.	Seminar – January 2004.



The Welland Partnership Housing Strategy 2002 – Appendix 3

Area of Need/Type of Issue	Objective and Measure	Action	Outcome	Update – April 2005
3. Supported Housing				
Sub-regional approach on homelessness.	Homeless: pooling of some of the resources from the ODPM to undertake an initiative in relation to the Homelessness Act 2002.	Write Welland Homelessness Strategy and commission some work from pooled resources.	Welland Homelessness Strategy, endorsed and published by 31 July 2003.	Completed.
Agree shared priorities for supported housing leading to a co-ordinated approach across the partnership.	Implementation of Floating Support service across Welland Partnership.	Continue to meet regularly with Muir Housing Group and continued awareness raising.	Service up and running from 31 October 2002.	Completed.
4. Decent Homes				
A partnering approach to new housing development and maintenance across the Partnership.	Increase awareness of partnering trial pilots and set up formal partnership agreement.	Welland Homelessness Strategy, endorsed and published by 31 July 2003.	Maintenance – January 2005 Development – ongoing	Limited progress.
Decent Homes	Ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency y 2010, by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by a third between 2001	Service up and running from 31 October 2002.	Achieved Decent Homes Standard 2010.	Ongoing. This is now linked to stock option appraisal in each LA area



The Welland Partnership Housing Strategy 2002 – Appendix 3

Area of Need/Type of Issue	Objective and Measure	Action	Outcome	Update – April 2005
	and 2004, with most improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas.			
5. Joint Service Delivery				
Further development of the tenants group within the Partnership.	Extension of existing tenants group to partner RSL tenants across the Partnership.	Open forum/conference inviting Welland RSL tenants.	Forum/Conference to be held by September 2003.	Completed.
Explore the potential for joint service delivery.	Level of customer satisfaction.	Continue with e-government initiatives, ie, Welland Contact Centre facilitating access to housing and other related services.	Ongoing	Progress, but not specially related to Housing.
Tenant satisfaction survey	Comparable data to benchmark tenant satisfaction against other housing organisations and compare with results obtained in 2000.	Undertake survey.	Results analysed – February 2003.	Completed 2002/03. Proposed Satisfaction Survey for 2006/07.



The Welland Partnership Housing Strategy 2002 – Appendix 3

Area of Need/Type of Issue	Objective and Measure	Action	Outcome	Update – April 2005
6. Initiatives				
Choice based lettings.	East Northamptonshire, Rutland, South Kesteven and Melton to explore options in relation to CBL.	Work with Harborough Homeseach to explore options.	Agreed and endorsed lettings policies by December 2003.	Individual progress.
6. Initiatives				
Stock options	Melton, Rutland and Harborough to look at and consider potential stock options.	Stock options appraisal to be carried out across Welland (except ENC).	Agreed brief tendered and consultants selected by March 2003.	Completed.
Key Worker Accommodation	Explore the potential need for this type of accommodation across the Welland, bearing in mind Thames Gateway impact.	Engage with Health, Police, Education, etc to ascertain potential in pursuing this.	Informed statistics to decide whether to pursue this further by April 2003.	Work in progress. Data provided through housing needs surveys.
7. Private Sector Housing				
Private Sector Housing Strategy/Policy	In response to the new legislation, new policies in relation to Private Sector Housing are required. Agree common themes.	Working group of officers set up and currently pooling information.	Adopted and endorsed strategy December 2003, policy 18 July 2003.	Completed.



The Welland Partnership Housing Strategy 2002 – Appendix 3

Area of Need/Type of Issue	Objective and Measure	Action	Outcome	Update – April 2005
Ongoing programme of events and publicity to raise profile of housing need in rural area.	Continue with articles in publications and representations to appropriate organisations.	Exhibit opportunities to raise awareness.	Ongoing	Partnership seminar held to discuss sub-regional housing market areas with Housing Corporation & DTZ Pineda Consultancy.
Energy efficiency	Explore potential benefits to Welland by adopting joint approach to tackling energy efficiency.	Set up working group with RSL representation to pursue this.	December 2003.	Needs feedback from Group.



