

# Bromsgrove District Council



## Private Sector Housing Strategy 2009 - 2014

*'Making best use of existing accommodation by improving quality of accommodation and addressing the imbalance in the housing market through the provision of more affordable housing.'* District'

Priority 2 'Improving the Quality and Availability of Private Sector Housing.'





# Executive Summary

## Executive Summary

Bromsgrove's new Private Sector Housing Strategy has been re-written as a separate document to clearly set out the role, aspirations and priorities that the Council has for improving the quality and availability of private sector housing in Bromsgrove District over the period 2009 - 2014.

The document has been developed in close relationship with partner agencies, taking into account recent housing and demographic data with priorities and objectives having been reviewed with stakeholders at two Strategic Housing Consultation Events held in November 2008.

Improving the standard of private sector housing and increasing the availability and accessibility of privately owned and rented housing, especially to the vulnerable and those on lower incomes, together with the important role of administering Disabled Facilities and Home Improvement grants is identified as the Council's second housing priority within its wider housing strategy.

**Section 1-** details the local context of the District with its increasingly ageing population of 92,300 of which 18.4% are over 65 years of age, high levels of owner occupancy and issues of housing affordability. The section identifies the needs of the District and the role of the local authority when dealing with private sector housing with particular regard to advice, assistance and enforcement.

**Section 2-** identifies how the Strategy takes into consideration the National, Regional and Local priorities, and how this has helped shape our vision for Housing in the District.

**Section 3-** identifies the housing profile of the Bromsgrove District by providing an overview of the last Stock Condition Survey and its key findings.

**Section 4-** identifies current issues influencing Private Sector Housing in the District and explores the emerging and potential impact of the current economic downturn upon the local housing market.

**Section 5-** identifies the Council's priorities for private sector housing that were identified during the recent consultation event with partners and stakeholders.

**Section 6-** details how the Local Authority currently meets these priorities and sets out further future initiatives

**Section 7-** provides information on resources and funding streams available in provide a range of grant assistance.

**Section 8** – sets out the outcomes and key performance targets relating to :

Sustained long term 'Decent' housing conditions, improved quality of privately rented accommodation (including HMOs), higher standards for healthier and safer homes.

Improved energy efficiency of homes.

Better support and assistance to older and vulnerable people in making home improvements and adaptations, healthier and safer homes.

Increased access to private rented accommodation for the homeless, increased choice and increased support and assistance to landlords.

The Private Sector Assistance Policy and the Private Sector Housing Strategy action plan are attached at Appendix 1 and 2.

# Contents

- 1. Introduction**
    - Population
    - Economy
    - Sustainable Development
    - Deprivation and Health
    - What is the Private Sector Housing Strategy?
    - What is the Council's role within Private Sector Housing?
    - Enforcement Policy
  - 2. Private Sector Housing: National, Regional and Local Priorities**
    - National
    - Regional
    - Local Vision
  - 3. Profile of Private Sector Housing in Bromsgrove**
    - Issues facing the Private Sector Housing
    - Bromsgrove's House Condition Survey
  - 4. Current Issues Influencing the Private Sector Housing Market**
  - 5. Consultation and Emerging Priorities**
  - 6. Private Sector Housing Priorities in Detail**
  - 7. Available Resources**
  - 8. Outcomes and Key Performance Targets**
- Appendix 1. Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy**
- Appendix 2. Private Sector Housing Action Plan**



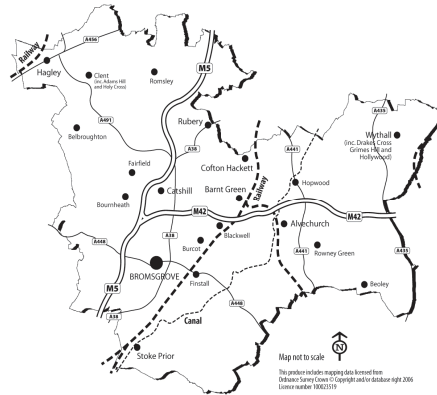
# SECTION 1-Introduction





# 1. Introduction

Bromsgrove District is in north Worcestershire, covering a large area of approximately 83.9 square miles. Whilst only 14 miles from the centre of Birmingham, the Lickey Hills country park provides an important dividing line between the urban West Midlands Conurbation and the rural landscape of north Worcestershire. Ninety percent of the District is greenbelt which creates difficulties for housing policy. Four radial routes pass through the District, each served by railway lines and major roads, including the M5 running north and south, the M42 running east and west, further links to the M40 and M6.



with  
and

Data suggests that 16,643 people travel into the District for work, with 26,112 (29%) of the population travelling out, a net commute out of 9,469.<sup>1</sup> Our main communities are detailed in the map (above). The District has no wards in the top 20% most deprived in England.<sup>2</sup>

## Population

The population of the District is 92,300<sup>3</sup> and the Office for National Statistics predicts that this will increase by 20.5% over

the next 23 years to 111,200 in 2031.<sup>4</sup> The over 65 population totals 17,000 (18.4% of the population)<sup>5</sup> and this older population is predicted to expand as a proportion of the overall District population significantly over the next 20-25 years, with the over 80s population estimated to increase by 132% by 2031.<sup>6</sup>

There are 37,492 households in the District.<sup>7</sup> The current review of the Regional Spatial Strategy is likely to require homes for 3,000-7,000 households to be built in the District in the next 25 years and it is also probable that the District will have to take some of Redditch Borough Council's housing allocation.

