

Report to:
**HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THURSDAY 15
 AUGUST 2002**
EXECUTIVE BOARD MONDAY 19 AUGUST 2002

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE 2002

<p>Report of: <i>Business Manager, Strategic Policy and Research</i></p>	<p>WARDS AFFECTED: ALL</p>
<p>Report Author: <i>David Hill, Business Manager, Strategic Policy and Research</i></p> <p>Lead Member Responsible: <i>Cllr Val Smith</i></p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Responsibility: <i>Housing</i></p> <p>Key Decision: <i>Yes</i></p>	
<p>SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>In July 2001 the City Council published its Local Housing Strategy (LHS) for the period 2002 - 2004. This strategy set out a number of actions across all forms of tenure and was submitted, together with the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to the Government Office for the South East.</p> <p>The Council is required to submit an annual update of the LHS and it is that document, attached to this report, which the Executive Board is asked to consider.</p> <p>The LHS has been reviewed and updated with the participation of relevant Business Units. Tenant Forums have been consulted through a workshop held on 7th August.</p> <p>Although the LHS sets out actions housing in all forms of tenure it does also provide essential context for the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan which was first published in 2001. The review and update of the HRA Business Plan is presented elsewhere on this Executive Board's agenda.</p> <p>The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Board are both asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommend to Council that the Local Housing Strategy Update 2002 be approved and submitted to GOSE. 	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The LHS is a strategy for all housing tenures in Oxford and is intended to reflect the need to separate the Council's strategic housing role from its landlord function which is contained in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
- 1.2. In large part the LHS is a response to meeting the Decent Homes Standard for all housing within ten years. (A summary of the Decent Homes standard is appended to the report on the HRA Business Plan elsewhere on this Board's agenda.) The LHS sets targets and commitments over the strategy period, 2001 - 2004 to be met across all tenures.
- 1.3. Along with other local authorities the Council is required to submit an annual review and update of its LHS to the Government Office for the South East.
- 1.4. The LHS submitted last year, together with HRA Business Plan, Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan Submission for 2002/03, influenced the Basic Credit Approval (BCA) for the City Council in 2002/03.
- 1.5. Whilst the overall assessment of the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan was "average" there were significant areas for improvement identified. Subsequent discussions with GOSE officials have confirmed the strength of their concerns, particularly relating to the lack of clarity on current stock condition and progress towards Decent Homes Standards. The HRA Submission for 2003/04 will clearly be expected to address these identified weaknesses. A clear concern for the Housing Strategy was the lack of timescales and responsibility for delivery. These have both been addressed in the strategy update.

2. PROPOSED SUBMISSION

- 2.1. Attached as Appendix 1 is the draft Local Housing Strategy. It has been produced with the input of a number of the Council's HRA Business Units.
- 2.2. The deadline for submission was 31 July 2002 but major staffing constraints have prevented us from hitting this deadline. GOSE have, however, agreed to accept this draft (sent to them on 31 July 2002) in advance of the formally approved version following Council on 22 August 2002 in recognition of our current difficulties.

- 2.3. The draft incorporates the comments made by Tenant Forum at a workshop held on 07 August for consultation on the HRA Business Plan and to introduce the Housing Strategy update. Appendix 2 lists the issues that they raised at the event in response to both documents.
- 2.4. As has been stated above, the major weakness with the strategy as submitted last year was the lack of timescales and responsibilities detailed within the action plan. This has been addressed and will allow for better monitoring and review of progress.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY: THE HOUSING
PROTFOLIO HOLDER

Background papers:

None



OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

(DRAFT)

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE 2002

July 2002

OXFORD: LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY UP DATE 2001-2004

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FOREWORD

This document up-dates Oxford's local housing strategy for the period 2001 - 2004. The strategy was developed last year against a background of considerable change and reflects the need to separate the Council's strategic housing role from its landlord function which is contained in our housing business plan and published separately. The strategy is forward-looking and sets targets and commitments over the strategy period.

This strategy up-date provides an interim progress statement. In particular it:-

- Outlines key changes in 2001/02 which affect the way Oxford City Council works
- Up-dates key statistics in the Oxford housing profile
- Reviews progress in achieving the housing strategy Key goals and proposes minor changes to the those goals to reflect current needs
- Identifies new challenges not evident when the plan was first published

THE STRATEGIC HOUSING ACTION PLAN KEY GOALS

The **Strategic Housing Action Plan** for 2001 - 2004 (as previously published) has been up-dated and some of the priorities reformulated. Significantly, time-scales and responsibility have been added in order to better monitor and review our progress. The action plan can be found in appendix A

Whilst still reflecting the original tasks, the reformulated action plan acknowledges that housing issues are not a static. The implementation of Supporting People has now reached a critical point and all housing related business units are working flat out to make this work. Likewise the research aspect of our work has been given prominence in order to fulfil strategic responsibilities such as the Decent Homes Standard and the new Local Plan.

Partnership working remains core to our business and we will continue to develop and sustain this work in its many aspects. Significantly the provision of social housing remains a very high priority.

THE PARTNERSHIP CHARTER

We have strengthened consultation through the establishment of the **Strategic Housing in Oxford Partnership (SHOP)** in January 2001 and formally launched at the Housing Strategy seminar on 14th June 2001. It is a partnership between the City Council, housing associations, The Health Authority, Oxford Primary Care Trust, Oxfordshire Social Services, the National Probation Service (Thames Valley) and the voluntary sector.

In parallel with the partnership we set up an inter-departmental **Housing Strategy Corporate Group** consisting of officers from Housing, Environmental Health, Planning and Economic Development and Regeneration departments.

SHOP has met regularly throughout the year to monitor and review the strategy and action plan. Attendance has been good from the Partners, but with key personnel changes in the City Council linked to its change management programme, it's potential has not yet been realised. Likewise the Corporate Group has yet to make an impact and fulfil its objectives.

Now that a stable corporate structure has been achieved these two groups will be in a position to carry forward their work of monitoring and reviewing the housing strategy and facilitating key actions

We currently work with neighbouring District Councils through the **Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Liaison Group** to identify and address cross-boundary issues. The work of this group needs to be strengthened and developed over the next year in order to address the pressing need for affordable housing across the region.

MODERNISING THE COUNCIL

The Council has modernised its structures through the setting up of an Executive Board and Scrutiny and Area Committees in October 2001(see appendix D - Oxford City Council's New Democratic Arrangements). The new Chief Executive has consulted staff on re-structuring the Council to reflect the new political structure. A new management structure was approved in July 2001. Within this structure, there will be clear separation of the strategic housing role from the landlord function with a new Strategic Policy and Research section located within the Chief Executive's Department.

Over the strategy period, we will consider the need to develop local Area Housing Strategies, within the context of the overall city-wide strategy and noting cross-boundary issues. The Council's Tenant Support Worker is working with tenants to explore the relationship of Tenant Forums to the new area committees.

Changes in management and business structure over the last year

The Council has changed from a 'Departmental' structure to one based on 23 Business Units each of which is held within one of three Strategic Directorates. The principal "housing" Business Units, Housing Management, Oxford Building Solutions and Neighbourhood Renewal, are now located in the Housing, Health & Community Directorate with a view to improved 'joined-up-working'.

The new corporate management structure has a Strategic Management Board made up of the Chief Executive, the three Directors & the Strategic and Corporate Business Unit managers who are there to support corporate decision making by the Council's Executive Board. The Corporate Management Group made up of the Strategic Management Board and all the Business Unit managers meets bi-monthly to discuss and decide upon corporate issues.