The Welland Partnership Housing Strategy 2002 – Appendix 3

Housing/Strategy/Welland Housing Strategy/Strategy 2002 – Action Plan (March 2004)

HRA BUSINESS PLAN TASK GROUP

CONSULTATION-DEVELOPING MELTON'S HOUSING STRATEGY

1 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To ask members of the Task Group to consider a programme of consultation on the Housing Strategy.

2 **RECOMMENDATION**

That the draft programme of consultation outlined in paragraph 4 is approved in principle.

3 **BACKGROUND**

The Government Office has produced a list of assessment questions for Housing Strategies. The list “shows the broad questions that authorities should be asking in preparing their Strategy.” One of the questions relates to partnership working:

- How well does the Strategy demonstrate effective consultation and joint working with key stakeholders, including members and meaningful engagement with residents?

4 **OPTIONS**4.1 Short Term

In view of the requirement to submit a revised Housing Strategy to the Government Office by the end of the year, there are limitations on what can be achieved in the time available. Suggestions are as follows:

- Inviting other stakeholders, for example housing associations to become members of the Task Group.
- Taking the draft Strategy to relevant local forums programmed during October and November.

Housing association colleagues have joined the Task Group. Presentations about the Strategy have been arranged with TFEC on and the Melton LSP on

4.2 Medium/ Long Term

A variety of approaches may be considered including:

- Individual meetings with stakeholders to discuss the Strategy from their perspective and how they wish to be consulted.
- A Housing Strategy conference which would both give a general overview and focus on a small number of key issues.
- Themed Task Group meetings which would consider aspects of the Strategy in some depth. It would be helpful to invite people with a particular contribution to make to these meetings.

5 **RESOURCES**

The main implication is for staff time to facilitate the approaches outlined above. A conference would incur some costs. However, these would be mainly administrative if the conference were to be held in the Council offices.

6 **CONCLUSION**

The Task Group are requested to consider the approaches outlined in paragraph 4.

Alex Rocke
Acting Head of Social and Economic Development

**ACTION PLAN – YEAR 1
MAY 2002 – APRIL 2003**

SECTION/SERVICE	FUNCTION POLICIES
<u>Environmental Health</u>	
Housing	Private sector housing complaints. Disabled Facility Grants, Renovation Grants, Home Repair Assistance Grants.
<u>Pre-Housing and Care</u>	
Homelessness	Appeals process. Forms and documentation. Advice to homeless Interviews Liaison – internal and external. Homelessness Strategy. Home visits. Temporary accommodation.
<u>Repairs and Property</u>	
Housing Repairs	Taking a repair report (via telephone/ reception, warden, etc). Contractor carrying out work.
Improvements to Council Dwellings (Capital)	Selecting properties for improvement (windows/heating).
Disabled Adaptations (Social Services)	Prioritised according to work. Large adaptations need pricing beforehand. Small adaptations go ahead as normal as long as there is enough money in budget.
Tenants Requesting Permission for Improvements	Letter received requesting permission. Letter sent to grant/refuse permission.
Housing Direct Service Organisation	Workmen providing repairs to Council dwellings.
Standby	Out of hours emergency service (e.g. repairs, floods, drainage, refuse problems, road traffic accidents).

SECTION/SERVICE	FUNCTION POLICIES
<u>Tenant Services</u>	
Rent Collection	Queries
Arrears	Monitoring process. Court referrals. Policy – Rent Arrears' Recovery.
Estate Management	Complaints: nuisance, anti-social behaviour, crime. Mediation. Enforcement/eviction. General observation. Policy – Conditions of Tenancy
Abandoned Vehicles (On Council owned land)	Queries.
Tenancies	Transfers (inspections with Repairs staff, check rent account). Mutual Exchanges (inspections with Repairs staff, report to both parties, check rent account). Policy – Conditions of Tenancy. Policy – Allocations.
Right to Buy	Visit (to check RTB details).

**ACTION PLAN – YEAR 2
MAY 2003 – APRIL 2004**

SECTION/SERVICE	FUNCTION POLICIES
<u>Environmental Health</u>	
Housing	Houses in multiple occupation. Caravan sites/gypsies. Harassment.
<u>Pre-Housing and Care</u>	
Waiting List	Public documentation. Home visits. Interview. Points' allocation. Special Category allocation. Medical points.
Rent Charging	Rent-added central heating charges.
Housing Advice	Interviews. Visits. Liaison – internal and external.
Void Properties	External liaison. Notice times.
Succession of Tenancy	Interview. Allocations.
Allocations	Interviews. Home visits. Nominations to Housing Association.
Transfers	Interviews. Home visits. Nominations to Housing Association.