The black and minority ethnic population (BME) is 6.4%, which is low for the region and nationally. This percentage comprises 1% Irish, 2.6% Asian, 1.2% Mixed, 1.0% Black and 0.6% Chinese.<sup>8</sup> There are no definitive data sources for the migrant worker population living in Bromsgrove, but indicative figures suggest this is in the region of 0.2%.<sup>9</sup>

## Economy

The economic picture of the District is generally very positive in spite of the current economic downturn. The mean household income is £38,690, which is the highest in the county (the county average is £35,656).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ONS 2001 Census  
<sup>2</sup> DCLG Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007  
<sup>3</sup> ONS 2007 Mid-Year Population Estimates

<sup>4</sup> ONS 2006 Subnational population projections  
<sup>5</sup> ONS 2007 Mid-Year Population Estimates  
<sup>6</sup> ONS 2006 Subnational population projections  
<sup>7</sup> Worcestershire County Council RSS Household Forecasts Report 2008  
<sup>8</sup> ONS 2006 Resident Population Estimates by Ethnic Group  
<sup>9</sup> Worcester County Economic Assessment 2007-2008  
<sup>10</sup> PayCheck 2008

## Sustainable Development

We all need to make a decisive move toward more sustainable development, not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is in our own long-term best interests. By thinking about the way in which we do things and becoming more sustainable, we can meet our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is the concept of sustainable development, and must underpin all of our actions. We already have a number of initiatives in place to help improve our sustainability. The Council House is in the process of switching to 100% green electricity, and part of our power comes from solar panels on our roof. We use 100% recycled paper, and encourage recycling in house and in the wider District. We are also signed up to the Worcestershire car sharing scheme.

The Local Strategic Partnership's Better Environment Group has a number of projects underway aiming to reduce our carbon footprint, help conserve and enhance our biodiversity, and reduce pollution. The Council and its partners want to ensure that the serious issue of climate change is addressed, and the Council and the LSP have therefore made climate change a priority. There are several National Indicators around climate change which need to be performance managed and monitored

## Affordable Housing

One of the biggest issues facing the District is affordable housing: 83.4% of households are owner occupied,<sup>11</sup> the 11<sup>th</sup> highest figure in England and Wales, and the average house price being £240,867, although this figure is falling in line with the global economic downturn.<sup>12</sup> The Council is currently operating a planning moratorium with only affordable housing developments

---

<sup>11</sup> ONS 2001 Census

<sup>12</sup> South Housing Market Assessment April 2007

being built. The Housing Strategy has a target of 80 units of affordable housing a year for the next three years.

## Deprivation and Health

The District ranks 299th out of 354 councils on the national index of multiple deprivation 2007 (where 1 is the most deprived), making the District one of the least deprived nationally.<sup>13</sup> It is also the only district in Worcestershire to have become less deprived since 2004.<sup>14</sup> Only 640 households are in receipt of benefits in the District, one of the lowest figures in Worcestershire.<sup>15</sup> As a result, identifying the vulnerable within our communities is more difficult than a district with geographic areas of deprivation.

Generally, the District's population is healthier than the regional average. Young people (18-24) have a high risk status being the most likely to smoke, binge drink and not take exercise.

As around 89% of the District's residents live within private sector housing, the Local Authority therefore has an important role in the delivery of statutory, discretionary and strategic interventions.

## What is the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy?

This document sets out the detail behind the Council's Private Sector Renewal Strategy that is embedded within the Bromsgrove District Council's Housing Strategy 2006 – 2011-*'Unlocking the door to meeting housing needs in Bromsgrove District'* Priority 2 'Improving the Quality and Availability of Private Sector Housing.'

---

<sup>13</sup> & <sup>16</sup> DCLG Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> Worcester County Economic Assessment 2007-2008

## The Council's Role within Private Sector Housing

Local Authorities therefore have an instrumental role in ensuring that properties throughout the district are decent and safe to live in. This can be achieved through several tools available to the Authority in the form, of advice, guidance, assistance or enforcement.

Since transferring its social housing stock to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust in 2004, Bromsgrove District Council now focuses upon its strategic housing role of enabling the provision of additional affordable housing and encouraging improvement to the availability and quality of private sector housing ensuring that it is safe and accessible for occupants. This strategy therefore details how the Council will achieve improvement to the quality and supply of private sector housing through grant assistance, advice and where necessary, enforcement.

The Housing Act 2004 provides the Council with a number of legislative tools which focus upon health and safety. Intervention has a direct impact upon local health targets, fuel poverty, the availability of safe and decent housing and independent living. The Act places a number of mandatory duties on the Council which include:

- A duty to review the housing stock
- A duty to intervene where a Category 1 Hazard exists
- A duty to set up a Mandatory 'House in Multiple Occupation' licensing scheme
- A duty to issue Interim and Final Management Orders when appropriate

The Council also has the following discretionary powers -

- Power to deal with Category 2 Hazards
- Power to set up an Additional Licensing Scheme
- Power to set up a Selective Licensing Scheme
- Power to issue Empty Dwelling Management Orders
- Power to issue Special Management Orders

In addition, Local authorities have the following mandatory duties:-

- A duty to assist people with disabilities to enable them to live independently within their own home (Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996)
- To report on the standard of energy efficiency throughout the district (Home Energy Conservation Act 1995)
- To adopt a strategy to assist homeowners to maintain and improve their homes. (Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002.)

Survey information indicates that a large proportion of vulnerable people (16.3%) in Bromsgrove, live in a poor standard of accommodation underpinning the importance of providing advice and assistance to home owners in improving existing stock and bringing back into use those properties that would otherwise remain vacant or derelict.

Whilst the responsibility for the maintenance of private sector dwellings ultimately rests with the owner-occupier or landlord, Bromsgrove District Council has in recent years, provided limited discretionary grants to assist more vulnerable households to improve their homes.

This strategy sets out the key priorities for the improvement of the quality, supply and suitability of privately owned accommodation to improve the ability of residents to live independently in decent homes. The key actions to implement the strategy are set out within the Action Plan see Appendix A of this document.

