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INTRODUCTION

This strategy examines the housing needs identified in the District, the resources to be made available to meet those needs and summarises the Council's aims and the policies to be pursued to address these needs. It is not intended to create policy but rather to draw together in one comprehensive statement the various key tasks the authority will undertake to meet its objectives.

In preparing this Housing Strategy, and taking account of Best Value, we have sought to consult widely and to reflect the wishes, concerns, aspirations and priorities of the local community. We have also been mindful of objectives which relate to social inclusion in rural areas.

In order to meet its responsibility to ensure continuous improvement, to regularly review all services, and to report performance and plans to local people, the Council has:

- Consulted with stakeholders to ensure our plans and services meet their needs.
- Made arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, by the introduction of a performance management and service planning framework.
- Prepared a Best Value Performance Plan which aims to show what the Council plans to achieve, how well it is performing and how it intends to improve year-on-year.

This Strategy takes account particularly of:

- The GO-East/Housing Corporation Regional Housing Strategy
- The Cambridgeshire County Council Structure Plan adopted in 1995
- The East Cambridgeshire District Local Plan adopted in June 2000
- The Council's Housing Best Value Plan adopted in January 2001
- East Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Agenda 21 Strategy

SUMMARY

The Housing Strategy Document draws together previously adopted policies, and states the authority's strategic aims for future improvement of the service. Many of the key tasks are drawn from the Best Value Improvement Plan and arise from the process of fundamentally challenging the services we provide and how we provide them.

This document complements East Cambridgeshire District Council's Statement of Overall Purpose :

The Council aims to provide quality services and to work in partnership with the local community to protect, enhance and develop the quality of life and environmental sustainability.

The eight aims of the housing strategy are as follows:

- 1. To improve information on Housing Need across tenure in the District**
- 2. Improve the delivery and effectiveness of the Housing Advice Service**
- 3. Work in partnership to provide new affordable housing**
- 4. Improve housing conditions in the private sector**
- 5. Promote healthy and sustainable living environments**
- 6. Work towards meeting the needs of vulnerable people in the community**
- 7. Methodically apply the principles of Best Value and encourage greater public involvement in the culture of our housing services**
- 8. Promote socially inclusive communities in line with East Cambridgeshire District Council's Corporate Objectives**

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

This Strategy has been prepared following widespread consultation with those who are affected by decisions arising from its implementation. These include Cambridgeshire County Council, other local authorities (including Forest Heath, part of whose area forms a single housing market with East Cambridgeshire in the area around Newmarket), local charities, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), the Housing Corporation, developers, the East Cambs Primary Care Group, voluntary bodies and faith groups, as well as residents in private and social housing and other service users. East Cambridgeshire District Council would like to thank those who contributed to the strategy in the consultation process.

The Strategy will be subject to interim annual progress reviews by the Council's Strategic Development Committee, and a rolling satisfaction survey.

Links with other Council strategies

Health Improvement

The Council is working to improving the health of people in the District. We recognise that health problems arise from housing that is unfit, in disrepair, damp, overcrowded, lacking or having substandard amenities or poor sanitation, requiring adaptation or energy-inefficient.

The Council's joint Health Improvement Plan with East Cambridgeshire Primary Care Group has established priorities for future health improvement as disability and vulnerability, chronic disease, mental health and accidents.

Local Agenda 21

Over the past two years the Council has carried out a programme of extensive consultation with the public and its partners during which it is estimated that over 1000 people participated in the development of the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) Strategy. This was carried out in a variety of ways, including visioning workshops in 14 villages and towns as well as a community conference to set priorities.

This Strategy incorporates a number of specific targets over the next three years identified in the LA21 Strategy Action Plan relating to the natural and built environment and to the reduction of pollution. In particular there is a commitment to implement a programme of public education over this period.

Draft Sustainable Economic and Community Development Strategy

The Council's Strategic Development Panel has set out its strategic priorities and objectives for sustainable economic and community development for the period 2000-2003 in a consultation document. Seven priority areas have been identified for action which impinge on the Housing Strategy:

- To secure the vitality and viability of the town centres of Ely, Soham and Littleport.
- To encourage the start up and growth of indigenous businesses within the district and to encourage local firms to adopt environmental best practice.
- To help employees to acquire the skills needed to maintain their position in the workforce and to enhance the competitiveness of their employers, and to help those without work to secure the skills needed to find worthwhile employment.

- To aid the economic and social regeneration of the priority areas identified within the strategy, including Littleport, High Barns (Ely), Witchford and Haddenham.
- To direct resources and initiatives towards the needs of the Council's priority groups within the community including young people, the elderly, travellers and other ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and lone parents.
- To tackle the identified needs in the local community using a development / capacity building approach.
- To strengthen and facilitate the co-ordination of the voluntary sector throughout the District.

EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE PROFILE

Population trends and forecasts

East Cambridgeshire remains a predominately rural area with over 56% of its population living outside the settlements of Ely, Soham, Littleport and Sutton. (Cambs County Council mid year population estimates, 1998). The population of the district grew by an estimated 10.9% between 1991 and 1998, compared to a county average growth of 7%. The growth is expected to continue, with an estimated population of 73,600 by 2006. The population of the county is forecast to grow at a faster rate than the rest of the Eastern region or England and Wales, with 70% of the increase attributable to in-migration.

Area	1991	1999 estimate	% change 91-99	2006 forecast
East Cambs	61,200	67,900	10.9%	73,600
Cambs County	511,700	547,300(excl P'boro)	7.0%	576,900(excl P'boro)

Population actual and estimate figures 1991-2006 (Cambs County Council Research Group, 1999)

The County Structure Plan envisages further rapid population growth in the District over the next ten years, reflected in the District Local Plan, which seeks to accommodate the growth around the existing larger settlements.

Black and Minority Ethnic Issues

East Cambridgeshire has a relatively low ethnic minority population but the emerging Census results are expected to reflect a small rise. The Council has access to translation services for non-English speakers and the Council is developing more effective means of communication and consultation with ethnic minority groups. The 'Open Out' project is currently being implemented and will facilitate the reporting of racially motivated anti social behaviour.

Economic Development

East Cambridgeshire has a diverse economy as many of the northern parishes bordering Fenland have an agricultural economy with related employment in farming, haulage and warehousing. The towns of Ely and Soham are included in the Cambridge Sub Region and expected to absorb some of the demand from the thriving high tech industry focussed around Cambridge City.

Although overall the district does not suffer high unemployment or poverty, there are pockets of rural poverty where low skilled employment and low wages mean that some people are priced out of the housing market, increasing the pressure on the demand for social housing. Studies have shown that these pockets of poverty persist particularly around Littleport.

**OBJECTIVE 1
TO IMPROVE INFORMATION ON THE NEED FOR HOUSING ACROSS TENURE
IN THE DISTRICT**

Tasks:

Research methods of improving knowledge of local housing needs, taking account of possible resource implications and links with other work e.g. on social exclusion.

Continue to support the Supported Housing Information Project in assessing the need for supported housing.