The Council's approach to Best Value has been fundamentally reviewed and identified key areas to address and develop a performance culture (the latest Best Value Performance Plan 02/03 is published separately). The new political and management structures have developed the Council's business planning framework to set and achieve corporate strategic objectives in line with the strategic vision for the City. Within this framework individual service based strategies and statutory plans are linked to strategic aims and corporate targets. A diagram of "How the Corporate Management Works" is at appendix E

Each of the new "housing" Business Units have also gone through a restructuring exercise which began with the introduction of business planning last autumn. All Business Units produced draft plans which underpinned their working arrangements

and objectives in the short and long term and formed the basis of budget setting for 2002-3. These business plans are now in the process of being updated with the feed-in of manifesto commitments from the new administration & early plans for budget setting for 2003-4. (See appendix C - "How Housing business planning works" & appendix F - "How Housing Works").

Democratic Framework

The Council has adopted a "Leader and Cabinet" political structure from October 2001. The new decision making structure has four key elements:

- The Executive Board: a cabinet of councillors and a leader responsible for providing a clear & accountable leadership
- Six local Area Committees: designed to increase the local perspective in decision making
- Full Council of Members: decides on policies, budgets for local areas & elects the executive
- Overview & Scrutiny Committees (including: a new Housing O&SC from 1 May 02): examine and review decision making at all levels

In accordance with the Council's new Constitution (30th Oct 01) the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will support the Executive Board & Full Council in the development of its budget priorities, policies and strategies.

The Council has identified five strategic aims:

- Sound financial management
- Strengthening of Local Committees
- Reducing Poverty and Inequality
- Improving the Physical Environment
- Reducing the Council's use of Resources

These 5 corporate aims identified in the Council's Vision statement and Best value Performance Plan 2002/03 provide a link between the Local Housing Strategy, HRA business plan, individual Business Unit plans and other strategic plans like the Asset Management Plan & Capital Strategy.

New Administration, May 2002

Following the local elections in May 2002, The Labour Party have formed a new administration. The new administration's priorities are based on their manifesto "Taking Pride in Oxford" which has five key pledges:

- Restore financial stability to the Council
- Focus on improving poorly performing services, aiming to bring them up to the standards of the best councils
- Bring more Council-owned homes back into use and substantially increase the provision of affordable housing in Oxford
- Invest up to £4m to bring the City's leisure facilities up to the highest standards
- Address the worsening state of the Environment where people live in many parts of the City

Over the course of the coming year Officers will work with the Housing Portfolio Member and her team to re-shape the Local Housing Strategy to achieve these aims. There will of course be substantial and on-going consultation with the appropriate stakeholders.

A PROFILE OF HOUSING IN OXFORD

A statistical appendix to this strategy is published separately, and is available on request.

Demand for Council Housing remains exceptionally high. As at 1st April 2002 there were 3217 households on the housing register, 955 on the transfer register and 950 households living in temporary accommodation.

The Council manages 8,466 properties within its housing stock as at 1st April 2002, comprising a mix of traditionally built and non-traditional properties. There is a need to modernise or replace non-traditional ORLIT, Airey and Howard type properties, maisonettes, and some sub-standard sheltered housing blocks. 1132 properties can be described as "difficult to let" but none as low demand. In 2001/2 we sold 108 properties under right to buy. Of the 108 properties 83 were family-sized houses. This in effect means the Council has diminishing stock to manage. Of that remaining stock, a rising proportion is in poor condition as the better and more desirable properties are sold under right to buy.

Affordability and access to the private sector remain important issues. House prices have continued to rise at a considerable rate and are among the highest in our region. Not only do entry-level purchase prices for first-time buyers remain beyond the reach of many, many growing households remain unable to buy larger properties.

According to figures published by the Land Registry the average purchase price of a property in Oxford during the 1st quarter of 2002 was **£203,829 compared to £163,035 for the same quarter the previous year. This represents a 25% increase in one year and a 37% over the last two years.**

Within this, average prices vary from **£157,365** for a flat or maisonette to **£430,213** for a detached property. Prices vary according to the location and number of bedrooms.

A snapshot survey of private sector rentals in Oxford at July 2002 found that rents varied from an average of **£350** a month for a room to over **£1,500** for a house with 4 or more bedrooms. 3 bedroom houses averaged at **£,1000** a month.

Rents in the **Oxford Social Letting Agency** scheme for homeless people tend to be at the lower end of the market, averaging **£848** per month. Rent officer determinations restrict rents to below current market levels, so that even with the help of housing benefit payments, rents still remain beyond the reach of many people.

Average Council rents have risen considerably in Oxford. In 1997/98, the average net rent per dwelling was £44 per week. This has risen to £53 per week in 2000/01 and £57 in 2001/02.

In October 2002 we will start to introduce rent restructuring to reflect size, type and location of properties across the city. It is not envisaged that this will effect the average rent very much as Housing Association and Council rents are quite similar.

REVIEW OF STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN PROGRESS

This section reviews the progress in the past year against the 8 key goals in the Strategic Housing Action Plan (SHAP).

ASSESSING THE HOUSING MARKET

SHAP 1 - To ensure a provision of housing across all tenures that is affordable, accessible, soundly managed and of a decent standard

In order to ensure that housing is affordable, accessible, soundly managed and of a decent standard we need up to date information about the current housing stock, and realistic and achievable plans to improve it. We now obtain regular information from the Land Registry and are regularly updating our information on private sector and social housing rents. We will analyse this data by property type and location and gradually map the housing markets within Oxford. We will use a range of data sources to develop a comprehensive picture of the way housing markets work within Oxford. This will inform the policy making process and indicate potential interventions that can be made to procure or develop suitable housing for people in housing need. We will use both external and internal data sources.

HECAMON Energy Survey

We aim to up-date our data on energy efficiency. We will assess improvements to the energy efficiency of Oxford homes since the last house condition survey in 1995. In the absence of a new housing survey, we used a low cost postal energy survey option called HECAMON, developed by BRE. This elicited 650+ returns from a mail-out to about 2000 randomly selected Oxford homes. Householders answered a series of simple questions about the insulation levels and heating systems in their homes. This information, when fully collated, will allow a comparison to be made with the data from the 95 survey and an assessment of progress towards targets.

SHAP 1A - To complete a complementary housing needs and house condition survey within 12 months

We have been unable to meet the time-scale for this action due to financial uncertainty and restructuring. We have now allocated a £40,000 budget to this project and will be commissioning a survey in September 2002. We aim to have this completed by November 2002.

The Strategic Policy and Research team will commission a new housing survey, and we will consult our partners in SHOP in the design and planning of the project. The new survey will aim to improve our understanding of the local housing markets in Oxford. We will work with neighbouring District Councils through the local **Housing Strategy Officers Liaison Group** to identify and address cross-boundary issues.

Housing Need and Demand

In Oxford, the Housing Needs survey in 1998 estimated a shortfall in the supply of social housing of **3,000 to 3,500** over the following three years. This shortfall has not been met, and if anything has continued to grow. The social housing development programme and re-lets in existing stock is insufficient to meet the shortfall and demand as evidenced from the Council's housing registers and homeless list remains at high levels. This issue remains a very high concern of the administration.