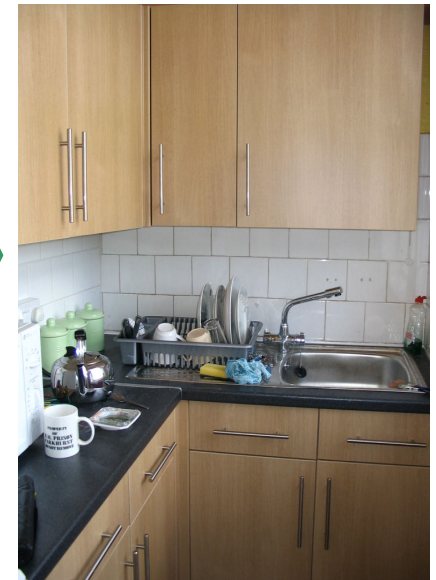
### **Enforcement Policy**

In accordance with the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, the Local Authority is developing a corporate approach to Enforcement that is consistent, proportionate and transparent. The policy sets out the Council's priorities for taking appropriate enforcement action and links to a procedure that ensures consistency in the application of enforcement action in accordance with local and national standards. Key pieces of legislation relating to the regulatory and enforcement role of the Council are as follows: -

- Housing Act 2004
- Housing Act 1985
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Home Energy Conservation Act 1995
- Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960
- Mobile Home Act 1980
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976



**BEFORE ENFORCEMENT**



**AFTER ENFORCEMENT**





# SECTION 2-Private Sector Housing: - National, Regional and Local Priorities





## 2. Private Sector Housing: National, Regional and Local Priorities

The Private Sector Housing Strategy recognises that in order to manage the supply, demand and quality of private sector housing within the District, Bromsgrove District Council has to embody a broad range of national, regional and local, policies, strategies and legislation. The Private Sector Housing Strategy therefore embraces the following: -

### National Priorities

At a national level, there have been significant legislative and policy changes which have affected the way in which local authorities deliver their private sector housing services. The main policy changes are as follows: -

***The Housing Act 2004***; this is the most significant recent piece of legislation that replaced the 'fitness standard' with the introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). That directly links housing and health. The Act also strengthens the rights for privately renting tenants through the introduction of the rent Deposit Protection Scheme, the mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and provides greater powers for tackling empty properties.

***Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All (2000)***; set out policies to achieve the aim of offering everyone the opportunity of a decent home and so promotes social cohesion, well-being and self-dependence including a new direction for the standards in the social and private sector.

***The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) 2002***; emerged from 'Quality of Choice: A Decent Home for All' and introduced a range of discretionary powers in order to

provide a more flexible manner to deal with the standards of private sector dwellings.

***The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) (England and Wales) 2005***; replaces many of the previous fire safety legislation. It is instrumental in placing the responsibility onto any person who exercises some control in a residential premises to take reasonable steps to reduce the risks from fire. The order details the Local Authority and Fire Authority's responsibilities particularly in the case of enforcing fire standards.

***Supporting People***; the government initiative that introduced centralised funding, multi agency strategic planning and commissioning of support services to vulnerable people with special needs, has been designed to promote peoples independence and ability to remain in their homes and community.

***The National Framework for Older People and Integrated Services for Older People*** - relies on providing support in order to assist older people to live safely and healthily in their own homes.

***The Housing and Health Agenda*** – highlights the high cost to the health service of delayed discharge of patients from hospital often due to the condition of their home or the urgent need for adaptations.

***Rugg Review*** – a research paper that has been instrumental in the review of England's private rented sector provides recommendations to maximise the full potential of private rented accommodation to ensure that it is a well functioning element and viable housing option.

***Home Energy Conservation Act 1995***; - influences the development of Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth Policy



and Government targets to increase Energy Efficiency and eradicate fuel poverty in all UK homes by 2016.

**Sustainable Communities: Building For the Future Plan (Feb 2003);** This paper introduced the government’s new approach to maintaining and encouraging thriving communities where people want to live and have access to decent and affordable homes.

**Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods – National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society (2008)** outlines where the Government aims to be in five years’ time:

- Existing housing stock will be improved to raise it’s quality and promote good health. Many more homes will be warm and comfortable.
- Major and minor adaptations will become easier to obtain.
- Major adaptations through the Disabled Facilities Grant will be quick and simple to obtain and appropriately linked to other services.
- Home improvement and handyperson services will be widely accessible. Home Improvement Agencies will be available in all parts of the country and will deliver a more proactive, wider range of services.
- People will get these services before a crisis happens.
- Where housing services are needed they will be personal, progressive, high quality and joined-up. They will provide choice and will give individuals more control to make housing-related decisions.

The following table indicates the National Performance Indicators:-

National Performance Indicators	Bromsgrove DC performance		
	2005/6	2007/8	2008/9
To increase housing energy efficiency by 30% from 1996-2010	22.64%	25.94%	Awaiting HECA Report 09/2009
To increase the proportion of vulnerable households achieving Decent Home Standard to in excess of 70% by 2010	76.66%	77.30%	77.83%
Number of private sector dwellings brought back into occupation each year as a result of action by the Local Authority	8	19	33
NI 187: - Monitor the proportion of households containing someone on means tested benefit (MTBs) that occupy a dwelling with a SAP rating less than 35 or greater than 65	N/A (New PI from 1.4.08)	N/A (New PI from 1.4.08)	Below 35 = 8.77% Above 65 = 36.11%

### Regional Priorities

**The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy;** has been formulated by the Regional Housing Board who are responsible for the allocation of housing funding. The key aim is to address the condition of housing in the District through advice and

enforcement action to ensure that dwellings meet Decent Homes standard.

**The Worcestershire Draft Code of Practise for Home Adaptations for People with Disabilities;** adopted by Bromsgrove Council, the protocol identifies best practise in the administration of Disabled Facilities Grants and identifies the role and responsibilities of the Local Authority and partner agencies.

**Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy;** identifies the importance of the Home Improvement Agency as a vehicle for the delivery of low level housing support to older and vulnerable clients.

The following table indicates Countywide performance indicators: -

Countywide Performance Indicators		Bromsgrove DC performance		
		2005/6	2007/8	2008/9
Number of DFG referrals received in each category	1	34	39	50
	2	19	40	51
	3	61	61	66
DFGs completed paediatric cases (0 – 19 age group) New in 2008		N/A	N/A	New From Jan 09
DFGs completed paediatric cases (16 -21 age Group) New in 2008		N/A	N/A	New From Jan 09
Number of Notices served under the Housing Act 2004		N/A	18	2

## Local Vision

At a local level, this strategy has to link effectively with Bromsgrove District Council’s corporate vision to **‘work together to build a district where people are proud to live and work, through community leadership and excellent services’** and Corporate Objectives:

- **Regeneration**
- **Improvement**
- **Sense of Community and Wellbeing**
- **Environment**

From this foundation, the Strategic Housing vision is to provide a co-ordinated approach to improving the quality of life for everyone living in the District by **‘making best use of existing accommodation by improving quality of accommodation and addressing the imbalanced housing market through the provision of more affordable housing.**

This Private Sector Housing Strategy supports the **‘Housing Strategy 2006 – 2011- Unlocking the door to meeting housing needs in Bromsgrove District** by detailing the Local Authorities strategy for improving housing conditions in owner occupied and privately rented accommodation.