Monitor the need for affordable housing through the housing needs register.

Undertake a stock condition survey.

Undertake research to examine the extent of demand across the district for low cost housing for sale, and the ways in which it can best contribute to meeting overall housing needs.

Tenure composition

80% of properties in East Cambridgeshire are owner-occupied. Indications are that with the current high level of new building for sale in the area the proportion of owner-occupation will increase further during the next five years.

5% of properties are privately rented including those with tied tenants, mainly agricultural workers.

15% of the stock is in the social housing sector owned by RSLs. Improving, increasing and ensuring access to these properties for those in need is regarded as critical to the success of this Strategy. We regard our co-operation with social housing landlords and monitoring of their activities as the key to achieving this objective.

Projected Supply

The projected population growth detailed earlier has implications for the provision of housing in the district in future years. The existing Cambridgeshire Structure Plan required that provision should be made for 7500 houses in East Cambs over the period 2001-2006.

By mid 1999 there had been 4011 dwellings completed, leaving a requirement of some 3489 further dwellings to be provided between mid 1999 and 2006. It is expected that this will largely be met by land allocated in Ely, Littleport and Soham.

Assessment of Affordable Housing Need

An assessment of housing need in East Cambridgeshire in September 2000 identified a need for a further 206 affordable homes each year to be provided between 2000 and 2005.

Following the Housing Need Assessment in 2000 the Council proposes that the sites that come forward for social housing should be developed in accordance with the following distributions:

Distribution	80%	15%	5%
Dwelling Size / Tenure	Rented Housing	Shared Ownership	Low Cost Market*
1 Bed	25%	10%	10%
2 Bed	40%	65%	65%
3 Bed +	35%	25%	25%

* Low cost market housing is defined by the Council as housing for sale at a price equivalent to the lowest quartile of house prices in the district.

Homelessness

The numbers of people presenting themselves as homeless is increasing. The authority accepted 180 households in 1999/2000 as statutorily homeless. This figure rose to 208 in the year 2000/2001.

Housing Need Register

Hereward Housing Association maintain the housing waiting list which is subject to monthly review. As at 31 May 2001 there were 1245 households on the waiting list and a further 349 applicants for a transfer. This is an overall increase of 30% over the previous year.

The following table shows the applicants for general needs housing only, at 31 May 2001.

1 Bed	2 Bed	3 bed	4bed +	TOTAL
547	368	220	31	1166

The list is advertised and a newsletter is issued to applicants every four months. There has been a steady increase in the applications from residents in the main towns like Ely, Burwell and Soham.

We have established a timetable to carry out a further detailed housing need assessment of East Cambridgeshire.

House Prices

House prices in the district have risen sharply in line with the rise nationally and due to local factors such as Cambridge's high tech growth. The average house price in April – June 2001 was £124,901 (HM Land Registry); this is £10,000 higher than the regional average, but slightly less than the county and national average. The current district average is over 10% higher than the corresponding quarter in 1999.

Key workers

Recent discussions with the County Council identified no significant recruitment problems amongst teachers, nurses, police, fire fighters and social workers as a result of local house prices in East Cambridgeshire.

Home Ownership Initiatives

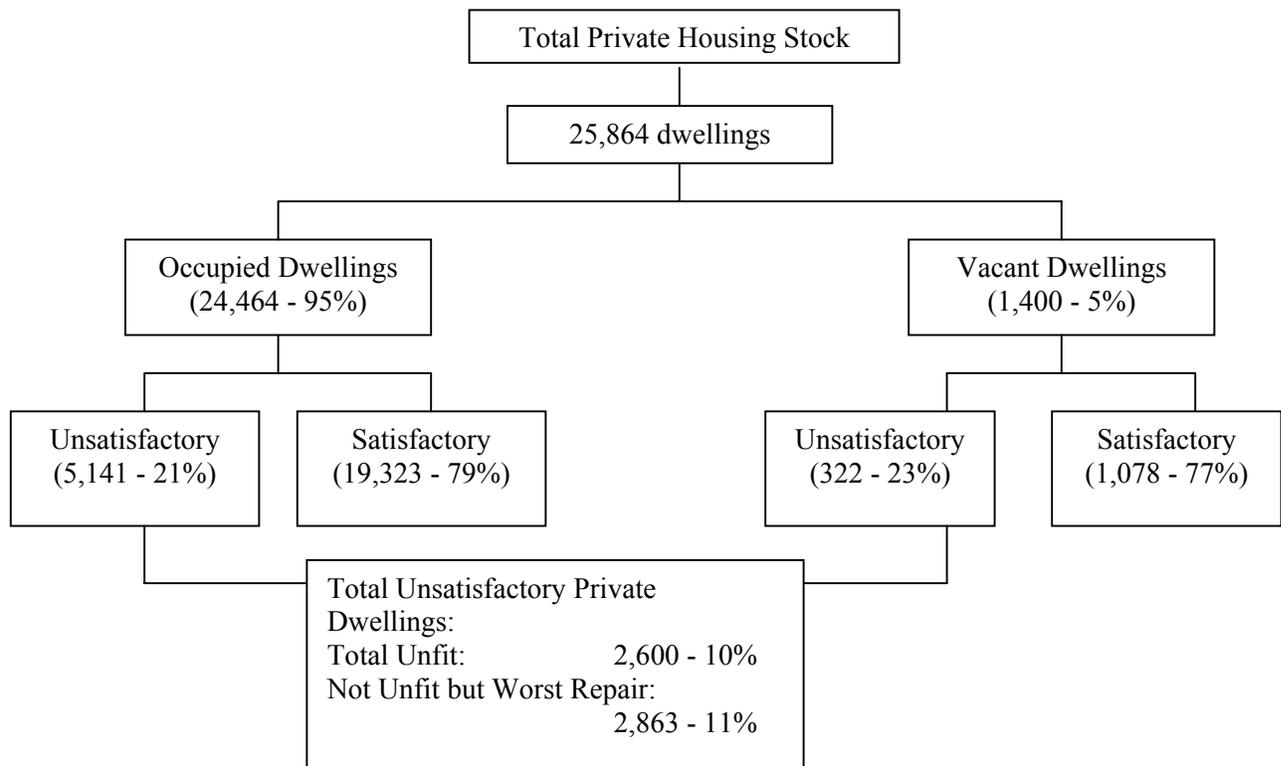
We shall continue to support schemes by RSLs to provide low-cost homes for sale through shared ownership within the district. We recognise that such housing meets a need while absorbing less subsidy than is required for purely rented accommodation, and at the same time promoting sustainable communities. We shall also continue to support Hereward HA in encouraging RSLs to implement the Homebuy scheme in order to release larger rented dwellings.

We recognise that under-occupation of social housing accommodation and use of adapted properties by able-bodied residents constitutes an inefficient use of valuable resources. We will therefore support application of incentives where appropriate to release such accommodation for its more appropriate use.

