



Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

2012 – 2017



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1.0 Introduction

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy guides local action and priorities for the Private Sector Housing team working across the Borough. It will identify the main local, sub-regional and national priorities that may affect Eastleigh for the coming five years and sets out what we aim to do to tackle the issues. The Strategy is underpinned by the Council's three strategic priorities which are:

- **A clean and green Borough: making a difference to our environment**
Relevance - reducing energy use, encouraging sustainable development and renewal and preventing area decline, anti-social behaviour and social exclusion.
- **A prosperous place: Where everyone is able to share in prosperity**
Relevance - contributing to the availability of a choice of affordable housing within the Borough to facilitate economic vitality and maintain communities
- **A healthy Community: Active and lively with a spirit of togetherness**
Relevance - ensuring homes are warm and dry, safe, secure and healthy places to live.

The Council has a statutory duty to intervene, where necessary, to ensure that the housing stock within the Borough meets the needs and aspirations of its residents. This requirement also includes making sure homes are safe and healthy for all who live in, work in and/or visit the Borough.

Poor quality housing increases exposure to health and safety risks, including accidents from trips and falls, hypothermia and the development of chronic illness such as heart disease and respiratory problems that increases the costs of health and social care. Intervention in the private sector is also important in order to help limit the demand for social housing.

Houses that are well maintained provide healthy, warm, safe and secure homes. They make a significant contribution to healthy living, to the prevention of area decline and the breakdown of communities. Vibrant communities deter anti-social behaviour and help to build and sustain social cohesion. In addition economic development and business vitality is encouraged by a choice of decent and affordable homes being available for the working population.

The condition and profile of the private sector housing stock therefore has a key role to play in the Council's mission to improve the quality of life for all its residents and can be shown to have a major input into the Council's ability to meet its three priority themes outlined above.

This strategy aims to:

- Encourage landlords to provide good quality accommodation for their tenants, increase tenants awareness of the Council's intervention role and ensure that health, safety and welfare standards are met, through education and the use of enforcement where appropriate.
- Facilitate independent living for people with a disability and older people.
- Help owners to repair, improve and adapt their homes through a range of measures that includes helping low income owners to access low cost loans and equity release packages.
- Assist homeowners to improve the thermal comfort and energy efficiency of their properties and tackle fuel poverty which affects over 10% of residents.
- Reduce the number of empty dwellings within the Borough.
- Ensure that the health, safety and welfare standards are met on licensed mobile home sites

2.0 Statutory Obligations

Provisions within the Housing Act 2004, place a duty on a local authority to deal with poor quality and hazardous housing within their area. The key areas of the Housing Act 2004 are;

- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System
- The duty to deal with identified category 1 hazards, this will include the investigation of potential category 1 hazards within resources available
- The licensing of high risk houses in multiple occupation, i.e. those that are more than 2 storeys high and occupied by more than 4 people who form more than 1 household; and the use of Management Orders.
- The Council is able to take control of long-term empty dwellings through the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders.
- The selective licensing of residential accommodation in designated areas (relates to areas of low housing demand only).

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. This Order requires that Local Authorities prepare a housing renewal policy drawing on a robust "evidence base" upon which they must decide local priorities, appropriate forms of assistance and the policy tools necessary to address issues in their area. The evidence base used by Eastleigh in preparing this strategy is the House Condition Survey 2010, and the local knowledge of the private sector housing team. A separate policy document based on the aims of this Strategy will be adopted and published by the Council.

The Housing Grant Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, places a duty on a local authority to provide mandatory financial assistance with adaptations to the homes of eligible disabled persons where a need is identified.

The private sector housing team cannot achieve all of the priorities without working in partnership with other disciplines within the council and other statutory and

voluntary organisations, including Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service in the inspection of HMO's and rented properties.

3.0 Resources and capacity

A team comprising a Principal Environmental Health Officer, 1 Senior Housing Officer, 4 technician/surveyors and two administrators currently provide the service. Cover and support is also provided from staff within Housing Services as a whole.

However an increase in service requests and the continuing high demand for Disabled Facilities Grants means that the capacity and opportunity to explore, develop and deliver additional forms of assistance and to be more pro-active in accordance with the recommendations of the Audit Commission remains very limited.