Housing for Key Workers

SHAP 1B. To carry out a comprehensive assessment of the need and demand for key worker housing by May 2002

We have been unable to meet the time-scale for this action due to financial uncertainty and restructuring. We have now allocated a £40,000 budget to carry out a Housing Needs Survey. We have decided to use this project as a partial measure for the need and demand for affordable key worker housing. We aim to have this completed by November 2002.

Starter Homes Initiative

The City Council supported two successful bids by Northcote Housing Association to the Government's Starter Homes Initiative (SHI) - a general scheme for teachers (13) and police officers (25) and a joint scheme with the Pan-Oxford Hospitals Trust (80). This amounts to nearly £2.8 million of extra investment into shared ownership housing for those employed in the city.

Public Service Agreement

The existing Starter Home Initiative scheme does not adequately cover all the current local areas of need. In addition we have entered into a partnership with Oxfordshire County Council under the national Public Service Agreement regime introduced by central government. Through this partnership working we will help an additional 22 key workers and their families access suitable and affordable accommodation. All will be employed within the city by either the City Council or the County Council.

A decision from central government is due later this year and if accepted will become operational from April 2003.

By using this partnership as a pilot we aim to create model and thus extend its working to other public sector employers in the county and sub-region. We hope that ultimately it could be used to attract private sector involvement, encouraging them to develop new solutions and utilising their own capital resources.

Housing For Older People

SHAP 1C - To complete City-wide review across all landlords of supply and demand for older persons housing, by Autumn 2001

We have been unable to meet the time-scale for this action due to financial uncertainty and restructuring. We have now allocated a £40,000 budget to carry out a Housing Needs Survey. We have decided to use this project as a partial measure for the need and demand for affordable older persons housing. We aim to have this

completed by November 2002. In addition we will use this data to design any further research work required.

We are working with Oxfordshire County Council and other agencies on a county-wide housing strategy for older people. This will form the strategic framework recommended by recent Government guidance.

We will carry out a comprehensive analysis and mapping of the supply and demand for older persons' housing to help inform plans for the future use or re-development of sheltered housing schemes for all social landlords. It will also take into account the projected demographic profile of older people in Oxford and the closure of Social Services homes for the elderly.

THE CONDITION OF HOMES AND THE "DECENT STANDARD"

SHAP 2 - To bring the condition of homes in all tenures up to the "Decent Standard" by 2010

Improving the Council's Stock

Resources for on-going capital costs of maintaining Council Housing is now provided as a subsidy to the Housing Revenue Account, known as the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA). Until the new stock condition survey has been completed, it is difficult to accurately predict whether the 2004 and 2010 targets for the "decent homes standard" will be achieved. The existing stock condition survey data will provide a base from which to identify, develop and cost the programme of work needed to achieve these targets.

Details of how the MRA will be spent plus programmes to improve energy efficiency and the energy characteristics of Council stock as well as the "decent homes standard" are given in the **Housing Business Plan 2002**, published separately.

Private Sector House Conditions

Over the next 12 months we will be developing the City's new policy initiatives for improving and maintaining private sector housing conditions. The governments' Regulatory Reform Order 2002 gives new powers to give loans in place of grants, to allow people to move to more suitable accommodation; if they are disabled and their homes cannot readily be adapted, and will allow equity sharing as well as equity release options to be considered in the future

Disabled Facilities Grants and Renovation Grants

We have spent £450,000 on Disabled Facilities Grants and approximately £1 million on Renovation Grants this year. We continue to work with Oxfordshire Social Services and the other District Councils in the County to improve the service.

INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF SOCIAL HOUSING

SHAP Goal 3 - To provide a target of 100 social rented and shared ownership homes per year that people in housing need want and can afford

The Council Vision has a target to deliver 100 additional units of social housing per year over the next 10 years. We continue to work with our approved housing association development partners to deliver this programme.

Local Plan and Housing

The new **Draft Local Plan** was placed on deposit in June 2002. We are seeking 50% planning gain for affordable social housing and an additional 20% for key worker housing. We are working closely with planning colleagues to deliver the social housing programme, and have been consulted on the **Local Plan Review** and **Supplementary Planning Guidance on Social Housing (SPG)**.

The Draft Local Plan has adopted a target of 3,750 new homes to the end of the plan period in 2016 and in order to begin to address the deficit in social housing units, the main thrust of planning policy in the Draft Local Plan is to develop more affordable homes.

Appendix B shows the City's Social Housing Development programme. Dwellings completed in 2001/02 and under construction are both slightly in excess of the target figure of 100 units per year and are predominantly using land transferred from the Council. However, S106 schemes feature more in the list of those which have allocated funding and illustrate the significance of the planning policy on affordable housing. The contribution made by S106 schemes is expected to increase over the Strategy period.

The Council and the RSL development partners have applied the strategic housing mix which reflects the Council's housing priorities to all new schemes. The number of 1 bed flats in the programme shows that the Council is responding to the needs of single homeless people.

The Housing Corporation's investment in the City through social housing grant (SHG) is £4.66m for 2002/03 which will fund 50 new rented and shared ownership units and includes part funding for the development of the new 50 bed Oxford Resettlement Project to replace the Nightshelter. This project also has funding of £1.45m from the city Council and £1m from Central Government's Rough Sleepers Unit and work is programmed to commence in early 2003.

Further allocations of SHG are being considered by the Housing Corporation for 2002/03 if completions can be guaranteed and a decision is expected shortly. There will be increased competition for SHG because of increasing needs from rationalising the Council's housing stock and new build opportunities arising from the Draft Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance. It will be necessary therefore to use grant funding strategically and direct it towards schemes which yield the greatest benefits in terms of housing need, sustainability, deliverability and value for money. Therefore we will discuss with the Housing Corporation the potential for forward grant allocation based on the Council's development programme, which includes S106 and Council sites.

SHAP Goal 3A - To work with approved housing association development partners to provide additional units of social housing during the strategy period, subject to annual reviews of association performance.

The performance of the associations is monitored and the effectiveness of the partnership will be reviewed at the end 2002/03.

SHAP Goal 3B - To ensure that 100% of new social housing is Egan compliant, built to Lifetime Homes standard and achieves a SAP rating of 90

The strategic housing brief requires that all new social housing for rent complies with Egan principles and Lifetimes homes standards. There is a high level of compliance with Egan principles, including on S106 schemes although there are difficulties with achieving "Lifetime standards" in some projects, particularly with blocks of 1 bed flats. The Council will be working with the RSL partners to investigate ways of resolving this. The achievement of high energy efficiency SAP ratings has been good across the programme and the Council is about to embark on a small energy efficiency demonstration project on two new units at Rose Hill to look at the wider application of such measures across new social housing projects in the City.

We expect all new development schemes to be Egan compliant, unless there are valid reasons for exceptions. All units are expected to be to Lifetime homes standards and to achieve a SAP rating of 90.

SHAP Goal 4 - To improve access and publicity on services to private sector residents, strengthen enforcement action and explore ways to utilise the private sector to meet housing need

We have been unable to develop a private landlords forum as was hoped in the original local housing strategy 2001-04 as there has been insufficient interest from the landlord side compounded by a lack of officer time due to redundancies. We have however met with a group of private sector landlords regarding the provision of temporary accommodation and will work to develop these links.

Likewise we no longer have an empty Property Officer but the number of long term vacant properties in the City is now down from 60 to about 50. This is mainly due to the fact that Oxford remains a high demand area.