Stock Condition

Section 605 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended by paragraph 85 of Schedule 9 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, requires authorities to consider the condition of housing in their areas at least once a year. This information is gathered for the Housing Investment Programme, which needs to be submitted to DTLR on an annual basis.

East Cambridgeshire District Council last carried out a comprehensive stock condition survey in 1995. The table below shows the results of the condition survey.



The house condition survey estimated a total of 2278 occupied dwellings unfit representing a rate among private sector dwellings in the district of 9.3%. Unfit dwellings are not equally distributed across the housing stock, but are concentrated in particular sectors and areas. These are as follows:

- A bias towards older properties including both pre 1919 and inter war dwellings. Pre 1919 dwellings comprise 57% of all unfit dwellings. This compares with a district wide average of 9% and an unfitness rate for post 1964 dwellings of 1.8%.
- Higher rates of unfitness in the private rented and tied housing sector. 13% of private rented dwellings were assessed as unfit. Rates of unfitness are highest in the tied housing sector at 17%.

Variations in the underlying causes of unfitness are apparent between different sectors of the housing stock. Key patterns include:

- Higher levels of multiple deficiency in the rural areas and a stronger incidence of repair and dampness defects linked to an older rural housing profile
- Higher levels of repair and dampness defects in the older stock with the importance of design defects increasing in the inter-war and early post-war unfit housing

The conclusions of the report identified the cost to make a property fit at an average of £7,525. The total resources required to deal with all unfit properties identified by the survey would be £17.14m, representing a seventeen-year programme of activity at the present £1m grants budget. This is to deal with those existing unfit dwellings only and takes no account of currently fit dwellings deteriorating into unfitness.

**OBJECTIVE 2
IMPROVE THE DELIVERY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HOUSING ADVICE
SERVICE**

Tasks:

By 31 March 2002, complete a review of the homelessness appointment system with a target of 95% of applicants to be seen within 4 working hours of first enquiry at office.

Complete a review of procedures, standard letters and forms and to produce a workflow chart by 31 March 2002.

Assess the accessibility of the service with a view to providing an advice surgery in Newmarket.

Through continuous improvement and use of IT workflow software, reduce the percentage of homeless investigations still outstanding after 33 consecutive days to 5% by 31 March 2006.

Subject to constraints on the capital programme, fund Hereward HA to complete the remodelling of Littleport hostel to provide single persons accommodation by 30 June 2002.

Review the rent deposit guarantee scheme by 31 March 2002, taking account of input from Wintercomfort, South Cambridgeshire DC and Cambridgeshire City Council.

Homelessness Procedures and Priorities

Whilst the authority investigates an application for housing under the provisions of the 1996 Housing Act, the household is if necessary, temporarily housed in one of three hostels in the district. The average length of stay in temporary accommodation is currently 11 weeks. We remain committed to avoiding the use of bed and breakfast in discharging our responsibilities towards homeless households and as such we operate a 'homeless at home' policy. Avoidance of the use of bed and breakfast is mainly due to the recognition of :

- the deleterious effect on the medium and long term health and educational attainment of families accommodated in it
- bed and breakfast is fundamentally expensive and poor value for money.

Hereward Housing Association maintain the housing needs register as part of the LSVT agreement. If people are accepted as homeless under the provisions of the 1996 Housing Act the authority nominate them to Hereward HA where they are given priority for housing.

We have reviewed and formalised our homelessness and housing advice policies and procedures, in line with good practice determined by the County Liaison Group and East Cambridgeshire's Best Value Strategy. A customer satisfaction survey on the housing advice service in 2000 indicated over 76% of service users were satisfied with the service provided.

Prevention of Homelessness

The main cause of homelessness in the District is relationship breakdown, followed by landlords serving lawful notices to terminate private tenancies. The authority continues to provide a high quality advice service to tenants and landlords and encourages and promotes use of the advice service through the Private Landlords Forum. The Council has produced a number of leaflets giving information on housing options for non-priority and intentionally homeless households and maintains a database of private landlords to assist in this.

Asylum Seekers

Early in 2001, the then DETR urged local authorities to respond to the growing need for housing for people seeking asylum in the UK. Authorities were urged to offer accommodation to the National Asylum Seekers Support Service (NASS) for people to be dispersed from London and Kent to other parts of the UK.

We worked with Hereward Housing Association to identify four properties that could be used by asylum seekers in East Cambridgeshire and offered these to NASS. However, since this offer of assistance NASS has only placed one household in East Cambridgeshire as the need has been met by the private sector in other parts of East Anglia.

Rent Deposit and Support Scheme

We provide funding for the provision of a rent deposit and support scheme for people who are homeless but not in priority need or who have been found as intentionally homeless under the Housing Act 1996. This service provides advice and practical support to ensure tenancies are successfully maintained. Wintercomfort for the Homeless provides this service.

OBJECTIVE 3
WORK IN PARTNERSHIP TO PROVIDE NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Tasks:

Review RSL competition and partnership arrangements by 2005.

Establish appropriate forms of ongoing liaison and consultation with key stakeholders, particularly RSLs, by 2003.

Actively encourage RSLs to participate fully in local strategies to promote social inclusion and sustainability.

Establish policies and procedures for issuing guidelines to RSLs on affordability and rent levels by 2004.

In 2002, we will promote at least one new RSL development which will act as a showcase, demonstrating how the environmental impact of housing can be minimised.

Participate in a corporate review of S106 procedures.

Establish local minimum scheme standards for new RSL development with particular emphasis on environmental performance.

Encourage RSLs to incorporate the Egan principles into new construction.

Best Value Review

The Council's Housing Best Value Review included consideration of its strategic and enabling role. A feature of this was a benchmarking exercise involving Bedford BC and the other Cambridgeshire housing authorities. This demonstrated some of the difficulties of making straight comparisons across different authorities, particularly in terms of costs, because of the differing nature and scope of the service provided. Nevertheless, a good deal of useful material emerged regarding good practice, and some of the findings are reflected in the Best Value Implementation Plan, attached at Appendix 1.

Partnership Arrangements

New development of affordable housing in the district is largely in the hands of 4 RSLs selected through a competitive exercise based on a wide range of performance factors. Whilst this has produced satisfactory outcomes, the Council needs to consider in due course whether this is the most effective way of securing genuine partnership working in the future.

Local RSLs are as a matter of course included where appropriate in discussions on the implementation of wider corporate strategies on, for instance, LA21, District Local Plan, Community Safety, Economic and Community Development and Community Planning.

This has been through different methods of consultation and will be reviewed in line with the Best Value Action Plan.

Development Priorities

East Cambridgeshire's approach to the assessment of housing need has been outlined above under Objective 1. Limited capital resources, combined with extensive new private housing development to meet the needs of a rapidly increasing population, make it inevitable that new affordable housing development will be concentrated on sites secured through S.106 arrangements, predominantly in Ely, Littleport and Soham. There are particular difficulties in the south of the district on the Cambridge fringe, where high land values and the presence of Green Belt make it more difficult to secure new social housing. Nevertheless, schemes are being progressed in Bottisham, Burwell and Swaffham Bulbeck, and further developments will be pursued where possible on an opportunistic basis. See Appendix 2 for the Capital Programme.