The staffing level for the delivery of adaptations is likely to be adequate to meet the growing demand for assistance over the period of this strategy. However, the staffing level in the enforcement and private sector housing team is only sufficient to undertake a reactive approach. With an increase in staffing levels more proactive activities could be undertaken in tackling poor quality housing standards in HMO's and the private rented sector. That being said it is acknowledged that in the current economic climate additional resources for this activity are unlikely to be available.

For the 2012/13 financial year the DFG budget stands at £1.1m, of this £400k comes from a government grant, and the remaining £700k is met from the Council's capital receipts. This level of budget represents a significant increase on previous budgets and it is hoped that if sustained in the coming years, it will be sufficient to deliver the mandatory grants during the Strategy period. Demographic trends indicate that the level of demand will continue to grow however and the budget will therefore need to be kept under review.

Eastleigh Borough Council has for a number of years been working with other Local Authorities and the Parity Trust to deliver a low cost loan scheme and other financial packages to home owners for the maintenance and repair of their property, where they are unable to obtain funding from other sources. The work with Parity Trust was initially funded through Regional Housing Board monies; we are committed to the future of this scheme as the capital investment will be recycled with a view to the scheme eventually becoming self-financing. It is the long term aim of the Council to build up Eastleigh's loan fund to a level where most new lending can be met from the recycled funds. The capital sum involved remains a Council asset. Parity Trust are governed and regulated by the Financial Services Authority, and therefore can offer a wider range of products to meet the client's needs.

Parity Trust will also be involved in the provision of a loan funding scheme for bringing empty dwellings back into use. £100k has been made available initially for this purpose. The funding is mainly likely to be provided to owners to enable them to carry out repairs to bring their property back in to a habitable condition. There will be

a charge placed on the property and interest on the loan will be payable at Parity Trust rates. In most cases loan terms will be relatively short.

The council is examining the option of purchasing properties including some of the long term empty dwellings, and this will help to support and encourage the private sector housing market.

A small amount of funding of £5k is kept in the capital budget to assist landlords of Houses in Multiple Occupation to undertake essential fire safety works where the works could not ordinarily be afforded.

4.0 Links to other Strategies

This Strategy aims to reflect policies at national and local level whilst contributing to the Council's overarching Housing Strategy designed to meet housing needs through the provision of new affordable homes and by influencing the private market.

This Strategy links into and complements a number of sub-strategies that underpin the Housing Strategy and partnerships including:

- Homelessness Strategy
- Older Persons Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy
- Empty Property Strategy
- Community Strategy/ Crime reduction Strategy
- Health & Well Being Partnership.

5.0 Consultation

The Council cannot operate alone to successfully sustain the Borough's private sector housing stock. In order to ensure that this Strategy contributes to the wider social, environmental and economic aims, the Council has to work with the large number of stakeholders and partners that exist.

A list of consultees and summary of consultation responses will be made available for inspection in the Council's offices.

6.0 House Condition Survey

Private Sector House Condition Surveys (HCS) are conducted at least once every 5 years by local authorities as a means of maintaining a detailed picture of housing conditions in the private sector (owner occupied and privately rented homes). Such a picture forms a useful evidence base on which to build strategies, inform investment decisions and feed into statistical returns and other internal reports.

The 2010 House Condition Survey identified the following headline facts about the housing stock within the Borough:

- Average SAP rating of 55 compared to the average rate of 48 for England
- Could spend £50m bringing properties up to decent home standards, but most are owner occupied.
- Could spend £7.6m on thermal comfort alone
- Fuel poverty is at 9.4% where England average is 13.2~%. Could spend £4.3m on fuel poverty elimination
- Poorest energy efficiency in pre WWII dwellings and bungalows
- Higher than average over 65 years, therefore cold hazards more important
- Around 300 HMO's, much less than the national average
- Around 300 empty dwellings = 0.7% of the stock, national average is approximately 4.1%
- Low income closely associated with household heads over 75 years of age
- Disability linked to low income
- Higher level of benefit recipients in the private rented sector
- Disabled tenants mostly need grab rails and adapted bathrooms - could spend £10.6m on adaptations
- Highest rate of non-decency in low rise purpose built flats followed by converted houses. Highest rate in inter war properties
- Falling on level surfaces, then falling on stairs were the major hazards identified, followed by excess cold.

a) Housing Stock Profile

- **Size of stock**

At the time of the 2010 House Condition Survey there were an estimated 44,890 private sector dwellings in Eastleigh. This is made up of around 38,890 owner occupied and 6,000 privately rented homes.