In addition, to these national and regional policies there are a number of other priority areas identified within local plans, the key documents are as follows: -

**Customer First;** Bromsgrove District Council’s approach to Customer Care is placed at the centre of all service delivery creating a golden thread throughout the authority by applying service standards that are continually monitored.

The **Affordable Warmth Strategy,** documents and through a

subsequent area specific action plan, identifies areas and responsible officers required to reduce fuel poverty throughout North Worcestershire.

**Bromsgrove District Council Plan 2009 - 2012.** a “road map” for the Council’s work between now and 2012 that sets out objectives of Regeneration, Improvement, Sense of Community & Wellbeing and Environment. The Council priorities include Housing and Climate Change.

**Bromsgrove Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2011;** Sets out the 10 year vision for Housing and improving Health and Wellbeing.

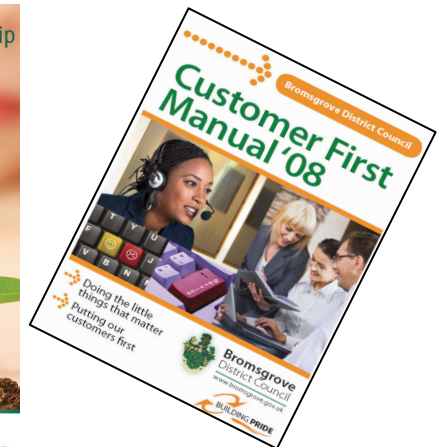
**The Climate Change Strategy;** details the actions the authority intends to undertake in order to prevent or reduced the adverse affects from climate change.

The **Empty Home Strategy;** details the authorities Empty Home Policy and sets out the advice, guidance and assistance that is available to encourage owners to bring unused properties back into use.

**The Housing Assistance Policy;** sets out type of grant assistance currently provided by Bromsgrove District and details the eligibility criteria for accessing these grants.

**Houses in Multiple Occupation-Licensing Policy;** sets out the standards required of a landlord running a licensable HMO, licensing procedure, fees and the local authorities regulatory powers.

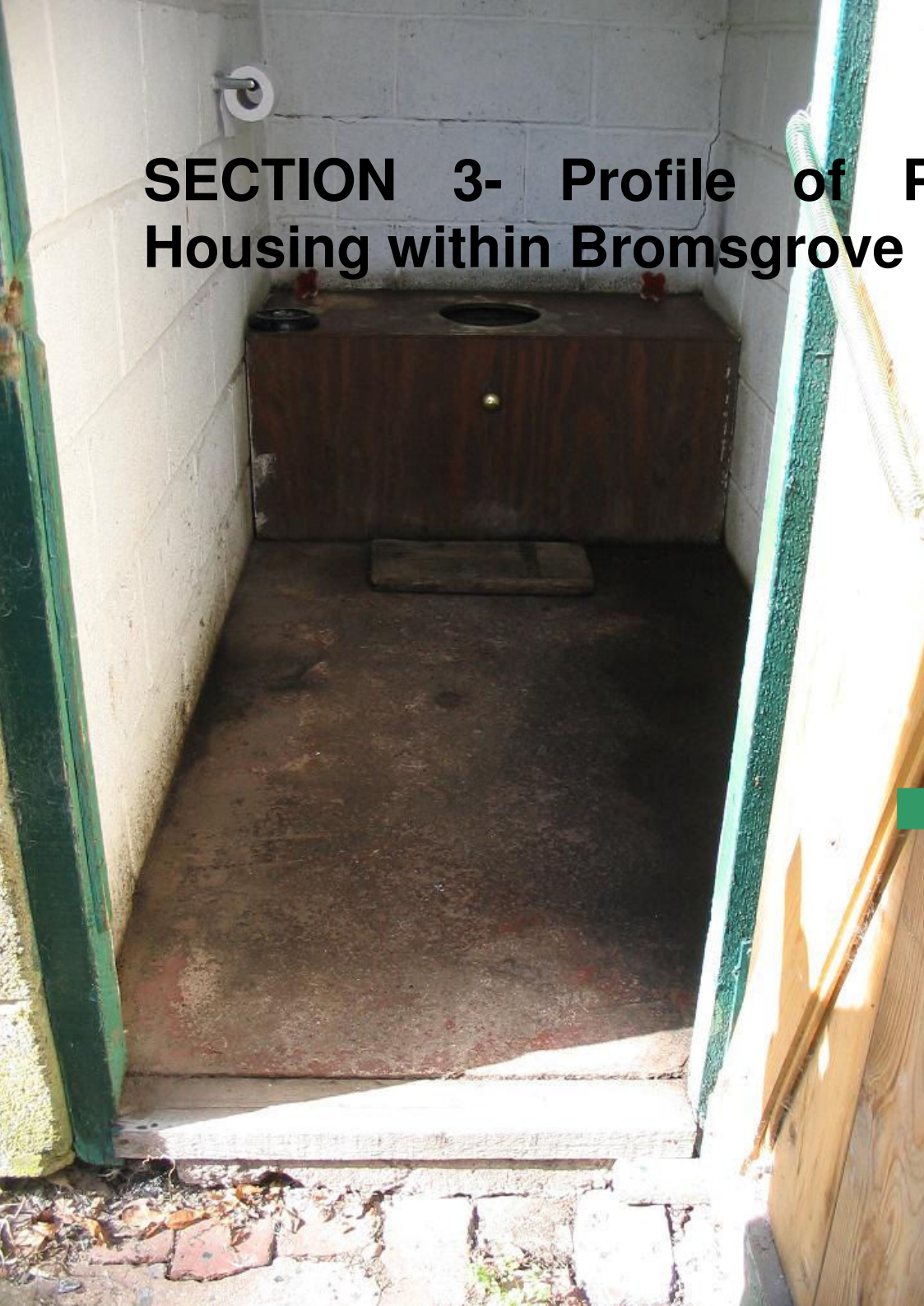
The following table overleaf sets out Bromsgrove District Council’s local Performance Indicators that relate to private sector housing: -