Rapidly rising house prices in most parts of the district have led to an upsurge in the demand for shared ownership housing, and such schemes are being developed in Ely, Burwell and Bottisham.

The Council recognises that there remain significant numbers of people whose needs will best be met by some form of supported housing. We have been involved with RSL partners in a project to provide floating support for tenants with relatively low-level mental health problems, and are supporting a new scheme in Littleport for people with learning disabilities. Clearly there are sometimes difficult choices to be made between the needs of different client groups; we acknowledge that in the future the prioritisation of bids for new investment in supported housing will increasingly be carried out on a county-wide basis under Supporting People arrangements, see Objective 6 below.

Environmental Impact

Consultation on the district's LA21 strategy revealed widespread concerns about the impact of housing and the built environment. There is continuing pressure from concerned residents within many village communities for the promotion of affordable housing, particularly starter homes for young people who would otherwise be forced to move elsewhere. Alongside these genuine concerns, NIMBY attitudes often co-exist. It also has to be recognised that many villages have lost key services such as post offices, grocery shops and bus services, and the promotion of new housing in these settlements is likely to be unsustainable.

Objectives 4 and 5 set out the extensive range of measures the Council has adopted to try to improve the energy efficiency and overall environmental performance of private housing in the district. As far as new housing is concerned, the Council supports the inclusion of demanding standards within the Building Regulations, and recognises that for social housing providers a wide range of measures is already included within the Housing Corporation's scheme development standards. Nevertheless, we believe that it is right to explore the possibility that Council activity can encourage further imaginative thinking on these issues, and raise awareness among both developers and the general public.

**OBJECTIVE 4
IMPROVE HOUSING CONDITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Tasks:

Carry out a house condition survey.

Continue to make disabled facilities grants available.

Continue to make Home Repair Assistance grants available.

Improve the time taken to process grant applications.

Pilot the new rating system from September 2001.

Implement the Housing Health and Safety Rating System into private sector inspection work by April 2002.

Develop and maintain grant policies in line with potential changes in legislative requirements.

Implement a housing enforcement policy in line with the enforcement concordat.

Introduce a proactive inspection programme for private sector landlords/HMOs, to be completed by 31.3.05, with programme for inspection implemented by 31.7.05.

Grants

The Council has successfully managed an annual grant budget of around £1 million for each of the past 6-7 years. The primary justification for public expenditure on the repair and renewal of privately owned housing is to help those in real need, who are unable to help themselves. The grant programme has also provided additional benefits for East Cambridgeshire, as it has provided work for the local building trade and retail activity for local suppliers of building materials. In addition, ensuring the housing stock is maintained has reduced demand on RSL accommodation.

The provision of discretionary and mandatory grant aid within East Cambridgeshire is now targeted to assist the elderly, disabled and those on low incomes, to live in accommodation suitable for their needs by improvement or adaptation.

The following table shows the number of grants approved between 1994 – 2000. This work has enabled people to remain in their own homes. The cost of these improvements in total is just over £5 million, of which £2.4 million was exchequer funding, the Council's contribution being the remaining £2.6 million. It is recognised that the quality of life for all recipients of grant aid is improved. The works implemented range from the provision of a ground floor bedroom and shower to enable a disabled person to live a more independent life, to the provision of energy efficiency measures to enable someone to live in a warm home.

YEAR	Renovation Grant	Disabled Facilities Grant	Minor Works Assistance	Home Repair Assistance	Houses in Multiple Occupation	COST £
1994/95	63	39	102	0	0	1,179,510
1995/96	75	21	112	0	0	1,000,959
1996/97	98	21	145	0	3	1,138,582
1997/98	53	43	0	62	0	791,080
1998/99	62	49	0	90	1	1,028,036
1999/2000	69	48	0	159	0	1,060,929
TOTAL	420	221	359	311	4	5,137,537

TYPES OF HOUSING GRANTS AND WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Disabled Facilities Grants

Available to help disabled people to return to, or remain in their own homes. To provide the necessary adaptation to allow relatives to care for a disabled child /adult in their home.

Home Repair Assistance

This grant enables the elderly, those on low income and the disabled to access money to carry out small but essential works to their homes which ensure that they live in a house suitable for their needs. The work ranges from the provision of security measures to replacing broken irreparable boilers. The grant is up to the value of £5000 and enables work to be carried out quickly.

Renovation Grant

To make unfit properties fit this grant is means tested, therefore ensuring grant aid goes to those families most in need.

This grant remains a key tool to encourage the improvement of the housing stock within the District. The house condition survey carried out in 1995 concluded that the authority had high levels of unfitnes especially within the older housing stock. The authority has a statutory responsibility to deal with unfitnes, and renovation grants provide the means for the elderly and vulnerable to carry out essential repairs.

Renovation Grant (Energy efficiency)

This grant enables those on low incomes, but not on benefit, to obtain grant aid to improve the energy efficiency of their properties and reduce fuel poverty. This grant is means tested therefore providing grant aid to those most in need.

This grant provides the Council with the ability to implement both the Home Energy Conservation Strategy and the Fuel Poverty Strategy. The provision of this grant enables low-income families both young and old to live in warmer homes and be able to afford to heat them. As a consequence of this it is also contributing to the reduction in pollution, and fits in with the aims of the LA 21 Strategy.

Landlord Grants

To provide grant aid to improve the condition of rented accommodation, with emphasis on improvement of energy efficiency and the health and safety of the tenants. (Max grant £7000.)

This grant is subject to an assessment on increased rent by the County rent officer.

The house condition survey in 1995 highlighted the private rented sector as an area where unfitness was very high. The availability of a restricted amount of grant aid is designed to encourage landlords to invest in their own property and to ensure that tenants live in suitable accommodation.

House in Multiple Occupation Grants

To provide assistance to improve the health and safety of occupants through measures such as fire safety, provision of adequate amenities etc. This grant is subject to an assessment by the rent officer, and therefore encourages landlords to invest in their own property. Discretionary funding is limited to a maximum allocation within the overall capital budget of £20,000. The number of grants applied for in this area is low. However the continued provision of this type of accommodation within the district is essential. This low rent accommodation is required to house young single people, but due to the nature of the accommodation it is vital that fire safety measures are adequate.

Common Parts Grants

This grant can help to improve the health and safety of tenants living in multi-occupied houses by ensuring that access routes and communal areas are maintained to a satisfactory standard.

Conversion Grants

This is the provision of grant aid for conversion of flats over shops and large units into small one-bed units in certain areas of the district. Priority is given to properties in Soham, Littleport, Ely and Burwell.

This grant attracts a max grant of £10,000 per unit. This is subject to a max grant of £25,000 for up to 3 units in one property.

Where properties are being turned into bedsits the max grant per unit is £8,000. This is subject to a max grant of £24,000 per property.