- **Age of stock**

The age profile of the private sector housing stock in Eastleigh was different to the national average with substantially lower levels of dwellings built pre-war (18.5% compared with 42.7%), and a significantly higher proportion built post 1964 (66.8% compared with 40.4%). The differences are particularly pronounced in the pre-1919 age band (5.7% compared with 24.6% nationally) and the 1965 – 1980 age band (36.3% compared with 20.4% nationally)

- **Tenure of Stock**

The tenure profile in Eastleigh differs to a degree from the national averages with a higher level of owner occupation than that found nationally (75% compared with 70%). The privately rented sector was represented at the same rate of 12% as nationally whilst the overall proportion of social housing was lower at 13% compared with 18% nationally. The lower proportion of publicly rented accommodation may have implications in terms of access to affordable homes for newly forming households. Although the private rented sector makes up a small proportion of the total stock, it provides an essential form of accommodation meeting the needs of those unable to purchase or who otherwise choose to rent.

As might have been expected, the owner occupied stock had a similar age profile to the overall stock position, with figures of 64.3% for homes built post 1964 compared with 66.8% in the overall stock. Unusually, the privately rented sector had lower proportions of properties built pre-war at 14.3% compared with 18.6% in the overall stock and higher proportions of properties built post 1980 (56.4% compared with 30.5%).

In recent years there has been an increase in buy-to-let properties, as investors have been encouraged by the return envisaged from rapidly rising house prices. There are very few large scale landlords in the borough; most landlords own only a few properties and many only one.

It is recognised that landlords have a significant role providing rented accommodation and that a good many act responsibly and maintain their properties in good condition. However, some landlords fail to act responsibly, either through a disregard for, or lack of knowledge of, their responsibilities.

The demand for privately rented properties has grown rapidly, outstripping supply and has been fuelled by:

- First time buyers excluded from home ownership as house prices have risen faster than incomes, and mortgages becoming increasingly difficult to secure.
- A shortage of social rented housing available and new housing provision has not kept pace with demand.

Many private rented properties are long standing, well established and well managed. However, amongst the lower priced properties in particular, there is a flux of activity as dwellings become available for rent or return to owner

occupation. The largest concentration of properties where this is occurring is to be found amongst the terraced properties of central Eastleigh.

When rented accommodation and HMOs in particular are poorly managed and maintained, tenants become increasingly transient as they seek and move to more suitable accommodation. This can have a destabilising effect on communities and lead to area decline, anti-social behaviour and social exclusion.

- **Equity characteristics**

Owner occupiers were asked about the value of their dwelling, the level of any outstanding mortgage, any other debt and the consequent total equity. This was to allow the relationship between available equity and dwelling condition to be examined.

The average value of a dwelling in Eastleigh was £215,600. The average mortgage level for owner-occupied dwellings in Eastleigh, based upon occupier responses, was £99,400 resulting in an average equity of £116,200 per dwelling using the Land Registry average value.

Most homeowners have sufficient income to maintain and carry out repairs and improvements to their own homes themselves. There are however 13% of households who have annual incomes that are below £10k. Predominantly these are the youngest and oldest heads of household and households that include a person with a disability.

Many older homeowners have little accessible cash to pay for repairs and improvements. Capital resources are often locked up in their properties, which can prevent investments in small but essential works.

This level of equity would allow plenty of scope for equity release schemes to fund repair works in the owner-occupied sector. Dwellings occupied by younger residents on means tested benefit and/ or low-income single parent families might find this prohibitive due to unaffordable repayments.

b) The Housing, Health and Safety Rating System

One of the most significant changes under the Housing Act 2004 was a change in the minimum standard for housing. The fitness standard was removed and replaced by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System HHSRS. The HHSRS system deals with a much broader range of issues than the previous fitness standard.

The (HHSRS) is a prescribed method of assessing individual hazards, rather than a general standard to give a judgment of fit or unfit. The HHSRS is evidence

based – national statistics on the health impacts of hazards encountered in the home are used as a basis for assessing individual hazards.

The HHSRS system deals with a total of 29 hazards.