Local Performance Indicators		Bromsgrove DC performance		
		2005/6	2007/8	2008/9
Time taken (weeks) to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant from referral to final payment for the following: -	Category 1 (Highest Priority)	52	52	35.2
	Category 2 (Medium Priority)	52	52	41.4
	Category 3 (Lowest Priority)	52	52	57.6
Number of Disabled Facilities Grants completed.		54	104	90
Percentage and amount of Disabled Facilities Grant budget spent in year.		58.9% (£397,607)	64.6% (£507,727.49)	97.8% (Projected £648.094.49)
Number of discretionary grants completed.		27	56	45
Percentage and amount of Discretionary Grants budget spent.		40.9% (£63,950)	86.6% (£139,429.72)	100% (Projected £131.892.53)



# SECTION 3- Profile of Private Sector Housing within Bromsgrove





### 3. Profile of Private Sector Housing within Bromsgrove

In order to identify the local housing needs and condition of the housing stock in the District, a Private Sector House Condition Survey was undertaken by Fordham Research in October 2004. The survey also included an assessment of the 671 non Council / LSVT properties that were in the ownership of Registered Social landlords.

Whilst the survey took into account two key indicators, disrepair and unfitness, considerable attention was given to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, Decent Homes Standard and Energy Efficiency. The key findings are as follows: -

- A total of 856 (2.5%) dwellings of the housing stock were found to be unfit, these were mainly concentrated within the pre 1919 semi detached housing stock. Of the total number of unfit properties 251 were identified as being occupied by vulnerable households.
- A total of 1513 (4.2%) properties surveyed were found to be in substantial disrepair. 134 (3.8%) of the public sector properties surveyed were found to be in substantial disrepair in comparison to 1379 Private Sector properties.
- 8079 (25%) of the private sector dwellings were occupied by people aged 65 and over, with 17% of households containing at least one disabled person. Approximately 4865 (58%) of these households were in need of immediate repair works carried out to their homes.
- It was estimated that 6070 (17%) households contained at least one disabled person.

- The average Energy Efficiency (SAP rating) for the dwellings in the District was 52 which is slightly above the national average (49). However, 79.4% of homes failed the Decent Homes Standard as a result of lack of sufficient thermal comfort.

To report identified that to achieve the Decent Homes Standard the Council would have to raise the standard of dwellings occupied by vulnerable households to higher levels through targeted assistance. The Decent Homes Standard requirements are as follows: -

- The dwelling meets current statutory minimum standards
- The dwelling is reasonable state of repair
- The dwelling has reasonably modern facilities and services
- The dwelling provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System takes into consideration the standard of the property and the vulnerability of the household (see Section 4). This strategy focuses attention upon ways of providing assistance to vulnerable residents to help them achieve their housing needs and ensure that where possible vulnerable residents live in housing that meets the Decent Homes Standard. Vulnerable households are defined as:

- Any household where one or more occupant is in receipt of a means tested benefit
- Any household that has an occupant aged 60 years or more, or
- Any household that has an occupant who is disabled or suffering a long term illness
- Any household that contains one or more children aged 16 years or under

Bromsgrove has a higher than national average private sector housing stock and below average social and private rented housing. The 'Right To Buy' scheme had a significant influence upon the ratio of social to private sector housing in Bromsgrove with over 3,000 Council dwellings having been sold between 1980 and 2004.

In Bromsgrove District, there are an estimated 38,500 homes across all tenures. The recent Housing Market assessment identifies the following tenure breakdown.

Year	Owner Occupied	Shared Owners	Social Rented	Private Rented	Other Rented
2007	82.1%	0.4%	9.8%	5.7%	2.0%

The profile of private sector housing types across the district, compared with England and Wales is set out below.

House Types	Bromsgrove (%)	England and Wales (%)
Detached	36	22.77
Semi Detached	33	31.58
Flat	6	19.19
Terraced	23	25.8
Other	2	0.42

(Source: 2001 Census)

Compared with the national profile, the proportion of detached and semi detached are above the national average, however terraced properties are less than half the average for both West Midlands and England. Bromsgrove District has a significantly lower proportion of flats compared with the National average. 54% of properties within Bromsgrove District were built after 1964 a factor influencing the levels of non decent homes (19.0%) being lower than the National average of 32%. Of the 19% non decent homes,

43.8% are privately rented. The following table indicates the age profile of the housing stock.

Age profile of housing stock	Bromsgrove (%)	England and Wales (%)
Pre 1919	11	24
1919-1944	12	18
1945-1964	22	18
Post 1965	54	38

(Source: 2001 Census)

The private sector house condition survey recognised the need for discretionary grant assistance to be introduced to target the most vulnerable households in order to assist those in the greatest of need. The survey indicated that demographic evidence suggests that the demand for Home Repairs Assistance and Disabled Facilities Grants will increase due to the aging population within Bromsgrove. Bromsgrove District Council therefore worked in partnership with neighbouring authorities and Supporting People to jointly develop and fund the North Worcestershire Care & Repair Agency (HIA) to assist elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to repair and improve their homes.

Building upon the strong countywide housing and support partnerships that exist a re-commissioning of HIA services in the form of a single countywide Home Improvement Agency is in progress providing a unique opportunity to improve and expand the range of services that improve the independence of older and disabled residents. The proposed new HIA will bring together statutory and voluntary sector partners to be more cost effective and innovative in meeting statutory requirements and key outcomes.