The Lord Mayor's Rent Deposit Guarantee scheme remains a success. It provides private landlords a bond to cover loss and damage, and is aimed at people aged 16 or over who are homeless or in housing need and unable to raise a deposit themselves.

LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES

Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy

The planned capital expenditure for housing to 2006 is itemised within the Capital Strategy. This represents some £13.5m over this period from a total programme of £34.3m. Improvements are planned in the strategy to significantly improve the Council's performance in monitoring and reviewing its capital programme expenditure.

Crime and Disorder Strategy

An inter-agency group known as **ATMOSPHERE** (Alliance to Make Oxford a Safer

Place) has published separately the Crime and Disorder Strategy for Oxford 1999 - 2002. This work has been developed and two new publications have been produced:-

Crime and Disorder Strategy for Oxford 2002 - 2005
Crime and Disorder Audit Summary for Oxford 2001

Tenant Participation Strategy

There have been some significant changes in the structure of tenant participation in the Council sector over the last year, these are given in the **HRA Business Plan**, published separately.

HOUSING WITH SUPPORT / SUPPORTING PEOPLE

SHAP Goal 5 - To work with the Health Authority, Social Services, and voluntary organisations to ensure adequate provision of housing with support during the strategy period

SHAP Goal 5A - To work with the Health Authority, Social Services, Probation, Neighbouring Districts and the Voluntary sector to implement Supporting People by 2003

Supporting People in Oxfordshire

A **Core Strategic Development Group** has been set-up to introduce Supporting People in Oxfordshire, comprising representatives from Oxfordshire Social Services, the National Probation Service (Thames Valley), all the district housing authorities, Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust and a local housing association. In addition client group based sub-groups feed into the Core Strategic Development Group, including City Council's Single Homeless Strategy Group.

The **Supporting People in Oxfordshire Forum** for key members from the county and districts has been formed to endorse the Supporting People Shadow Strategy and the subsequent service reviews and resource allocation.

"Staying Put" scheme

We are also working in partnership with Anchor Housing Trust, through the home improvement agencies, and the other Oxfordshire district authorities and Social Services, to deliver the elements of Supporting People that will enable elderly people to be discharged from hospital more quickly and generally to remain in their own homes for longer.

Teenage Mothers and Lone Parents

SHAP 5B - Work with the Health Authority and neighbouring districts to assess the housing needs of lone parents and teenage mothers

A Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for Oxfordshire is being drawn up for the next ten years. This work is being progressed by the Oxford City Primary Care Trust In conjunction with the district and county councils.

HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY

SHAP Goal 6 - To carry out a multi-agency review of homelessness and publish a general homelessness strategy to improve the supply and provision of accommodation for homeless people and to strengthen preventative work, within 12 months.

Following the implementation of the Homelessness Act this year we are now in a better position to focus on the necessary reviews of homelessness within the city. We have had some major changes this year in the supply of our temporary accommodation for homeless people. The Private Hostel Initiative collapsed due to housing benefit subsidy being withdrawn, this has led to the renewal and expansion of the Oxford Social Lettings Scheme (750 houses) and new lease arrangements for hostel accommodation.

We have reviewed the service level agreement with the Oxfordshire Housing Right Centre and are looking at ways to further improve the housing advice services we supply and grant fund. The Customer Services business unit now process initial presentations and a new homelessness advice leaflet is being developed.

We are currently conducting a Best Value review of the Homelessness Service and in May 2002 set up a partnership Homelessness Task Force to address the bigger picture facing the city. The Task Force is chaired by the City Council's Chief Executive and will report in a year's time. It will cover homeless people whether they are single, in families or asylum seekers.

Homelessness Task Force

Homelessness is one of the single most important issues facing Oxford today, driven by a wide range of physical, social and political factors – many of which are not within the immediate control of the City Council, or indeed, any one agency.

Oxford's homelessness problem is not new. However, the scale of the problem has now reached levels more commonly associated with a London Borough, than a second tier district council.

The Homelessness Task Force will

- Identify homelessness best practice in the UK and apply it to Oxford where appropriate.
- Commission and endorse one strategic framework to tackle homelessness in Oxford and the sub-region if necessary – this would be the Homelessness Strategy for Oxford which would have to be formally approved and adopted by the City Council.
- Prepare an action plan to arrest and reverse the scale of homelessness in Oxford with clear responsibilities and resources identified to take these actions forward.
- Monitor, review and adapt the action plan in light of Task Force activities and ensure subsequent arrangements are in place to continue to review action and strategy.
- Pool resources and seek additional external funding to help deliver the action plan.

- Raise greater awareness of the Oxford homelessness challenge and advocate change to other local or national policies where they mitigate against the Task Force's agreed strategic framework and action plan.
- Feed its findings as necessary into complementary partnership work and policy making.

The **Homelessness Task Force** operates through a **Steering Group**, comprised of representatives from:-

Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County, Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Liaison Group, Oxford Citizens Housing Association, Oxford City PCT, DTLR Homelessness Directorate, English Churches Housing Group, Oxford Brookes University and Thames Valley Police Authority.

A Co-ordinating Team will provide the day-to-day momentum for the initiative. The City Council will make available the Strategic Director for Housing, Health and Communities and the Strategic Policy & Research Unit to provide this co-ordination.

Single Homeless Strategy

SHAP 6A - To complete the multi-agency review of the Single Homeless Strategy and publish revised and updated strategy by July 2001

We published the revised **Single Homeless Strategy** in July 2001 and have updated it again in 2002 . A full report has been published separately.

The revised overall aims of the Single Homeless Strategy for 2002/3 are:-

- maintain and aim to reduce further low levels of rough sleeping, begging, drinking and drug-related activity on the streets through the continuation and improvement of co-ordinated action by statutory and voluntary agencies;
- seek solutions to reduce the expense to the City Council of procuring adequate temporary accommodation for statutorily homeless people (this topic will be covered in the Council's main Homelessness Strategy);
- provide additional good quality accommodation for single homeless people, mainly self-contained, with appropriate support;
- ensure that the Supporting People pot for Oxfordshire and support levels for individuals are maximised through the full utilisation of Transitional Housing Benefit in existing schemes and the development of pipeline schemes;
- seek to prevent homelessness through enhanced and more widely available housing advice provision (see main Homelessness Strategy) and timely intervention by outreach workers, at day centres and through support agencies
- promote independence and tenancy sustainment through meaningful occupation and the acquisition of life-skills in hostels and day centres and by providing floating support to those who need it in their own rented homes.

Progress since the Single Homeless Strategy of May 2001

- Funding is now in place for the replacement of Oxford Night Shelter. The Oxford Resettlement Project, as it will now be known, will have 50 bedspaces.
- The Bridge direct access hostel for young people re-opened in December 2001 and now has 25 bedspaces in single and shared rooms, instead of 15 in dormitories. It is envisaged that this will become a 24-hour service.
- The Mission at St Clement's has eleven bedsitting-rooms with communal facilities, five for charity workers and six for homeless people under 25; two rooms are doubles. There is a part-time support worker from the Church, 24-hour on-call and informal support from the charity workers.
- The City Council is to reintroduce a centralised allocations team in Summer 2002, which should lead to a more efficient use of opportunities for rehousing, including move-on from hostels and nominations to housing associations.