- The most common hazard failures in Eastleigh are falling on level surfaces, falling on stairs and excess cold (unusually, excess cold is not the most common category 1 hazard).
- Category 1 hazards are strongly associated with older dwellings (in particular Interwar properties) and dwellings occupied by households where there is a person with a disability and households in receipt of benefit.
- Proportionately, Category 1 hazards are more strongly associated with the privately rented sector.
- Overcrowding is one of the hazards, and prevalence is expected to increase with the growing shortage of housing available.
- Overall a hazard was found in 21% of dwellings.

c) Cost implications for repair and improvement

The cost to make dwellings decent in the private sector provides an idea of the cost of bringing dwellings up to a good standard. The costs are the total sum that would be needed for remedial and improvement work, regardless of the source of funding. They take no account of longer term maintenance, which would be in addition to these costs.

Reason	Total Cost (£ million)	Cost per dwelling (£) (average)
Category 1 Hazard	£30.1	£4,600
Repair	£5.4	£4,500
Amenities	£6.7	£14,100
Thermal comfort	£7.7	£1,400
Total	£49.9	£4,800

Repair costs vary depending on the age, type and tenure of dwellings. The highest repair costs are to be found in the 35% of the stock that was built before 1965 with post war dwellings 1945 – 1964 incurring similar costs to those properties built before 1919. Average comprehensive repair costs amount to £10,200 per dwelling. Semi-detached properties have the highest repair costs by building type.

A lower proportion of repair costs in Eastleigh (54%), compared to England as a whole (63%), relate to the exterior fabric of the dwelling. There are few structural problems with the stock and most works relate to windows, roofs and walls.

The repair cost of those properties that will require some level of repair over the next 10 years is widely distributed between small works required for the most modern dwellings and others where major elements will be going beyond their

life span and will therefore require replacement. It should be noted that the majority of works required will be carried out by the property owners in the normal way without requiring intervention by the council.

7.0 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

To increase revenue some landlords divide properties into smaller lettings such as bedsits, known as houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). However they are often more costly to manage and maintain than many landlords anticipate.

HMOs are often the only form of accommodation available to young and single people who are on low incomes. However the sharing of personal hygiene and cooking facilities increases risks to health and statistically injuries and incidences of deaths caused by fire in HMOs are much greater than that for single dwelling households. The Housing Act 2004 contains provisions for the mandatory licensing of high risk HMOs. These are HMOs that are more than 2 storeys high and are occupied by more than 4 people who form more than a single household.

Currently the Council is aware of about 300 HMOs within the Borough of which only 2 are covered by the Mandatory licensing regime. The recent change to the Local Housing Allowance for under 35's is likely to increase demand for HMO accommodation.

Apart from considerations under the HHSRS there are additional standards to consider with respect to HMOs. About half the HMOs that are known within the Borough lack adequate amenities and/ or fire precautions, to varying degrees, having regard to the Council's adopted standards and are prioritised for attention on a risk rated basis.

8.0 Empty Dwellings

The figures vary from year to year. Out of a total of 52,000 homes an average of over 300 properties are empty long term (vacant for over 6 months), approximately one third of these properties will be subject to the probate process at any one time.

The number of empty dwellings in Eastleigh is well below the national average and most are brought back into use by the normal operation of the housing market. However there is an undisputed shortage of housing and even a single empty dwelling deprives a family or an individual of a home. In addition empty dwellings often become a focus for antisocial behaviour, become neglected and detract from the amenity of the neighbourhood and contribute to area decline.

The Council has a number of tools available to it to encourage property owners to bring their properties back into use, including incentives, advice and enforcement. A list of long term empty properties is produced twice a year and initial action is taken by contacting the owners identified, to offer advice and assistance.

9.0 Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency is a key consideration in private sector housing and the following illustrates some of the issues:

- Fuel poverty at 9.4% is below the average rate found in England (EHCS 2007) at 13.2%. The cost of remedial works to the 3,700 owner occupied dwellings in fuel poverty (i.e. spending more than 10% of income on heating) is just over £4.3 million.
- The mean SAP (energy rating on a scale of 0 (poor) to 100 (good)) is 55 in Eastleigh, which is higher than that found nationally in private sector properties (48).
- The least energy efficient dwellings are those built before the Second World War and bungalows. The owner occupied stock had a slightly higher mean SAP rating than that found in the privately rented sector.
- Improving energy efficiency will contribute towards a range of Eastleigh's corporate priorities and indeed contribute to a wide range of issues e.g. reduced carbon emissions, tackling fuel poverty, elimination of Cat 1 hazards, improved health and well-being and warmer, better homes.
- The level of excess cold hazards is an issue given the numbers of older residents in Eastleigh and the potential link with cold related illnesses.