**BEFORE GRANT**

**AFTER GRANT**

### Future House Condition

To effectively deliver efficient and value for money services, it is essential that the authority accurately understands the housing needs of the District. In partnership with neighbouring authorities, the Council has therefore commissioned a **Housing Needs Survey (2009)** to increase its understanding of the housing needs, conditions and markets within the Bromsgrove District. The survey, scheduled for completion by July 2009, will incorporate data obtained from a **Thermal Flyover (2009)** to provide more meaningful objectives, structural and socio-economic information from a review of 4% of private and socially owned dwellings. The report will provide a rational basis for strategic investment to encourage housing markets to operate in a way that meets the needs of the community.

The survey aims to determine the extent and severity of disrepair in dwellings across the District with particular regard towards vulnerable households, decent homes, houses in multiple

occupation and energy efficiency.

### Issues facing the Private Sector Housing

The private rented sector performs an important housing function in the provision of short to medium term accommodation to a range of different households and markets. The responsibility for the maintenance of private sector dwellings rests with the owner-occupiers. Figures released by the ODPM reveal that 12% of homeowners aged 70 or over would not be able to pay for major repairs to their homes.

The Bromsgrove Housing Market Assessment (2008) identified that 19% of households within Bromsgrove District contain one or more members with identified special needs e.g. physical or mental disability. This has increased by 2% since the Stock Condition Survey was undertaken in 2004.

- 23.9% of vulnerable households living in the private sector were found to be living in non decent homes.
- Average costs to make homes decent are relatively high in comparison with the 2001 England average (£3,820), with the majority of homes failing on disrepair issues which would cost approximately £4,920 to remedy.
- Since 2004 the number of empty homes in the private sector have reduced from over 755 to 728.

The demand for home aids and adaptations has increase by 145% since 2005 from 59 Occupational Therapists referrals to 149 referrals received in 2007. Few houses have an accepted standard of accessibility and most of the older housing has none at all. As most housing the UK is over 50 years old, the problem exists on a large scale. Historically government policy has been to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to carry out



individual improvement when the need emerges. According to research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, one in four households includes a person with some form of disability, usually someone elderly. This is particularly evident in the Bromsgrove District with 19% of households containing at least one disabled/elderly person.

By 2026 older people will account for almost half of the national increase in the total number of households. Forecasts estimate that there will be an additional 6700 people aged 60 or over by 2026 living within Bromsgrove District. The over 60s age group is estimated to see the greatest increase in growth compared with the younger age ranges.

### **Energy Efficiency**

The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating is the Government standard rating for energy efficiency within a dwelling. The reading is expressed on a 1-100 scale, the higher the reading, the better the energy efficiency of the building. The average SAP rating for a dwelling within Bromsgrove is 52, which is slightly above the national average (49).

A key issue in reducing energy consumption within Bromsgrove is tackling fuel poverty. The occupiers of a dwelling are considered to be in fuel poverty if more than 10% of their net income has to be spent on heating and hot water. Where fuel poverty exists this indicates energy inefficient dwellings which are very often occupied by residents who are least likely to be able to carry out improvements due to low incomes.

Schemes to assist and encourage landlords to improve energy efficiency of privately rented accommodation have been developed by Bromsgrove District Council. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System also supports the need to encourage compliance with Excess Cold issues, which are closely related to

Fuel Poverty. The estimated works involved to improve the SAP rating of a dwelling from 52 to 57 are as follows: -

- Loft and Cavity wall insulation
- Double Glazing
- Central Heating

The average cost for these works per dwelling is £390 and will on average reduce the energy costs from £461 to £410 per annum.

For owner occupiers, assistance in the form of advice and guidance can be provided as well as national and local authority grant assistance. Bromsgrove District Council works in close partnership with Act on Energy (Worcestershire) in order to promote Energy Efficiency throughout the District.

Dwellings occupied by older households (head of the household over the age of 65) are more likely to be in fuel poverty than dwellings occupied by younger residents. However due to the current financial climate it is proposed that a large number or younger households will be considered to be suffering fuel poverty. As might be expected, given that fuel poverty is a function of low incomes, it is also associated with receipt of benefits.

In order to remedy fuel poverty it is necessary to make dwellings more energy efficient by addressing the elements that are making the dwelling inefficient. As it is not possible to alter the construction type and age of a dwelling, altering the heating and insulation provisions within the dwelling are the most effective methods in improving energy efficiency.

Privately owned properties have the highest proportion of heating costs at £491 with privately rented accommodation at a slightly lower cost of £382. Housing association (RSL) dwellings have

costs at around £245 as a result of the requirement upon RSLs to bring all of their stock up to the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

The Stock Condition survey found that 7.5% of dwellings with lofts have minimal or no loft insulation at all and 36.0% of dwellings have loft insulation of 90mm or less, a level that is generally considered as a minimum below which replacement or additional installation would be required.

The Warmfront Scheme, a central government initiative providing energy efficient improvements to those least likely to be able to afford them, was never designed to fully address dwellings that pose a fuel poverty threat. On average the cost of improving a dwelling that causes fuel poverty is in the region of £3,200. The maximum Warm Front grant available is £2,700. Therefore the Local Authority 'Top Up' the Warmfront grant is necessary in order to assist those with the greatest need to access improved insulation.

Tackling fuel poverty is a key target for the authority as it aids those residents in most need as well as improving the thermal comfort (required under the Decent Homes Standard) and potentially reduces the number dwellings falling into disrepair and presenting Category 1 Hazards e.g. damp and mould growth, excess cold etc. Targeting the whole district through a Thermal Flyover (2009) will enable the Local Authority to identify areas and properties which are in the most need of energy efficiencies measures, thus targeting investment, assistance and guidance to these areas.

There is currently a Central Government Initiative which enables those households over the age of 70 to receive free loft and cavity wall insulation; however the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) funding is limited due to the recent influx of demand for the product. In order to ensure these households are safely housed in energy efficient accommodation, Bromsgrove District

Council currently provides a grant assistance package to encourage landlords and homeowners to meet the requirements of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, Decent Homes Standard and reduce Fuel Poverty within the District. This package aims to provide more energy efficient accommodation through providing free loft and cavity wall insulation where occupants are 60 years or above.

Bromsgrove District Council has also introduced a Renewable Energy Scheme to encourage home owners to install renewable energy measures such as solar panels and wind generators. Matched grant is currently available up to £1000 with advice and guidance to households from both the Local Authority and our partner agency 'Act on Energy'.