These grants were considered when looking at housing needs within the district, as it became apparent that single people and young couples with low incomes were finding it difficult to find accommodation. There were also a number of unused buildings such as rooms over shops, which provided space in town centres, which could be utilised as accommodation. Discretionary funding for this type of grant is limited to a maximum allocation within the overall capital budget.

Forthcoming Proposals

Changes to grant policies will be considered in the light of future House Condition Survey results and as the result of forthcoming legislative changes.

In March 2001 the Government set out its proposals for reforming the legislation governing private sector housing renewal in England and Wales.

The reforms are set to remove many of the detailed provisions that govern the way local housing authorities carry out housing renewal, replacing them with a power to provide financial and other assistance for home repair and improvement. Furthermore the proposals aim to:

- Bring authorities' powers to give grants, loans and other forms of financial assistance for home improvement together within the same legal framework;
- Enable authorities to help disabled people meet their contributions towards the cost of adaptations;
- Enable authorities to help people with the cost of buying another property where this is a better option than improving or adapting their own home.

Authorities are to have the power to perform means tests and to set conditions for assistance, in order to help target resources effectively. Although the Council has been in a strong financial situation in the past this level of spending will not be sustained. The emphasis of strategy and housing renewal will be on the most effective use of resources, by local authorities addressing the specific needs of the area and targeting assistance to those most at risk from poor quality housing. Options to run alongside and complement the grant system will be for the Council to look at alternative ways of funding improvements e.g. the provision of interest free loans and working in partnership with local lending institutions.

In 1998 the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions commissioned the development of a new Housing Health and Safety Rating System to replace the current Housing Fitness Standard. The development was completed in May 2000 and the system was released for implementation by local authorities from July 2000 onwards. Most local authorities are in the early stages of development of their inspection systems as the results of early testing of the hand held computers designed for this purpose have been awaited. The principle behind the Rating System is that a dwelling, including the structure, the means of access, any associated outbuildings and garden, yard or other amenity space, should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and any visitors. To satisfy this principle a dwelling should be free from unnecessary and avoidable hazards and where hazards are unavoidable they should be made as safe as reasonably possible. The Rating System is designed to rate the severity of hazards.

Housing Enforcement

The house condition survey highlighted the poor condition of the private rented sector, the problem being exacerbated by the high number of tied cottages in the district. The decline in the farming industry has hit some farmers in this area leaving them in a poor financial position, and making it hard to maintain their rented houses, especially with the restrictions a tied cottage brings.

The Landlord Forum has provided a platform to educate landlords, and offer advice on the availability of grant aid not only from the Council, but also through other Government funds

As noted previously the Council has in the past been able to promote and support improvements to the private rented sector through its grant budget due to its strong

financial situation following LSVT. With the expected reduced level of finance available in future years the emphasis of the strategy will need to change from a grant based reactive landlord service to a programmed inspection and proactive enforcement service, which will impact on landlords. They may need to find alternative ways of funding maintenance of their properties.

The licensing of HMOs has been discussed at length. At present the proposals do not appear to be high on the political agenda. This authority does not have a large number of HMOs, but consideration needs to be given to increasing the priority of inspections of landlord properties including HMOs in the light of national decisions.

**OBJECTIVE 5
PROMOTE HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING ENVIRONMENTS**

Tasks:

Secure continued funding of Care and Repair through partnership working to be in place by September 2001.

Support Care and Repair in establishing a Handy Person Service.

Review caravan site licence conditions.

Reduce the void rate of pitches on the Council's authorised sites by 5% per year.

Continue to support the Walk Tall, Don't Fall project.

Health and Energy Advice and Referral Team (HEART) to be operational by April 2002.

Carry out a survey to identify the level of energy efficiency in East Cambridgeshire.

Promote high efficiency boilers to both installers and residents.

Ensure the public is kept aware of the importance of energy efficiency by public events and presentations to community groups.

Care and Repair

Care and Repair East Cambridgeshire was set up 6 years ago with joint finance from East Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire Social Services and the then Cambridge and Huntingdon Health Authority. The agreement for joint finance included a commitment from the Council to progressively increase its funding over a four-year period from 1998 to 2001. In addition, various Registered Social Landlords have made funding contributions to the Agency.

The Agency was established when it became apparent that a number of people, especially the elderly, were not using the grant system. Applying for a grant, contacting builders, applying for planning permission and building regulations can seem a daunting task. Care and Repair was set up to help those groups of people who needed supporting through the system or identify funding from alternative sources if the client is not eligible for grant aid. The Agency will ensure that clients are claiming benefits they are entitled to. These additions to the service on offer have helped the Council target its resources and grant money more effectively.

Cambridgeshire Social Services and the District Council recognise the significant contribution Care and Repair has made over the last six years. From Social Services' point of view, this is not only reflected in the range and volume of work that has been undertaken, but particularly through the way in which occupational therapists and other social services staff are linked into the Agency. Occupational therapists are one of the highest sources of referrals to the Agency and now consider it as one of the key elements of community care in East Cambridgeshire.

The Agency makes a significant contribution to the housing options for people in the District through enabling disabled and elderly people and those on low incomes, to maintain, adapt and improve their homes. The policies adopted by the Council tie in closely with the client group of Care and Repair. Current proposals include development of a handyperson scheme to provide repairs and adaptations in the homes of those at risk.

Licensed Caravan Sites

The Council carried out a risk assessment exercise on the caravan sites in the area. These range from individually owned sites with one or two vans to sites with 60-70 vans. The risk-based assessment was carried out in an effort to target resources in areas most needed. Officers in the domestic team were required to inspect sites on a six monthly basis; this was proving too difficult. The sites are now inspected in order of priority. Any complaints regarding site licence conditions are dealt with within the service level agreement response time.

Travellers

The Council manages traveller sites at Burwell, Earith Bridge and Wentworth - a total of 29 pitches. All three sites contain a high level of occupancy, very settled residents, and very little turn over within the past two years.

Count of Travellers in East Cambridgeshire - DLTR

Date	Number of Adults	Number under age 17	Total	% under 17
Jan 1997	175	142	317	44
Jan 1998	209	102	311	32

Jan 1999	209	115	324	35
Jan 2000	177	101	278	36
Jan 2001	190	109	299	36

The number of travellers under 17 remains high although there has been a reduction over the past five years. The Council continues to consider the implications of these figures within its wider review of the accommodation needs of younger people in the District.

Unauthorised Encampments

During the year April – March 2001 officers have called on 56 unauthorised encampments containing approximately 740 persons.

The pattern of unauthorised encampments appears to be changing. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of large groups of 10 or more caravans turning up in the District. These are usually travellers who are not indigenous to the area but are either looking for somewhere to stay for a short while before moving off to another county or who want a base for a few weeks while they are working in the area (usually self employed).

The Traveller Liaison Officer makes at least an initial visit to all known unauthorised encampments and works with the landowner who is responsible for applying to the courts for a possession order. Although the legal process requires certain investigations in some cases before a court order can be granted, the general experience in the District is that most travellers do move on before this process has been fully implemented.