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995

The 1995 Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) aims to improve the energy efficiency of dwellings across the country. The Act is part of a broader government strategy to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and thereby reduce the impact of energy expenditure on the environment. By giving dwellings better insulation and more efficient heating systems, such as modern gas boilers, the amount of fuel used to heat a dwelling and produce hot water can be reduced.

A new guidance document was issued in July 2012 to English Energy Conservation Authorities in which the Government stated that they were committed to Local Authorities setting their own priorities, ambitions and any related targets as they are best placed to assess their local needs and judge what will achieve significant improvements based on their particular circumstances. Starting from March 2013 the Council will be required to report to government on energy conservation measures that the authority considers practicable, cost effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the Energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area and to provide subsequent progress reports.

The starting point for action is the specific set of targets for carbon emissions, as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. The Carbon Plan published in 2011 sets out how the government aims to achieve these reductions.

National Targets include;

- To reduce greenhouse gas CO2 emissions – for buildings this means a reduction of between 24% and 39% lower than 2009 levels, by 2027
- To insulate all cavities and lofts where practical by 2020
- By 2030, between 1 – 3.7m additional solid wall installations and between 1.9 -7.2m other energy efficiency installations
- By 2030, 1.6 -8.6m building level low carbon heat installations, such as heat pumps
- By 2050, emissions from UK buildings, 'close to zero'.

This means that in the lifetime of this strategy the Private Sector Housing team will need to work with the Sustainability team and other units to deliver significant improvements in the energy efficiency of domestic dwellings.

Measures could include;

- Completing as many loft and cavity wall insulations as possible
- Devising appropriate measures for hard to treat dwellings (these include mobile homes and properties with solid wall constructions)
- Focussing on owner occupied bungalows, which have been identified as being generally poor in energy efficiency terms.
- Promoting and encouraging uptake in the Green Deal Scheme, and any other financial support packages available.
- Encouraging landlords of private rented properties to install energy efficiency measures. Enforcement action may also be used when necessary.
- Consideration of an affordable warmth strategy targeting homes in fuel poverty. Work would be undertaken with partners in health as tackling excess cold issues has a direct impact on peoples' health.

10.0 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)/ Adaptations

The ability of people with a disability to live independently in their own homes within the community is accepted as a key social inclusion issue. The Private Sector House Condition Survey revealed that people with a disability occupy 5,200 (13%) properties. Of these, 2,350 (45%) required adaptation, which is nearly 6% of the total stock. A breakdown of the adaptations identified is shown in the table below.

Disabled Facilities Grants provide for adaptations such as stair lifts, level access showers and wheel chair access. The grant is part funded by Central Government. Legislation requires that applicants must be referred by an Occupational Therapist who will determine what is suitable and appropriate for their needs. The Council then determines how the adaptations can be provided having regard to the age and

condition of the property. An applicant's resources are assessed to determine if they can contribute towards the cost of the works. The grant awarded amounts to the total cost of the work less any calculated contribution. The Council works in close co-operation and liaison with the Occupational Therapists to ensure that resources are properly targeted to those most in need and in a timely manner.

In some cases it may be more appropriate for a person with a disability to consider moving to another property that is more suitable for their needs or can be more readily adapted. Provision is made within the Regulatory Reform Order that enables Councils to help with relocation costs and this assistance is incorporated within the Council's Financial Assistance Policy.

Where assistance is provided it remains the Council's right to reclaim up to £10,000 of the grant provision, should the property be sold or ownership is transferred within 5 years from the date the assistance was provided and where it can be shown the assistance has increased the value of the property

Types and cost of adaptations required

The Private Sector House Condition Survey revealed that there is a potential demand for adaptations costing £7.51m as shown

Adaptation	Nº Needed	Cost £ millions
Wider doorways	130	0.20
Stair lift / lift	840	2.50
Ramp	180	0.40
Grab rails / handrail	920	0.50
Hoist	40	0.09
Redesigned kitchen	90	0.50
Redesign / relocation WC	110	0.30
Redesign / relocation bath	900	2.70
Door answering / opening	60	0.06
Emergency Alarm	380	0.20
Other adaptation	120	0.06
Total	3,770	7.51

Nationally it is estimated that 73% of the total housing stock is inaccessible to wheelchair users. This represents some 30,000 properties within the Borough.

The largest number of adaptations required is for lifts between floor levels and bathroom adaptations such as the replacement of baths with showers.