SECTION/SERVICE	FUNCTION POLICIES
<u>Repairs and Property</u>	
Housing Repairs	Assessing the priority/urgency of repair.
Improvements to Council Dwellings (Capital)	Tender process and awarding contract. Commencement of work. Completion of work.
Disabled Adaptations (Social Services)	Recommendation received from Social Services (e.g. level access shower or a grab rail). Check rent account if rent-added central heating to be installed.
Tenants Requesting Permission for Improvements	Rent account checked; if account clear then permission granted.
<u>Tenant Services</u>	
Rent Collection	Physical collection (rounds).
Arrears	Escalation process (range of actions above and below £200.00). Write-offs (assess cost/benefit; current tenants – part of escalation process).
Estate Management	Liaising with Partners (Police, Social Services).
Abandoned Vehicles (on Council owned land)	Removal or wrecks. Removal or untaxed vehicles.
Right to Buy	Requests (receipt of RTB1 and acknowledgement). Discount (calculation – includes checks with previous landlords). Admission (issue RTB2). Completion/cancellation. (Valuation by Legal Section; S125 issued; if sale not completed within 60 days RTB cancelled; after completion records amended).

**ACTION PLAN – YEAR 3
MAY 2004 – APRIL 2005**

SECTION/SERVICE	FUNCTION POLICIES
<u>Environmental Health</u>	
Housing	Overcrowding. Filthy and verminous. Unsecured buildings.
<u>Pre-Housing and Care</u>	
Community Meals Service	Internal/external liaison. Gretton Court food service Meals on Wheels. Luncheon Club. Liaison with suppliers and contractors.
H.O.M.E.S.	Applications.
Community Alarm Service	Home visits. Contact with Market Harborough Control Centre.
Melton Lifeline	Interview. External liaison. Home visits.
Allocations	Liaising with other Councils.
Transfers	Liaising with other Councils. Discretion on decisions.
Sheltered Housing	Interviews. Home visits. Medical liaison. Liaising with Social Services. Liaising with relatives. Community Centres.

SECTION/SERVICE	FUNCTION POLICIES
<u>Repairs and Property</u>	
Housing Repairs	Processing the job ticket and allocating work to a contractor. Payment processing.
Improvements to Council Dwellings (Capital)	Invoicing process.
Disabled Adaptations (Social Services)	Liaising with Social Services.
<u>Tenant Services</u>	
Rent Collection	Liaising with Housing Benefit.



Melton Borough Council Priorities for Action

Area of Need	Options	Objective/Measure	Action	Target
Enhance advice and advocacy to prevent homelessness	Record all homelessness and at risk enquiries to clarify needs and monitor service provision and delivery	Through preventative advice, reduce the number of households presenting as homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a procedure for identifying and recording at risk enquiries Implement regular monitoring of delivery of service provision to meet needs 	December 2003
	Contribute to the provision of independent debt, welfare benefit and housing advice services, to maximise access to free specialist advice and advocacy – to include practical help/advocacy for vulnerable people	Establishment of additional measures to provide such services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore need and effectiveness of tenancy support services provided by other councils. Establish feasibility of such a service in Melton 	March 2004
Increase access to and awareness of advice service	Produce leaflets/guides on the service and distribute to local agencies.			
	Obtain and distribute leaflets from other relevant agencies.	<p>Produce a "Maximise your income" advice pack for a range of households.</p> <p>Produce "Resettlement Advice Packs".</p>	<p>Work together with: Benefits Agency/Pensions Service; Revenue Services; CAB to produce pack.</p> <p>Work with statutory and voluntary agencies to raise awareness of services available.</p>	<p>August 2004</p> <p>March 2004</p>