A recent new development has been the emergence of boat dwellers requiring long term moorings. There are issues here regarding a different form of unauthorised encampments as well as needing to address the accommodation requirements of this small group of around 6 – 8 families.

Accommodation for Travellers.

Liaison continues between Hereward Housing Association, the Council's Housing Service and the Travellers Liaison Officer to ensure resettled travellers maintain successful tenancies

Regular consultation takes place over individual travellers who apply or wish to apply for housing with in many cases the Travellers Liaison Officer acting as the contact between the Housing Association and the traveller family.

Healthy Homes

The authority work in partnership with a County wide group under the Health Improvement Programme (HImP) to tackle a number of priority areas where a significant contribution can be made towards improving health standards. A sub-group has been established to focus on Healthy Homes, and develop proposals to improve energy efficiency, reduce accidents in the home and encourage doctors to 'prescribe' improvements in a patient's accommodation, where appropriate, particularly in relation to children and older people. We will continue to work with this group, in accordance with the East Cambridgeshire Joint Health Improvement Plan to tackle housing related health issues.

'Improving your health, improving your quality of life' - The East Cambridgeshire Health Improvement Plan - is a joint initiative between the District Council and the Primary Care Group. Local initiatives include the Walk Tall, Don't Fall project, a multi-agency project being led by East Cambridgeshire Primary Care Group which provides information packs and talks on falls prevention to individuals and groups around the district. The project recently won an award for best practice in the National Service Framework for Older People.

Recommendations for future action based on evidence of effectiveness

- The development of home safety inspections and home maintenance schemes
- Flexibility of design of new housing to meet needs of occupants throughout their lives e.g. level thresholds, wider doorways, ground floor toilets etc
- Provision of information and advice to older people's groups, through pre-retirement courses and other information routes so that older people are aware of the potential changes and effects of ageing in relation to future housing needs
- Provision of information and advice to families on safety in the home
- Introduction of low cost safety equipment schemes including lithium battery long life smoke alarms,
- Improvement of play areas
- New homes and communities should be planned and designed to incorporate safety features. This should also apply to homes being upgraded e.g. hard wiring in smoke detectors.
- Develop initiatives to address security in the home

Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

Under the Local Agenda 21 Strategy and the Home Energy Conservation Act of 1995 (HECA), the Council has a responsibility to promote sustainable development. The Government has made a commitment to the reduction of Carbon Dioxide emissions by 30% by the year 2010. Environmental management in general and energy efficiency in particular can save money and can also make a significant contribution to protecting the environment. Under the Home Energy Conservation Act, the Council is required to submit an annual report on the percentage improvement in energy efficiency of domestic premises within the district resulting from the installation of energy efficiency measures such as insulation and through education.

Please see the East Cambridgeshire District Council HECA Strategy for more details.

District-Wide Energy Efficiency Survey

This project is designed to provide information on the level of energy efficiency in homes across East Cambridgeshire. It is a partnership project with the Anglia West Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEAC) based in Peterborough. The survey commenced in September 2000 and is scheduled to run for a three-year period. Information provided by the householder is analysed by the EEAC and used to create a clear picture of the level of insulation, age and type of heating systems in use in the area, and is used to develop targeted energy efficiency promotion schemes.

Central Heating Installers Partnership Scheme (CHIPS)

The information gleaned from the district survey project since its launch in September 2000 shows that more than half of the boilers currently in use in the East Cambridgeshire district are over 10 years of age. They are therefore rapidly reducing in efficiency and increasing in CO₂ emissions.

The CHIPS scheme has been proven to encourage local installers to recommend the use of high efficiency boilers. It is therefore proposed that the scheme will be replicated in East Cambridgeshire to address the issues of the ageing population of boilers in the area. The scheme proposal already has the support of Hereward Housing Association in terms of their schedule of works for the coming years to ensure that any boiler replacements will be done using high efficiency boilers.

Public Events and Presentations to Community Groups

The Home Energy Conservation Officer regularly holds or participates in public events and visits local community groups to give presentations on energy efficiency. This enables the dissemination of information to residents across the district and provides the opportunity for residents to find out more about energy efficiency and the grants available. Further information on future events is available on the East Cambridgeshire District Council website.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is recognised nationally as the requirement to spend more than 10% of disposable income on heating in order to maintain ambient temperatures of at least 18°C.

The most vulnerable groups are those with a low level of income, the elderly and young children. It is often the case that those most at risk live in poorer quality housing. Figures from the Office of National Statistics show that there are approximately 20-50,000 excess deaths in winter compared to the rest of the year (additional number of deaths over what would normally be expected). The major difference in the winter mortality rates has been attributed to the poorer quality of housing in Britain, the lack of insulation and inefficient heating systems.

Please see the East Cambridgeshire District Council Affordable Warmth Strategy for further details.

Health and Energy Advice and Referral Team (HEART)

HEART is a new project to develop a referral network to provide access to information and grants. Particular emphasis will be placed on identifying and assisting those most at risk of fuel poverty.

The authority will work in partnership with the Primary Care Group, Care and Repair and housing providers to ensure that staff from all professions recognise the indicators of fuel poverty and can assist clients in combating fuel poverty and accessing affordable warmth.

**OBJECTIVE 6
WORK TOWARDS MEETING THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE
IN THE COMMUNITY**

Tasks:

Participate fully and actively in the preparation and implementation of the Supporting People arrangements.

Continue to support the County Supported Housing Strategy.

Continue to support SHIP in assessing supported housing need and developing appropriate methods of gathering information.

Ensure an appropriate model of supported accommodation is available to teenage parents by 2003.

Support the East Cambridgeshire Domestic Violence Forum.

Supporting People

Implementation budgets for Supporting People have been pooled in Cambridgeshire and the authority is a partner in the County wide inter agency working groups who are steering the implementation team in successfully preparing for the new arrangements in 2003. This has mainly focussed on the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme and monitoring of payments and the supply and needs mechanisms which are necessary in preparation for the changes.

Supported Housing Information Project (SHIP)

This project is a multi agency partnership between housing, health and social services which covers Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This project carries out work on the need for new supported housing development and has been fundamental in the run up to Supporting People. We continue to support SHIP and the work it carries out on forecasting future need for supported housing across all client groups throughout the County.

This has been particularly successful in establishing a floating support service for people with mental health problems in conjunction with North Rural Mental Health Team, Hereward Housing Association and Granta Housing Society.

The authority also works with the other districts on the County Supported Housing Strategy. The aims of this are to:

- Jointly promote and support independent living
- Provide a full and flexible range of housing and support
- Enable individuals' needs and housing aspirations to be consistently identified and addressed

- Enable information about met and unmet needs to be collated as the basis for better planning

Teenage Pregnancy

Figures for teenage pregnancy in East Cambridgeshire have traditionally been low but recent figures are showing that this trend is changing and pregnancy figures for young people over sixteen are increasing. To date little is known about housing need and support required for young mothers over 16 years of age and no data has been collected on the housing needs of this group unless they have suffered homelessness. Guidance in the National Teenage Pregnancy Strategy states that:

'By 2003, all under 18 teenage lone parents who cannot live with family or partner should be placed in supervised semi-independent housing with support'. 'Housing authorities will audit provision and need in their areas, and the guidance on the Housing Investment Programme and the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme will provide the framework for the capital funding necessary to provide for unmet need.'