It is estimated that it would cost, on average, £2,000 each to make the estimated potential 30,000 properties currently inaccessible to wheel chair users, accessible in accordance with the revised Building Act 1984, and the regulations made there under where adaptation would be practically possible.

11.0 Priorities for Action

a) Improving and Maintaining the housing stock

A high proportion of Eastleigh's housing stock is now 30 –50 years old or is older stock that last benefited from major renewal works some 30+ years ago. Consequently there are a significant number of properties across the Borough that are now around an age where substantial refurbishments are required to arrest the major deterioration that contributes to area decline and poor health.

There are a number of barriers however that deter owners from tackling repairs including:

- A general lack of awareness of what constitutes poor repair and its long-term effects, which often results in it not receiving the necessary priority. As a result, home owners are often reluctant to invest in planned maintenance and repairs to keep their properties up to an acceptable standard.
- Many older owner occupiers are what are termed asset rich but cash poor. This means that, although they may live in a mortgage free property, they have to live on a fixed income and are unable to raise money for repairs and improvements through commercial lending.
- Owners, particularly older people are deterred from getting work done through lack of confidence and knowledge of the processes. There are also fears of 'cowboy builders', excessive costs and lack of confidence in accessing loan facilities. .

When owners were asked about what forms of assistance might be useful to them in getting repairs carried out, the most popular choice was assistance in finding reputable builders, obtaining reasonable estimates and having someone supervise the works. This was followed by advice about repairs and advice about funding.

Key Activities identified:

1. ***Help homeowners to repair, improve and maintain their homes by providing advice, information and assistance.***
2. ***Use the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System to deal with housing health and safety risks.***
3. ***Target resources on a particular type and age of property and/or a particular socio-economic client group.***

How can these be achieved?

1. The Council is currently revising its Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, which is to be adopted as part of the overall Strategy. The Policy provides a financial assessment framework that identifies by what means owners can finance repairs to their homes. This Policy also makes provision for assistance in bringing empty dwellings back into use, and assistance to clients in need of adaptations in order that they can remain in their own homes and live as independently as possible.
2. Currently there are few financial packages accessible to low-income owners and those generally who could release equity to finance repairs of a relatively modest cost. The Council is, however, working with a number of other local authorities and a Community Development Finance Institution (the Parity Trust) to provide a range of loan packages and an equity release product for low-income households who are currently excluded from mainstream financial assistance.
3. Owners are offered advice, information and assistance to help them:
 - Identify repair works and the likely cost
 - Draw up work specifications
 - Select and employ a contractor
 - Comply with statutory requirements
 - Access funding for repairs and adaptations
 - Supervise works
 - Ensure value for money

b) Improving and maintaining standards in the private rented sector

A healthy private rented sector is essential to provide good quality affordable and practical accommodation for those that are unable, or choose not to become owner-occupiers or access social housing. It is important to a wide range of people, of which many are either on low incomes or income related benefits. Private renting is often the only tenure available to young people/ newly forming households.

Key Activities identified:

4. ***Assist landlords to repair, improve, maintain and manage their properties by providing advice, information and assistance and where necessary require landlords to meet minimum statutory requirements.***
5. ***Promote the services the Council offers to tenants.***
6. ***License high risk HMOs and provide for the use of Management Orders.***
7. ***Investigate setting up a HMO landlord accreditation or registration scheme.***

How can these be achieved?

1. Landlords generally are given advice and information about their legal obligations, the action they need to take and where they require financial assistance, loans via the Parity Trust can be made available to ensure fire safety provision and Means Of Escape. In addition a landlord's information pack is available and distributed.
2. Where landlords are unwilling to meet statutory and adopted standards, enforcement action is taken to ensure homes are repaired, made safe, secure and healthy. An upgraded section of the Council's website will be launched and promoted. This will be aimed at landlords, providing them with a range of information, and incentives to let to the council's homeless clients.
3. The Council provides a range of booklets offering advice on such topics as disrepair; dampness caused by condensation, gas safety, and tenant's rights and landlords obligations. In addition an increasing number of articles providing information and advice are being published in the Council's newspaper and other local publications. The Council receives and responds to, on average, 200 requests a year for assistance and advice from private sector and social tenants about repair issues. In addition in excess of 200 requests are received each year for advice on tenancy issues generally.
4. Currently the Council has a programme of inspecting known HMOs to ensure that they are in adequate repair and comply with the fire safety and amenity standards. Inspections are now carried out in conjunction with Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service.
5. The need to regulate parts of the private rented sector has been recognised by Government in the Housing Act 2004 that includes provision for the licensing of high risk HMOs and where a landlord is deemed not to be a fit and proper person, to take over their management. .

c) Maintaining independent living and social inclusion

An aging population and the Government's policies on increasing care provision within the community have resulted in a greater dependence on health and community care services. There is a need for dwellings to be adapted to allow people with disabilities and older people to live independently in a safe, warm and secure home. Some 45% of dwellings occupied by a person with a disability are in need of adaptation.