Area of Need	Options	Objective/Measure	Action	Target
Joint working to raise awareness of homelessness and prevention of homelessness services	Work with relevant agencies (Connexions, CAB, Shelter) to develop education for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with schools and other groups (e.g. Queensway Young Voice; Youth Forum, etc) to raise awareness and prevent homelessness amongst young people 	Production of a Prevention of Homelessness Education Video and Advice Pack	December 2004
	Disseminate information about the service to other agencies and groups within the Borough	Improve access to services and service user satisfaction	Raise Awareness Sessions with CAB and other statutory and voluntary agencies	Ongoing
	Raise awareness of homelessness issues and help address stigma	Working with public and private sector providers to improve understanding of social housing and reduce stigma of homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish more effective communication with local media to ensure positive coverage • Investigate establishment of local homelessness forum, using existing structures 	Ongoing

Area of Need	Options	Objective/Measure	Action	Target
<p>Phase out use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation (B&B) other than in absolute emergency</p>	<p>Additional provision of temporary accommodation in the Borough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate immediate access to accommodation for those who are roofless and in priority need • To ensure that no families with children are placed in B&B except in an emergency, and then for no more than 6 weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a range of options and investigate the feasibility of each option taking into account resources available • Maximise use of all alternative forms of temporary accommodation 	<p>December 2003</p> <p>March 2004</p>

Area of Need	Options	Objective/Measure	Action	Target
Floating support for vulnerable groups	Provide support and referral to other agencies to meet identified need.	To reduce risk of homelessness	Promote and develop the floating support service to homeless households and vulnerable tenants	Ongoing
Develop good practice in supporting households with domestic violence across the Welland	To support and advise victims of domestic violence to prevent homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach worker • Continuation of poster campaign • Ongoing support for DV Forum and its initiatives 	To support victims of domestic violence and help reduce the threat of homelessness to them	Ongoing
Secure more affordable accommodation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For young/single people and couples • For families 	Review designation of properties	More units of general needs accommodation available within the Council Stock	Analyse preference, need and choice from Common Housing Register	Ongoing
	Incentives to release under-occupied family accommodation	More units of family accommodation available to priority households	Review of policy and identification of under occupied family units of accommodation within the housing stock	December 2003
	Identify and where possible develop rural exception sites in partnership with parish councils and landowners	To deliver more units of suitable affordable accommodation where it is needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build upon existing work of Rural Housing Enabler with parishes • Identify key settlements in Housing Strategy and draft Local Development Framework 	February 2004 March 2006
	Bring empty properties back into use	To make more units of appropriate housing available in the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to identify empty properties and work with owners • Landlords to bring those properties back into use 	Ongoing

Area of Need	Options	Objective/Measure	Action	Target
Inter-agency working	Link to related strategies and existing partnerships, e.g. Melton Community Partnership; Safer Communities Partnership; Private Landlords' Forum; Tenants' Forum Executive Committee; partnerships and groups working on behalf of those with, e.g. mental health problems or learning difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise resources for joint working with other agencies and partners • Monitor the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy 	Establish an effective mechanism within existing partnership structures to monitor delivery of the action points in this strategy	March 2004
Customer satisfaction	Service Standard	To increase service user satisfaction	Clear information in simple terms (available in different formats upon request) will assist the homeless in understanding how and where to access the service and the quality and level of service that will be provided.	July 2004

Melton Borough Council Homelessness Strategy: Joint Working & Services Provided by Other Agencies.		
Client Group	Initiative	Partner
Households with dependent children or someone who is pregnant	A countywide protocol is proposed for homeless families	Social Services
Clients vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap, or physical disability or other special reason	Leicestershire Learning Disability Strategy	Social Services Health Housing Authorities
People who are homeless as a result of a disaster such as flood or fire	Detailed emergency plan, backed by staff available 24 hours, 365 days per year, referring clients directly to emergency accommodation	Operated within the Borough Council, supported when necessary by Social Services
16 and 17 year olds (except 'relevant children')	Draft protocol for homeless 16/17 year olds	Social Services And Connexions
Care-leavers aged 18 to 21 who are former 'relevant children'	Leaving Care Protocol	Social Services
People considered vulnerable as a result of fleeing violence (or threats of violence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Love Hurts" poster campaign • Essential Directory of services for victims of domestic violence • Outreach worker • Common monitoring project • Specific anti-domestic violence initiatives within the Community Safety Strategy 	Multi Agency approach involving the Melton Area Safer Communities Partnership, Melton & Rutland Domestic Violence Forum, Police, County Council, Health Services, etc
Those considered vulnerable through having spent time in the armed forces, in prison, or in care	Draft Protocol for Housing Low Risk Offenders + Floating support service	National Probation Service and Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project
All client groups	Provision of money and other wide-ranging advice services	Melton Citizens' Advice Bureau (see below)
Young families	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advice, guidance and practical support 2. Accommodation, advice and support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home Start (see below) 2. Westbourne House
Young single people	Accommodation, advice and support	MYST Lodge