Work with rough sleepers

The main points of the **Rough Sleeping Strategy**, which has yet to be approved by the Homelessness Directorate, are:-

- to maintain the number of rough sleepers below 10
- to maintain the number of beggars below six
- to maintain the number of street drinkers below five
- to adopt targets relating to the percentages of people who:
 - do not return to sleeping rough when leaving hostels
 - are engaging with treatment if substance misusers
- have accessed training/education whilst staying in a hostel,
 - have engaged in voluntary work/paid employment whilst in a hostel
 - have maintained their tenancies for three, six, nine or 12 months if in receipt of support.

£346,000 has been secured from the Homelessness Directorate to fund work to rough sleepers for the next 9 months. This funding will provide a combination of outreach, resettlement, floating support and specialist substance misuse workers.

Snapshot counts are carried out every 6 weeks, to date numbers of rough sleepers has remained below 10. The last snap shot count carried out was in the early hours of the 5th July, **6 people** were found to be sleeping rough and 5 people were in tents.

Partnership Work

The partnership between the Police, Oxford City Council and the voluntary sector remains very strong ensuring clients have full access to services should they require them. The Police continue to be pro-active in addressing people begging and dispersing street drinkers. The Luther Street Drop-in [based at the Night Shelter] has played a key part in reducing the numbers of street drinkers and provided a resource enabling street drinkers the opportunity to access support.

NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

SHAP Goal 7 - To develop a co-ordinated approach to neighbourhood renewal and the development of sustainable communities in partnership with other agencies

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit was established in December 2002, with the aim of strengthening communities and making them more sustainable. This is to be achieved through developing a more co-ordinated corporate approach to meeting community needs and through building on and developing partnerships with other agencies. Since then the Unit has developed its management structure and operational systems. It includes three teams with the responsibilities set out below:

Housing Development and Regeneration

Special needs housing schemes and support, work with RSL's, tenants participation; management of 3 SRB regeneration schemes in East Oxford, Blackbird Leys and Barton, Rough Sleepers and Street Scene initiatives.

Community Development

Community centre buildings and community development, health promotion, play and crèche provision, grants to the voluntary sector, international exchange.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Addressing neighbourhood nuisance and anti-social behaviour through information sharing, mediation, parental orders and anti-social behaviour orders.

The Unit is still in the process of becoming established but it has already been successful in developing a more corporate approach to neighbourhood renewal and has developed good partnerships with other agencies. A recent initiative, for example, includes a successful retail crime bid for £100,000 to address problems on estate shops and an invitation to bid for 6 Neighbourhood Wardens from the Home Office.

There have also been discussions with Oxford City Primary Care Trust, Local Education Authority, Youth Service and Social Services Department about developing future joint working focusing on the more deprived housing estates within the city.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND FUEL POVERTY

SHAP Goal 8 - To improve the energy efficiency of all dwellings across all tenures by 30% by 2010 and eradicate fuel poverty in vulnerable households across all tenures by 2010

Tariff Advice Sheet

A gas and electricity tariff advice sheet has been produced in conjunction with TVEEAC - this will allow householders to get information on the cheapest energy tariffs. The approach is one which will avoid obsolescence as company pricing structures change as the recommended route for the consumer is via a free phone or website. Account is taken of house type, personal circumstances, household energy use, preferred methods of payment, choice of green energy etc, in arriving at a recommended tariff.

Improved insulation discounts

Oxford City are working with a major utility company (London Electricity) to bring improved discounts to householders and landlords for insulation upgrades. This scheme is now possible due to the Energy Efficiency Commitment that has been imposed on utilities by the government.

As an example of the prices that are available, a detached, gas heated house can now have cavity wall insulation for £175.

The scheme has two sides, one for the private sector and one for social housing. Discounts of just under 50% have been made available for upgrading insulation in Oxford City's own housing stock and this deal will be rolled out to local Housing Associations in the near future.

Solarsavers

A bulk discount and advice scheme for householders considering investing in solar water heating systems for their roofs is now operational.

The East Oxford Green House

We aimed to develop a low energy demonstration house and drop in centre through sponsorship under the East Oxford Action SRB. Unfortunately this project did not come to fruition.

Winterline

The 24 hour emergency phone service (a partnership with Age Concern (Oxford) and the Community Alarm Control Centre) has unfortunately had to be discontinued.

APPENDIX A
Social Housing Development Programme 2001-2004

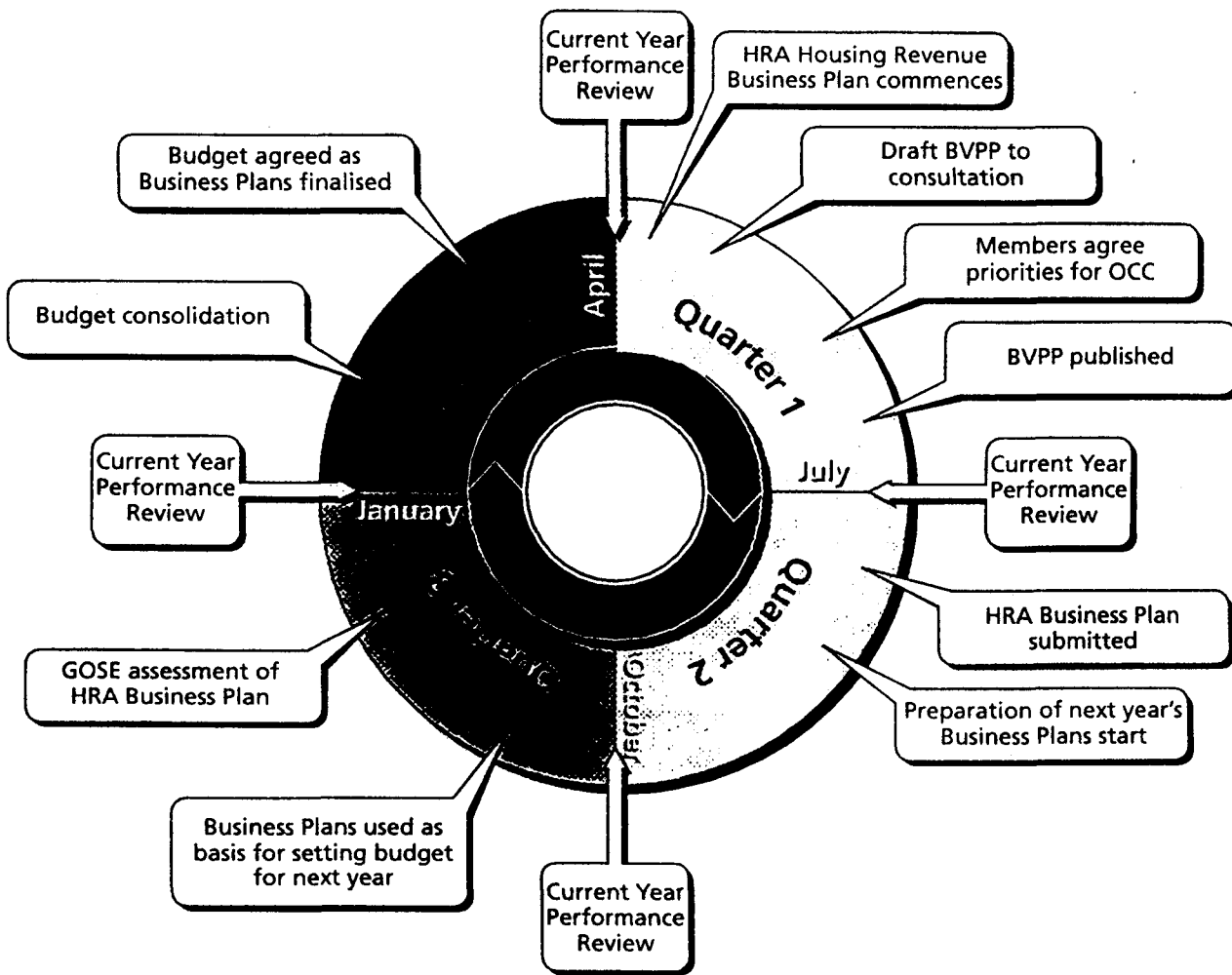
Site	Housing Developer	Units				Funding/ Completion Date
		Elderly	Family	Single	Total	
Schemes Completed 2001/02						
William Morris Court	Oxford Citizens HA	36			36	£1,996,000 [ADP] July 2001
Horspath Rd	Ealing Family HA		12		12	£274,000 [LASHG] February 2002
Sandy Lane (West)	Northcote HA		3		3	No grant October 2001
Atkins Road	Warden HA	4			4	£105,000 [LASHG] March 2002
Hundred Acres Cl	Oxford City Council		21		21	£1,731,000 [OCC] September 2001
3/5 Iffley Rd	Oxford City Council			25	25	£359,000 [OCC] October 2001
TOTAL		40	36	25	101	
Schemes under Construction 2002/03						
Barton Orbits	Oxford Citizens HA		31	4	35	£1,422,000 (ADP) May 2002
The Slade;Masons Rd; Thrift Place; Gwyneth Rd; Donnington Bridge Rd	Bromford Housing Group		23	20	43	£1,124,000 (LASHG) June 2002
Lambton Close	Warden HA		15	8	23	£480,000 (LASHG) May 2003
Leon Close	Cherwell HT		9		9	£625,000 (ADP) March 2003
106 Bullingdon Rd	Cherwell HT		7	3	10	£200,000 (ADP) May 2003
Lion Brewery [Shared Ownership]	Cherwell HT		5		5	£60,000 (ADP) November 2003
TOTAL			100	35	135	
Schemes with Grant Funding						
Barton Village School [Shared Ownership]	Oxford Citizens HA		15		15	£424,000 (ADP)
Oxford Resettlement Project	Warden HA			50	50	£3,803,000 [Joint Funding]
Paradise Street	Ealing Family HA		14		14	£1,147,000 (ADP)
Warren Crescent	Warden HA		6	9	15	£767,000 [Joint Funding]
Osney Court	Warden HA		16	11	27	£2,820,000 [Joint Funding]
Shortlife Scheme	Coop Home Services		2		2	£56,000 [ADP]
TOTAL			53	70	123	