Key Activities identified:

- 8. Assist older people and people with disabilities to remain living independently within the community by awarding grants and providing advice, information and assistance.**
- 9. Help to ensure support services are provided such as a handy person service and garden maintenance service.**
- 10. To undertake a pilot scheme of slips trips and falls prevention**

How can these be achieved?

1. Through close liaison with the Occupational Therapy Service the Council currently assists on average about 140 people a year to adapt their homes and provides grants totalling £1m to help with the cost of the work.
2. The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy makes provision for helping with the cost of adaptations that exceed the £30,000 mandatory grant limit and for moving to a more suitable home if this is a more appropriate solution to the client's needs.
3. The Council has a policy that 3% of new build housing should be built to wheelchair accessible housing standards and also requires new affordable housing to be built to lifetime homes standards.
4. The Council proposes to undertake a pilot scheme for the prevention of slips, trips and falls. Officers will be visit homes and identify hazards which need addressing. In some cases the Handyperson Service will be utilised or the householder signposted to appropriate services.
5. The Home Improvement Agency, run by Family Mosaic Housing Group and contracted jointly with Hampshire County Council, provides a Handyperson Service for vulnerable people whose homes need minor repair or maintenance such as replacing broken glazing, small electrical and plumbing repairs and minor repairs to woodwork. In addition the Service carries out home safety checks to assist with security issues.
6. The Council's Direct Services Unit, provides a gardening service to help older people maintain their gardens so that they do not attract unwanted callers, anti-social behaviour and other activities that lead to social exclusion. This is administered within the Housing & Environmental Health Unit.

d) Improving Energy Efficiency

Investing in energy efficiency enhances the quality of housing, reduces CO2 emissions and helps to reduce fuel poverty, providing affordable warmth for low-income households.

Key Activities identified:

11. Encourage and assist owners to undertake energy efficiency works to their homes.

How can this be achieved?

1. The Council has an active Home Energy Conservation Strategy based upon disseminating information and advice and promoting energy efficiency schemes that raise awareness of ways to save energy, keep homes warm and assist with the cost of measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation.
2. The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy makes provision for helping with the cost of energy efficiency works that will address lack of sufficient heating to make a property habitable, excessive cold that constitutes a serious hazard and the lack of thermal comfort. In the most urgent of cases, to remedy the conditions, assistance is available for low-income households. In other cases the Council currently offers advice and information on the Warm Front Scheme and schemes promoted by fuel suppliers.
3. More work will be undertaken to identify hard to treat properties and dwellings whose occupants may be suffering from fuel poverty. Campaigns to ensure the uptake of energy efficiency measures will be aimed at these homes. Education on energy use and savings will also be used as this has shown to be effective in other parts of the country.

e) Bringing Empty Dwellings Back Into Use

The council has a separate empty homes strategy which was updated in 2011, the strategy can be found on the website or by following this link [LINK](#)

Key Activities identified:

- 12. Identify and encourage owners to bring long-term empty dwellings back into use and if necessary use all tools including statutory action**
- 13. Provide low cost loans to assist owners in bringing properties back into use.**

How can these be achieved?

1. Where a housing need can be proven, Councils can use Compulsory Purchase powers to acquire empty dwellings in order to bring them back into use. It is a measure of last resort and the Council has a pro-active policy of encouraging owners to let or sell their properties instead.

2. The Council may seek to make use of Empty Property Management Orders in cases where owners are unwilling to bring their dwellings back into use. The Orders will allow the Council to take control of an empty dwelling and pass it on to a property management company, such as a Housing Association, for rented use for a specified period.
3. In 2012/13 the Council has made available a sum of £100k for use as a revolving loan fund to help and encourage owners pay for works required to bring an empty home back into a habitable condition.