A small amount of funding is now available to undertake a housing needs analysis for young lone parents and it is anticipated that a short research project will be carried out in Autumn 2001 in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland.

Relationship Breakdown and Domestic Violence

The largest proportion of people who approach the authority for advice or to make an application as homeless do so because of relationship breakdown. Of these, the number of cases involving domestic violence continues to increase. Although there is currently no refuge in East Cambridgeshire, there is provision in the surrounding districts of Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire and plans for a scheme in Fenland. The possible need for such a facility in East Cambridgeshire is under review and will be discussed with the Supporting People Implementation Team as part of their work on the analysis of supported housing need.

We shall continue to work within the County Multi-Agency Forum for Domestic Violence. This has established a local Domestic Violence Forum to serve the rural areas of East Cambridgeshire and Fenland. East Cambridgeshire District Council support this proposal and have a proactive involvement in the forum and support its work in raising awareness of the issues, co-ordinating the multi agency response to domestic violence and improving and co-ordinating the support networks available to victims. Future priorities of the Forum include joint training of front line staff to improve understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Learning Disabilities

Along with Cambridgeshire Social Services we have identified a need for a supported living project for people with learning disabilities in Littleport. We are committed to working with an RSL partner in meeting this need.

**OBJECTIVE 7
METHODICALLY APPLY THE PRINCIPLES OF BEST VALUE AND
ENCOURAGE GREATER PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE CULTURE OF OUR
HOUSING SERVICE**

Tasks:

Implement the Best Value Action Plan.

Work with the Housing Inspectorate to critically assess the service and plan for continuous improvement.

Consult caravan park operators and residents on satisfaction with the service.

Continue to assess the satisfaction of users of the homelessness service.

Develop the Council web site to increase the information available to service users and assess the scope for greater use of information technology to deliver housing services.

Best Value

The review process commenced in May 2000 and led to the publication of the report and Improvement Plan in January 2001. The review incorporated all the Council's housing functions, i.e. those enabling functions located within Strategic Housing, and the private sector housing service within Environmental Health.

The Best Value Review has proved to be an unprecedented opportunity to consider the range of housing functions we perform, the ways we carry them out and the effectiveness with which we make use of the resources available. A case has been made for suggesting that, in terms of cost effectiveness, we provide a remarkably economical service.

Customer Satisfaction

Measuring customer satisfaction within the housing service will develop further in response to the Best Value agenda. As part of the Review, we carried out a satisfaction survey of users of the housing advice service. We will be developing an on going satisfaction monitoring mechanism in due course to assist with the continuous improvement process.

Access to Information

As discussed earlier, East Cambridgeshire is a diverse district with areas of relative affluence and pockets of poverty and deprivation. Poor transport networks disable some members of the community from fully accessing all Council services. We will be developing the Council web site and information on housing services alongside the new rural IT access points the Council Council is developing in the context of the Cambridgeshire Community Network.

OBJECTIVE 8**PROMOTE SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES IN LINE WITH EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S CORPORATE OBJECTIVES****Tasks:**

Use the LA21 principles as overarching themes throughout the work of housing services.

Contribute to the Economic and Community Development Strategy and the Local Strategic Plan.

Participate in a comprehensive survey of High/New Barns residents to identify the social, economic and housing needs of the community.

Work with partner agencies to address the identified needs of the High/New Barns community.

Social Inclusion

Our development partners have all been required to demonstrate a commitment to promoting the wider well-being of their tenants and residents, and the promotion of healthy and sustainable communities. Examples of existing activities in which they are involved include the provision of community transport, credit facilities for people on low incomes and other Housing Plus initiatives.

We broadly welcome the emphasis placed by DTLR and the Housing Corporation on bearing down on rent levels, and recognise the prescriptive nature of the provisions within which social housing providers now have to operate. Nevertheless, we feel the need for a deeper understanding of the impact of differing rent levels on households on low incomes within the district, and recognise that further research is necessary in this area. This work will inevitably form a contribution to wider research being carried out in the context of the emerging Community Plan.

High/New Barns, Ely

A multi-agency task group has been meeting to consider in a holistic way the needs of this area. Most of the properties on the estate are owned by Hereward Housing Association, so clearly the association is a key player. The group was formed after concerns were raised about the conjunction within the estate of relatively high indices of deprivation, and repeated complaints to the Police and to Hereward about vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Initial feedback from both residents and those working in the area suggested that the estate's problems were complex and interlinked, and that success would depend on implementing an initial phase of capacity building within the local community. It has therefore been agreed to carry out a wide-ranging residents' survey to gain a wider understanding of the area's socio-economic,

environmental and housing needs. Following this an action plan will be drawn up in consultation with residents, including specific objectives and tasks directed towards promoting both physical improvements and social inclusion. The possibility of a local lettings policy for the estate is also being considered. Early successes have included the establishment for the first time of a successful neighbourhood watch group.

The creation of a multi-agency task group committed to working alongside local residents, and to pooling resources in pursuit of common objectives, is seen as a key step forward. Whilst significant levels of deprivation tend to be concentrated within restricted areas, we feel strongly that the experience will enable the lessons learned here to be replicated in other parts of the district where similar circumstances exist.

BV ACTION PLAN – STRATEGIC AND ENABLING, HOMELESSNESS and HOUSING ADVICE, and PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

Year 1 = 2001/02
 Year 2 = 2002/03
 Year 3 = 2003/04
 Year 4 = 2004/05
 Year 5 = 2005/06

Task	Year	Assumptions/Constraints	Targets and PI
Participate in corporate review of S.106 policies and procedures.	1	Co-operation of other services, particularly Planning and Legal.	To be completed by 31.3.02.
Review procedures, standard letters and forms and produce workflow chart	1	Volume of presentations	To be completed by 31.3.02.
Work with Care & Repair management committee on potential future partnerships and funding arrangements	1	Best Value Review on Grants outcome	To be completed by 31.3.02.
Undertake a review of the rent deposit guarantee scheme	1	Input from Wintercomfort, South Cambs DC, Uttlesford DC and Cambridge CC. Outcome of Best Value Review of Grants	To be completed by 31.3.02.
Introduce homelessness appointment system	1	Availability of IT system and demand for housing assistance	By 31.3.02., 95% of applicants to be seen within 4 working hours of first enquiry at office
Increase number of properties surveyed for energy efficiency.	1	Working in conjunction with Energy advice centre	50 to be carried out annually
Establish appropriate forms of ongoing liaison and consultation with key stakeholders, particularly RSLs.	2	Requires discussion with Members and RSLs.	
Carry out House Condition survey	2	Budget issues	To be tendered by July 2002; completion of survey and report to Members by Jan 2003
Specify IT requirements	2		
Benchmark processes with Babergh	2	Volume of presentations	
Implement housing enforcement	2	To be agreed by Members	