APPENDIX B - Revised Strategic Housing Action Plan

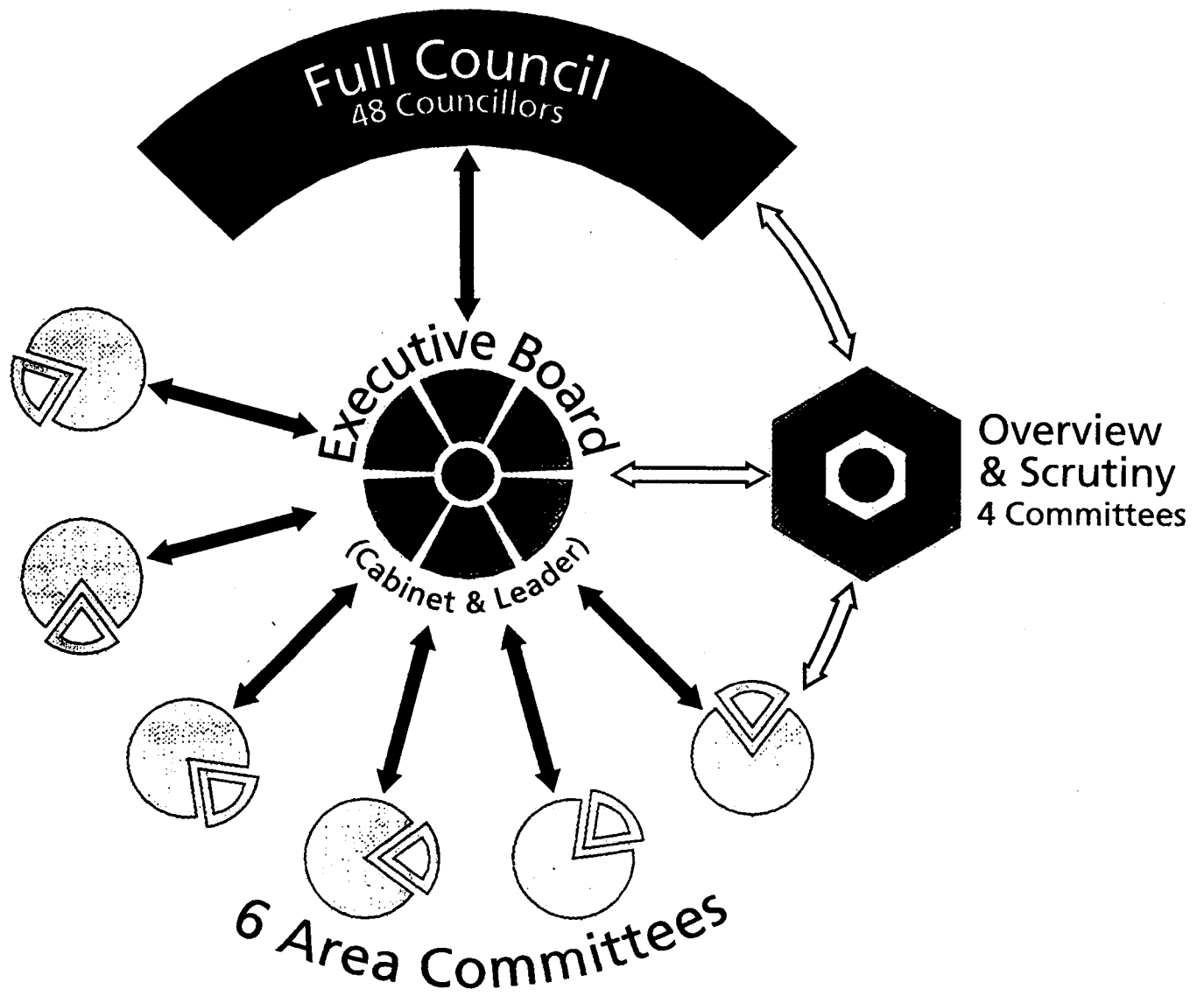
Key Goal	Action	Responsible Lead Officer(s)	Proposed Target Date
SHAP 1 To ensure a provision of housing across all tenures that is affordable, accessible, soundly managed and of a decent standard	To undertake a housing needs survey and related research. Including an assessment of older persons and key worker housing	David Hill Strategic Policy & Research Unit	Completed by November 2002
SHAP 2 To bring the condition of homes in all tenures up to the "Decent Standard" by 2010	The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan has identified funding for a Stock Condition Survey to be undertaken	David Hill Strategic Policy & Research Unit	Completed by April 2003
SHAP 3 To provide 100 social rented and shared ownership homes per year, that people in housing need want and can afford	Through development work with our Housing Association Partners and through planning gain we will continue to facilitate the provision of affordable social housing.	Steve Northey Neighbourhood Renewal Unit	To be monitored on annual basis
	Housing Association Partnerships to be reviewed in 2002-03	Steve Northey Neighbourhood Renewal Unit	Completed by July 2003
SHAP 4 To improve access and publicity on services to private sector residents and to strengthen enforcement action	To continue the current work and to develop and action plan to implement the key goal	Andy Forbes Gail Siddal Environmental Health	To be monitored on annual basis
SHAP 5 To co-ordinate work with the Health Authority, Social Services, and voluntary organisations	To implement Supporting People by 2003	Val Johnson Neighbourhood Renewal Unit	Completed by April 2003
	To assess the housing needs of lone parents and teenage mothers	Val Johnson Neighbourhood Renewal Unit	Completed by April 2003
SHAP 6 To carry out a multi-agency review of Homelessness and publish a general Homelessness Strategy	To co-ordinate the work of the Homelessness Task Force and produce a new general homelessness strategy	David Hill Strategic Policy & Research Unit	Completed by July 2003
	To carry out a review of services to homeless people	Neil Gibson Strategic Director Housing health & Communities	Completed by December 2002
SHAP 7 To develop a co-ordinated approach to neighbourhood renewal in partnership with other agencies	This is now the core remit of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit	Val Johnson Neighbourhood Renewal Unit	To be monitored on annual basis