The Stock Condition survey also identified the cost of remedying substandard conditions and Energy Efficiency issues. Special attention was given to all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) within the District, which underwent assessment as part of the survey. The findings of the survey have been used in developing a prioritised action programme to bring HMO's up to a Decent Standard.

At the time of the Stock Condition Survey in 2004 it was estimated that there were over £9,116 of general repairs and £6,535 of urgent repairs per property required to Bromsgrove District's Private Housing Stock. It was felt at the time when the Housing Health and Safety Rating System was introduced that this was greatly underestimated.

The results of the survey indicate that the total comprehensive costs for all private sector dwellings in Bromsgrove currently stands at approximately £43.3million. This figure includes the cost of carrying out all urgent and general repairs required to bring a property up to a Decent Standard that would require no further work for a minimum of 10 years.

The Local Authority has recognised that information relating to the condition of the private sector stock needed to ascertain an accurate assessment of the current housing market and to set more meaningful objectives is limited and out of date. A countywide House Stock Condition Survey and Thermal Imaging Fly Over has therefore been commissioned in 2009 to update the 2004 Stock Condition Survey and provide more comprehensive data on the energy efficiency of dwellings throughout the District. The surveys will enable investment, advice, guidance and assistance to become targeted throughout the areas of the district with the greatest need.

To address the issues identified relating to the private sector housing stock in the Bromsgrove District this Strategy and its Action Plan (Appendix 2) aims to achieve its objectives by: -

- Working with people to help them improve their homes
- Endeavouring to create the right conditions, incentives and financial packages to effectively assist people to improve their homes
- Where co-operation and encouragement fails we will use our enforcement powers to ensure that tenants are living in safe and decent housing.





# SECTION 4 - Current issues influencing the Private Sector Housing Market



**BEFORE GRANT WORKS**



**AFTER GRANT WORKS**

## 4. Current Issues Influencing the Private Sector Housing Market

**The Bromsgrove District Housing Market** – suffers from an imbalance. A low level of social housing and lack of privately rented accommodation impacts upon the need to assist owner occupiers to maintain, improve and make best use of existing housing stock and encourage prospective landlords to let out under utilised accommodation.

**The 2008/09 economic downturn** being experienced at the time of developing this strategy has significant impact upon the private sector housing in the district:

- The reduced availability of credit and the increased requirement for prospective home buyers to provide larger deposits is increasing demand for social housing and privately rented accommodation. Housing inspections are identifying a resultant upward trend in overcrowding of privately rented and owner occupied dwellings.
- Values, sales and confidence in the housing market have experienced a decline impacting upon levels of empty homes and community cohesion. Downsizing has become increasingly difficult and a less viable option for under occupied homeowners in some circumstances increasing incidents of fuel poverty.
- Although house prices stabilised and reduced in 2008, the longer term impact of the rising housing market means that affordability in Bromsgrove District remains a significant issue.
- The economic downturn is slowing the delivery of newly built open market housing with larger scale developments being

shelved. Nationally this is impacting upon the delivery of affordable and social housing increasing pressure on privately rented options.

- Shared ownership forms of affordable housing have become less viable to both Registered Social Landlord providers and prospective purchasers.
- Complaints regarding health and safety and quality issues in privately rented accommodation is increasing as landlords become less financially able to maintain property standards by the Local Authority and its partners.
- Rising employment and the risk of increasing mortgage arrears and home repossessions is raising the need for support, advice and mortgage rescue services to be provided.
- In the longer term the economic downturn is likely to impact upon the condition of private sector accommodation both owner occupied and privately let as owners ability to invest in building maintenance and longer term improvements is reduced.
- Reducing household incomes are likely to increase incidents of fuel poverty and impede resident's ability to install energy saving measures in their homes.

**The Proposed Town Centre Regeneration** is enabling an extensive survey of under utilised accommodation over shop units to inform future plans to encourage private landlords to convert, improve and let their property to meet local housing needs.

**The 2008 Bromsgrove Housing Market Assessment** – identifies significant unmet housing need within the district with particular reference to the increasing older population and the requirement to provide a range of housing options for older people to encourage down sizing across all tenures. The need is influencing the provision of an under occupation survey and the development of an incentive and support service to assist and encourage older people to move to accommodation that better meets their needs and requirements and thus free up family accommodation to the market.

**The ageing profile of the District's population** – impacts upon the increasing demand for disabled facilities grants for the adaptation of homes and assistance to home owners to maintain their dwellings in older age as their incomes decrease.





# SECTION 5-Consultation and Emerging Priorities

• Housing Corp Grant Rates/VFM Requirements

## Improving the Quality and Availability of Private Sector Housing

- Lack of private rented accommodation
- Difficulty in securing flats above shops
- Limited opportunities to use planning powers
- More Houses in Multiple Occupation

## Addressing Homelessness

- Homelessness
- Youth Homelessness
- Overcrowding
- Credit crunch
- Mortgage Repossessions
- Redundancy/Unemployment

## Supporting Vulnerable Groups to Live Independently

• Vulnerable Population - Lack of appropriate housing

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

FIRE





## 5. Consultation and Emerging Priorities

Consultation has been undertaken in order to identify local priorities with residents, stakeholders and businesses. The process was fundamental to the production of this document and essential to identifying the concerns, aspirations and priorities of the community. The Stakeholder Consultation events that were held in November 2008 assisted in the formulation of the strategic priorities and actions and subsequent consultation has taken place in agreeing the final document and policy.

Thriving housing markets are the key to the creation of sustainable communities and our work with private sector housing has a major impact upon the wider housing strategy.

**Improving the standard of private sector housing and increasing the availability and accessibility of private rented housing, especially to those on lower incomes, is identified as the Council's second Housing Priority.** The private sector housing objectives closely overlap and assist the Council's other three housing priorities by:

- Increasing the availability of private housing for rent to supplement the limited supply of affordable social housing.
- Assisting the homeless to access the private rented sector to reduce the use of temporary accommodation.
- Supporting vulnerable people to live separately.