policy in line with enforcement concordat			
Remodel new block at Littleport hostel to provide discrete single persons accommodation	2	Subject to ECDC Capital programme – cost £3K	To be completed by 30.6.02
Complete preparations for implementing “Supporting People”.	2	Joint working with other Cambridgeshire authorities; liaison with Members on local policy implications.	To be completed by 31.3.03.
Establish policies and procedures for issuing guidelines to RSLs on affordability and rent levels.	3	Links with other corporate work on social exclusion.	
Establish local minimum scheme standards for new RSL development, with particular emphasis on environmental performance.	3	Member approval; possible increase in grant requirement per unit.	
Research methods of improving knowledge of local housing needs.	3	Possible resource implications; links with other work on e.g. social exclusion.	
Consult caravan park operators and residents on satisfaction with service	3	Act on any issues raised in consultation	To be completed by 31.3.04.
Review RSL competition/partnership arrangements.	4	Requires discussion with Members.	
Review caravan site licence conditions	4	Consultation with site owners, working with other local authorities to provide consistency	To be completed by 31.3.05., implementation by 30.9.05.
Introduce proactive inspection programme for private sector landlords/HMOs	4	Possible resource implication	To be completed by 31.3.05., with programme for inspection implemented by 31.7.05.
Market test Housing Advice with CAB	5		
Market test Homelessness with HHA	5		
Participate in implementation of supporting people	3-5		
Through continuous improvement reduce the % of homeless investigations still outstanding after 33 working days	5	IT workflow software	By the end of Year 5, 95% of homelessness investigations to be completed within 33 working days
Run annual focus group with homeless applicants	1-5		
Maintain rolling satisfaction survey	1-5		

Corporate Objectives

Statement of Overall Purpose:

The Council aims to provide quality services and to work in partnership with the local community, to protect, enhance and develop the quality of life and environmental sustainability.

Environment and Transport:

To promote an accessible, integrated and affordable transport system that reduces its impact on the environment

To encourage the reduction in the use of finite resources and the reduction of pollution to the natural environment

To protect and enhance the wealth of wildlife and to maintain and improve access to the natural environment and awareness of it.

To promote safe healthy living and create opportunities for people to eat fresh, local food

Strategic Development and Housing:

To conserve the distinctive character of the built and natural environment, to involve the local community in planning decisions, and to manage development whilst extending the provision of affordable housing.

To create a safer environment where people can live and work free from crime and the fear of crime

Economic and Community Development:

To encourage a varied and dynamic local economy, which does not harm and seeks to improve the environment, offers quality employment and training opportunities, and secures the vitality and viability of our towns and villages

To foster a unified, participating and informed community.

To promote opportunities for sports and leisure, and to promote tourism.

Personnel and Administration:

To invest and motivate our staff to maximise their knowledge, skills, commitment and morale.

To promote accessible, speedy and open decision making conducted to the highest standards of probity.

To promote equal access to service delivery through the activities of licensing, regulation and enforcement under a variety of legislation intended to safeguard the rights of the individual and to protect public health and the environment.

To promote equal opportunity in the employment of staff and the delivery of services.

Information Technology and Resources:

To ensure the adequate funding of services through the effective and efficient use of resources.

To improve access to information and services through the effective use of IT within local communities.

To ensure the Council and its staff takes full advantage of IT to provide better and more efficient services.

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

AC: Audit Commission

ACRE: Action with Communities in Rural England

ADP: Approved Development Programme

Affordable housing: rented, shared accommodation or low cost market housing developed and preserved for people who are otherwise unable to purchase on the open market.

Benchmarking: comparing the relative performance of different agencies on comparable activities

Best Value: regime to ensure accountability and effectiveness of local authority services

Cambridgeshire Supported Housing Information Project (Cambs SHIP): organisation which seeks to identify provision and need for specialised housing within Cambridgeshire

Care in the Community: the provision of services, support and equipment to people who need help to be able to live as independently as possible in their own homely setting in a local community

Common Housing Register: a list of housing applicants for social housing, used by a number of RSLs to fill vacant properties

County Structure Plan: this is developed by the county planning authority and sets out details of strategic policies for the county over a 15 year period.

County-Wide Supported Housing Strategy: joint approach between housing, health and social services towards housing aspects of care in the community

Crime & Disorder Act: legislation imposing community safety duties on local authorities

DFG: Disabled Facilities Grant

DTLR: Department of Transport Local Government And The Regions the central government department responsible for housing issues

HEES: the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme, introduced to provide grants for low income households for, for example, loft insulation, draught proofing and basic energy advice, extended in 1994 to include many disabled people and all people aged 60 and over.

HHA: Hereward Housing Association

HImP: Health Improvement Programme

HIP: Housing Investment Programme

HMO: House in Multiple Occupation, a property divided into a number of rooms or bedsits let on separate tenancies

Homebuy: a scheme started in 1999 (replacing the former Tenant Incentive Scheme) to provide a cash sum for those tenants wishing to purchase a private home. The property the

tenant vacates must be let to a household in priority need for rehousing.

Housing Capital Programme: a list of new housing projects planned, including costs and a timetable for achieving them.

Housing Corporation: a government organisation which monitors, supervises, advises and provides funding for RSL's

Housing Plus: activities contributing to the wider social and economic well-being of communities.

HRA: Housing Repairs Assistance

Landlords Forum: a meeting of all private sector landlords in the District to discuss issues of concern or interest.

Local Agenda 21 (LA21): local strategy to promote environmental awareness.

Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG): grant similar to Social Housing Grant but paid by the local authority and subject to Housing Corporation requirements.

Local Plan: this is developed by East Cambridgeshire District Council and sets out the policies applied to the use and development of land in the District.

LSVT Authorities: those local authorities which have made a large scale transfer of their housing stock to a RSL.

MWA: Minor Works Assistance

Performance Standards: targets against which to measure organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

Registered Social Landlords (RSLs): non-profit making voluntary group, generally a housing association, formed to provide affordable housing and run by a management committee.

S106 Agreement: a legal planning obligation placed on a private developer to secure additional requirements of the authority in relation to a given site, such as the provision of affordable or open space.

Shared Ownership: a method of acquiring a legal interest in their home by people who cannot afford to buy on the open market.

The occupier buys a share in the property, usually between 25% and 75% and the remainder is generally held by a RSL

Social Housing Grant: grant paid by the Housing Corporation to RSLs to fund housing development.

Social Housing: housing managed by RSLs providing homes for rent or shared ownership in perpetuity for people on low incomes

Special Needs Housing Register: a list of applicants in need of social housing and who require additional support of some form.

Statutory Homeless: households who are accepted by the authority for rehousing and defined as being in 'priority need' and not intentionally homeless under the terms of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII. These are families with (or expecting) children, elderly people or people with a mental or physical disability.