Melton's Targets for Improved Performance

Description of PI	Baseline (Oct to Dec 2002)	(April to June 2004)	(July to Sept 2004)	(Oct to Dec 2004)	Target (Top quartile performance)
Rent arrears	1.50%	2.38%	1.84%	2.66%	1.30%
Former Tenants arrears	£76,756.41	£77,191.39	£82,246.10	£69,213.29	
Rent loss due to voids	2.10%	2.17%	1.97%	1.89%	1.80%
Repairs – Emergency (24hrs)	92%	94%	94%	93%	100%
Repairs – Urgent (1 week)	63%	79%	76%	85%	100%
Repairs – Routine (8 weeks)	88%	73%	73%	80%	95%
Repairs – Void (3 weeks)*	80%	78%*	75%*	87%*	95%
Right To Buy Applications	9	13	8	4	
RTB within time	22%	54%	88%	50%	100%
Void Turnaround	46.04 days	47.8 days	41.02 days	41.35 days	25 days
Allocations	46	47	38	33	

* Note: Void times have been changed in the 3rd quarter of 2003/4 to show completion against individual target times, rather than an overall 3-week completion target.

Reasons for Homelessness in Melton

Cases which have been accepted under Homelessness Legislation as not being intentionally homeless and eligible for assistance at : 2004-2005

46%	19	due to families/friends no longer prepared to accommodate
12%	5	fleeing violence
5%	2	arrears (rent or mortgage)
30%	12	loss of private sector or tied accommodation
7%	3	leaving institution or care
100%	41	TOTAL

Melton BC Capital Strategy Priorities	
Corporate Objectives	Capital Programme Priority
To ensure a planned and co-ordinated approach is adopted to flood alleviation and protection throughout the Borough	Flood alleviation as a result of flooding within the Borough during 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001
To constantly review and implement improvements to the use of the cattle market site	Improvement and development at the Cattle Market due to Melton Mowbray's position as a market town and the needs of the local economy
To optimise the use of the Council's physical assets so as to achieve economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the use of all Council services and operations	Development of e-government initiatives with the emphasis on the introduction of a Customer Service Centre from January 2004 and the necessary Information Technology infrastructure to support the facility
To provide healthy and safe accommodation for all members of the community and improve the condition of the Council's own housing stock	Investment in local housing in terms of the Council housing stock in order to meet Decent Home Standard targets and tenants' aspirations through an effective private sector housing strategy; and to tackle the needs of those seeking affordable housing through understanding and seeking to influence local housing markets and tenants' aspirations
To work in partnership with interested parties to create a supportive community with access to good social, recreational and health facilities for people of the Borough	Operation of a number of grant schemes aimed at providing resources to sport, leisure and community groups. Substantial investment will also be required to improve or replace the Borough's only leisure pool, which is reaching the end of its useful life.

Melton Borough Council - Summary of Decent Homes Failures

		A : Unfitness		B : Reasonable state of repair		C : Reasonably modern facilities		D : Thermal comfort		TOTAL of Decent Homes Standard Works*		Decent Homes Failures
		Number	Cost £000's	Number	Cost £000's	Number	Cost £000's	Number	Cost £000's	Number	Cost £000's	
Non-decent	1st April 2003	558	1,490	370	745	53	265	866	1,910	1249	4,410	1249
Becoming non-decent	2003			389	563					389	563	154
	2004			133	185					133	185	64
	2005			293	575					293	575	142
	2006			104	141					104	141	13
	2007			339	285					339	285	71
	2008			57	92					57	92	6
	2009			36	16					36	16	7
	2003-2010									1351	1857	457

- Totals differ due to multiple requirements in some properties

Melton Borough Council-
Non Decent Homes Differential- Summary Report (23 March 2005)

Overall non decent ratio	Now	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5
Total non decent	863	1837	723	918	37	1116
% Of total property	40.78	86.81	34.17	43.38	1.75	52.74