SHAP 8 To improve the energy efficiency of all dwellings across all tenures by 30% by 2010	To continue the current work and to develop and action plan to implement the key goal	Dr Paul Robinson Environmental Health	To be monitored on annual basis
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Appendix C: How Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Planning Fits in with the Overall Business Planning Process

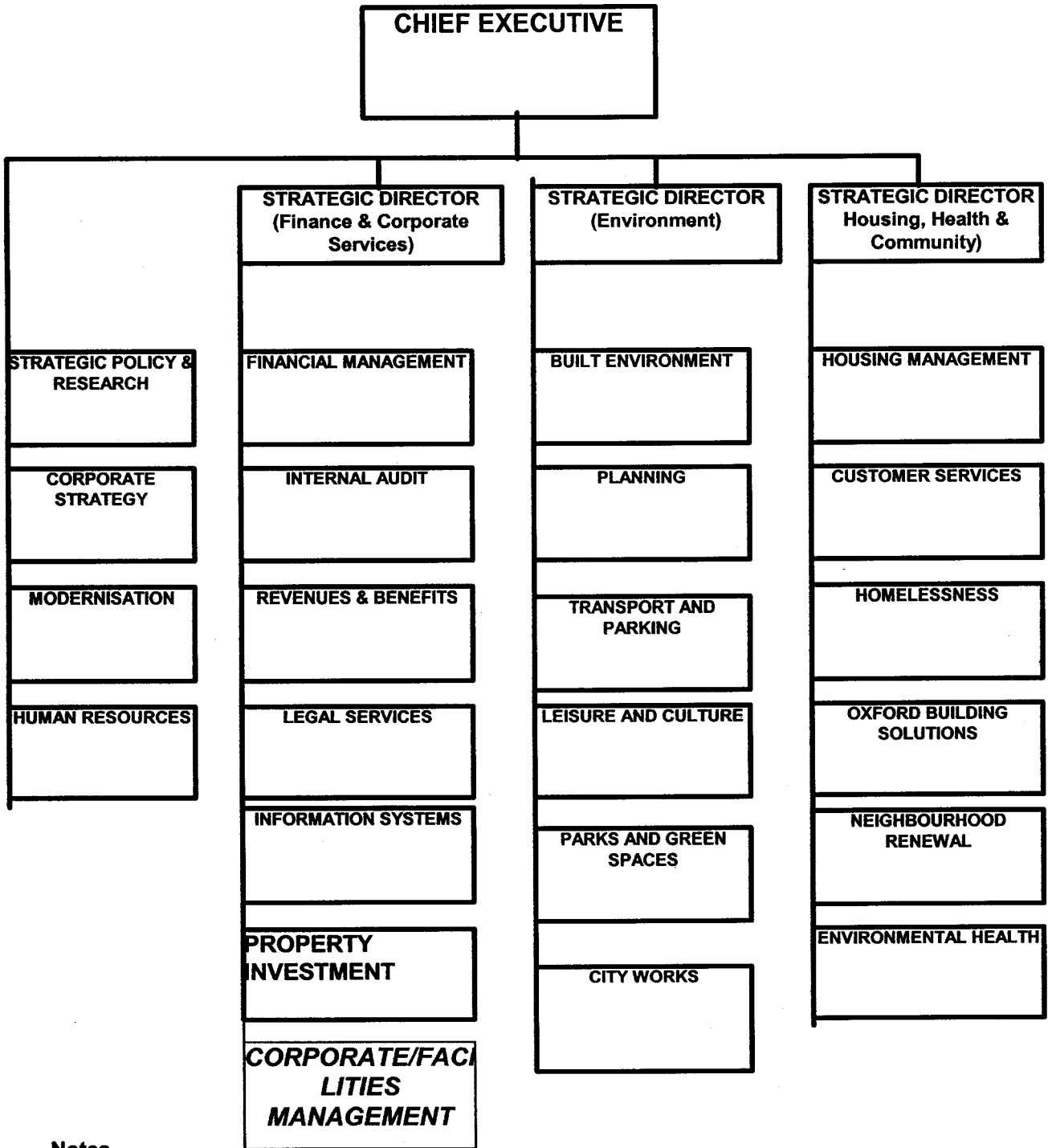


Appendix D: Oxford City Council's New Democratic Arrangements



APPENDIX E - "How the Corporate Management Works"

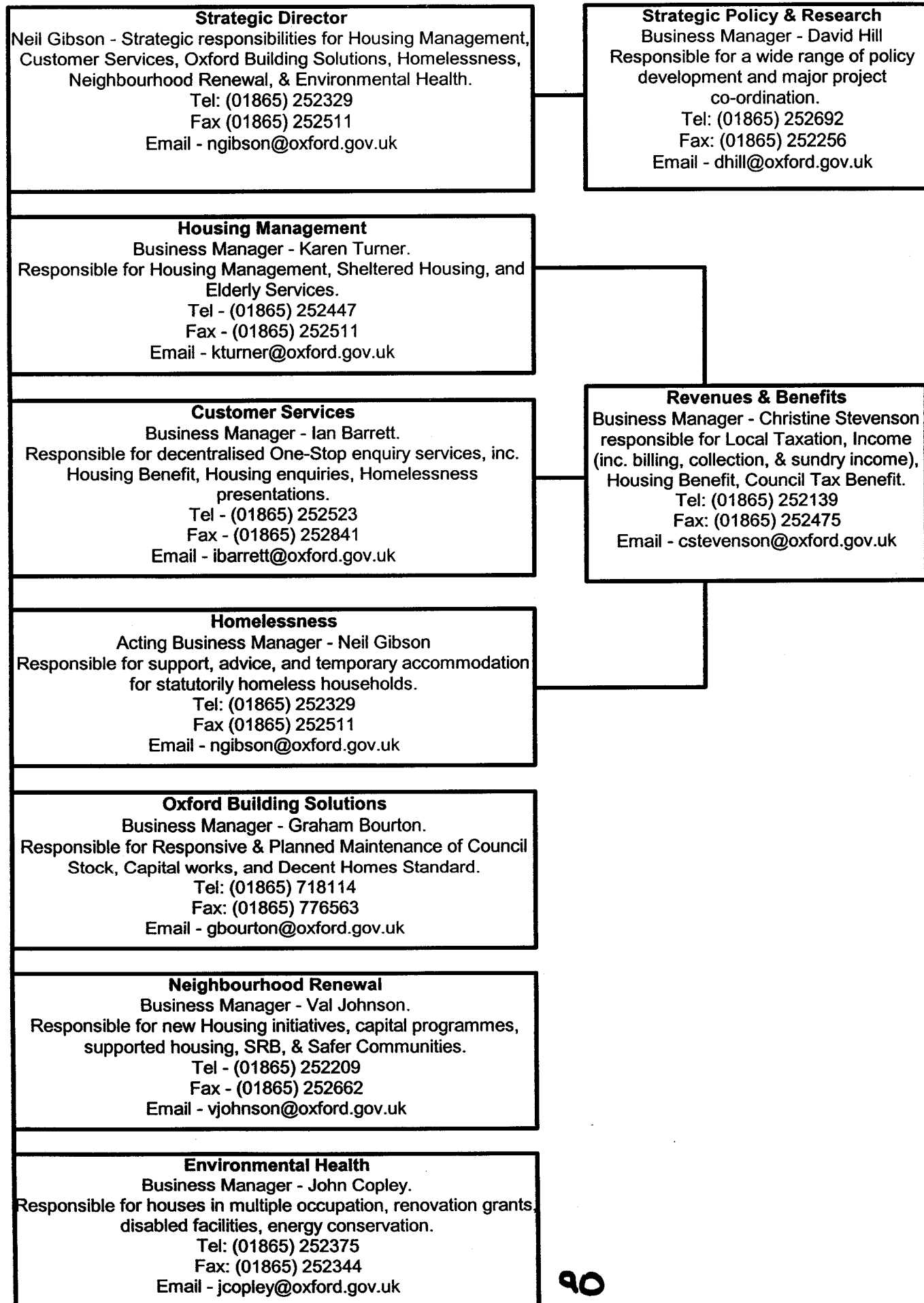
NEW CORPORATE AND BUSINESS UNIT STRUCTURES



Notes

1. The 'Corporate Management Group' consists of the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and all Business Managers.
2. The 'Strategic Management Board' consists of the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and the Chief Executive's Business Units

APPENDIX F - "How Housing Works"



CONTACTS

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Andy Forbes - Principal Environmental Health Officer Tel: 01865 - 252564
e-mail: aforbes@oxford.gov.uk

Comments on Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty:-

Dr Paul Robinson - Home energy Conservation Officer Tel: 01865 - 252541
e-mail: probinson@oxford.gov.uk

Comments on Local Authority Housing issues:-

Karen Turner - Housing Management Business Manager Tel: 01865 252447
e-mail: kturner@oxford.gov.uk

Comments on new social housing development, neighbourhood renewal & supporting people programme issues:-

Val Johnson - Neighbourhood Renewal Business Manager Tel: 01865 252209
e-mail: vjohnson@oxford.gov.uk

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Strategic Policy and Research Unit
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St. Aldate's
Oxford OX1 1BX

If you need a large print copy, audiotape or require a translation, please contact telephone 01865 - 252692.

RESPONSES FROM THE TENANT'S DAY - 7TH Aug 02

Invitations were extended to all Forums & Tenant Associations to send representatives to an all-day meeting to discuss the draft HRA Business Plan and be introduced to the draft Housing Strategy Update. 12 tenant representatives attended the day with a further 7 requesting all information be sent to them by post. 5 Business Managers were also in attendance.

The event was very productive and felt to be successful by those who attended. Each section of the HRA Business plan was explained and then discussed and debated. The main points of the Housing Strategy Draft were also discussed and the tenants were provided with a copy to take away and read (they had already had a copy of the HRA Business Plan draft sent to them prior to the meeting). Overall, the tenants concluded they were happy with the draft HRA Business Plan and in its current format and content.

A summary of the discussion points made on the day, by the tenants, about both drafts is below. Tenants asked that Members took careful note of their views. Any further comments that are received after 7th Aug will be reported verbally.

- It was felt that the Council should be more imaginative in exploring other ways of providing housing e.g self-build schemes, mobile homes, pre-fabricated buildings rather than just relying on RSL new-build for example.
- The tenants felt it was essential that the consultants employed to conduct the Stock Condition Survey MUST ensure that their information had an ability to interface with the current council IT systems.
- The tenants expressed a concern that slow void turnarounds contribute to a reduced income to the HRA. (They were advised of the new focus that the portfolio member was applying in this area in conjunction with OBS).
- The tenants made a plea for reports and documents sent to them had a précis or summary cover to help them understand what they were reading. That they had a glossary of "jargon" provided and larger print was used where feasible. It was generally agreed that one-off meetings to discuss big issues like the HRA Business Plan were a useful tool in ensuring understanding.
- Tenants felt it was very important they be consulted about issues like the HRA, Housing Strategy and housing policy issues earlier in the cycle of report writing to ensure they were able to properly contribute to their production.
- The tenants felt the time had come for the council to represent to the Govt how serious the housing demand had become in Oxford. Major issues such as the fact that low-paid workers would never afford a home in the City, the influence on the housing market played by the universities and the hospitals etc. They suggested the Council investigate a scheme that could grant people an initial deposit towards buying a home.

- The tenants understood the need to help key-workers with housing who were new to the City but asked that local "born and bred" Oxford citizens did not get forgotten.
- Concerns were expressed that rent restructuring would further exacerbate the ability of lower paid tenants to afford their rent
- The tenants want to play a full role in the consultation about service charging and what locally will be decided for tenants and leaseholders
- The tenants were keen to see improvements and necessary changes in Tenant Participation and expressed a wish to be represented through the Housing Scrutiny process as soon as possible. (A brief summary of changes at OFTA was given by the Secretary).
- The Tenants expressed disappointment at the poor turnout from Officers and Members at a recent CWOIL Conference (Val Johnson agreed to investigate this).
- Tenants were keen to see Leaseholder Associations set up as soon as possible and understood the need to consult with leaseholders whether they wished to have a Leasehold Officer in post (as they would be recharged for the cost).
- The tenants emphasised the importance of using our CWOIL partners to benchmark against in the Best Value Reviews as well as other Local Authorities.
- The tenants expressed a desire that any future SRB schemes address some "on the ground" issues for estates like clean streets, drugs and anti-social behaviour.
- The tenants asked that all HRA Business Units reported their performances to the Tenant's Monitoring Panel on a regular basis.
- The tenants understood the need for future spend on stock improvements to be directed at Decent Homes Standards but insisted that they be consulted as part of that decision- making process.
- Tenants wish to be involved in how it is locally decided to interpret the Govt guidelines for Decent Homes i.e what is a decent kitchen/bathroom standard.
- Tenants who lived in communal heated blocks insisted that their "defective" heating systems be prioritised for improvements especially as they would be paying full heating charges from next year.
- Tenants wished to be consulted on what capital bids were made for housing and what priorities were given (this followed a discussion about the use of 25% of council right-to-buy receipts).
- The tenants felt the ODPM should be made aware that management costs for housing didn't necessarily reduce because approx 100 a year properties were being sold through right-to-buy.
- The tenants felt that coming up with a range of options for Rose Hill ORLIT tenants to consider was very important and needed to reflect the desire of some ORLIT tenants to stay where they were
- The tenants were pleased to note that LSVT was off the Administrations agenda at the present time.