The support to private sector housing by the Council is of paramount importance in achieving a balanced housing market, long term benefits to the health and quality of life of our residents and protection of the environment.

The following Private Sector Housing priorities have been identified for service provision: -

1. Assistance to older people, the vulnerable and those with disabilities to live independently within their own homes and the community.
2. Provision of advice, guidance and assistance to reduce energy use and to help combat fuel poverty.
3. Improvement in the quality of privately owned and rented accommodation to Decent Homes Standard through advice and assistance and the enforcement of minimum house condition standards.
4. Improve access to privately rented housing and promote a strong and well managed private rented sector through the provision of support and guidance to landlords and tenants.
5. Monitoring and promotion of improved property standards within rented accommodation through inspection.
6. Investigation into levels of under-occupancy of housing throughout the District to promote more efficient use of housing stock and reduce the number of empty homes.
7. Improve standards and energy efficiency within Mobile Home sites.
8. Apply Value for Money measures to the grants process, the supply of materials and contractors and implement the optional use of the equity release Kick Start Scheme.



# SECTION 6- Private Sector Housing Priorities in Detail





## 6. Private Sector Housing Priorities in Detail

The role of a private sector housing team creates both challenges and opportunities, therefore in order to make best use of existing accommodation Bromsgrove District Council must look carefully at the private sector housing needs and previous policies in order to develop a balanced housing market.

A Stock Condition Survey undertaken in 2005 looked at a cross section of the private sector housing in the district. This study has enabled Bromsgrove District Council to develop a clearer understanding of the make up of housing type and tenure throughout the District.

As a result, the Stock Condition Survey enabled us to focus upon the main areas of need which identified that there were high levels of 'unfitness', disrepair and poor thermal efficiency within the following: -

- Private rented properties
- Pre 1919 dwellings
- End terraced and flats
- Vulnerable Households
- Pensioners and single households.

Based upon the stock condition information held and Strategic Housing Consultation the priorities for Private Sector Housing set out in the Council's overall Housing Strategy (2006 – 2011) have been reviewed and are as set out below: -

### 1. Assistance to older people, the vulnerable and those with disabilities to live independently within their own homes and the community.

Figures released by the ODPM reveal that 12% of homeowners aged 70 or over would not be able to pay for major repairs to their homes. Both Central and Local Government are therefore now addressing the requirement to make housing sustainable in order to address housing needs.

Ultimately the responsibility for maintaining privately owned homes rests with the owners and where owners can afford to carry out repairs and maintenance through their own resources they are encouraged to do so. The Council, however acknowledges that it is essential to assist lower income homeowners with repairs in order to ensure people remain in their homes for longer and in safety through the provision of advice, guidance or assistance.

Vulnerable households in need are able to access advice, guidance and assistance through the Home Improvement Agency, (The North Worcestershire Care and Repair Agency). This HIA was developed in 2004 and is primarily funded through the Local Authority, Supporting People and fee income through nationally and locally funded grants. The proposed recommissioning of a countywide Home Improvement Agency from 2010 will be appropriately placed to address the themes of the national strategy to assist in improving social care, health and social wellbeing within the District by supporting choice, providing more options to fund works, providing handyman schemes and linking into the health and support personalisation agenda.

## **2. Provision of advice, guidance and assistance to reduce energy use and to help combat fuel poverty.**

Bromsgrove District Council encourages energy efficient lifestyles through advice, guidance and assistance. The Private Sector Housing Team work in close partnership with 'Act on Energy' our partner agency to provide initiatives to the residents of Bromsgrove District in order to improve thermal comfort within their dwellings. We currently inspect properties with the aim of bringing them up to the Decent Homes Standard and therefore thermal comfort is included within this remit.

Currently a Home Insulation Project is operating throughout the district which enables Residents are therefore eligible for free loft and cavity wall insulation and a free hot water tank jacket subject to the following eligibility criteria: -

- Residents over the age of 60 years of age
- Living within a property within council tax band A - E

The Council's Private Sector Housing Team works closely with other local authorities to develop and advise on energy efficiency initiatives. Following a countywide grant of £92,000 being obtained through the LAA a Thermal Flyover has been commissioned, completed and the report is due in July 2009.

Bromsgrove District Council also provides grant assistance towards the installation of renewable energy sources e.g. Photovoltaics, ground heat source and wind turbine generation by currently offering £1,000 match funding to eligible residents. The aim however is to work in conjunction with Act on Energy to develop an energy efficient property/competition for promotion purposes potentially within newly developed Affordable Housing sites.

## **3. Improvement in the quality of privately owned and rented accommodation to Decent Homes Standard through advice and assistance and the enforcement of minimum house condition standards.**

Through the introduction of the Housing Act 2004 it has been identified that there is a direct correlation between housing quality and impact on the health of the occupants, visitors and on the quality of life in an area, which is based upon historical NHS data. Bromsgrove District Council therefore aims to improve the standard of accommodation within the District to enable all residents remain in their existing property for a longer period in safety to maintain their independence. Providing and enabling properties to reach a Decent Standard (See Section 3) reduces the pressures on Social Housing, Social Services, National Health Service or Primary Care Trust pressures.

All properties are currently inspected to identify Category 1 Hazards and the works required to bring a property up to a Decent Home Standard. It is the aim however to inspect all privately rented accommodation throughout the district over the next 5 years in order to bring them up to a Decent Standard, thus ensuring that more Privately Rented Properties become a viable option for residents within the district.

## **4. Improve access to privately rented housing and promote a strong and well managed private rented sector through the provision of support and guidance to landlords and tenants.**

Bromsgrove District Council's Private Sector Housing Team provides advice, guidance and assistance to landlords and tenants during property inspections and through the annual landlord forum. A text message initiative has recently been launched to landlords that enable updates on events and legislative changes to be sent to all landlords throughout the District.

A **Step Up Private Tenancy Scheme** has been developed in order to enable vulnerable people over the age of 25 years to access decent private rented accommodation with the assistance of a guaranteed rent deposit or a **Guaranteed Bond Scheme** which enables residents to access private rented accommodation by the Local Authority issuing a bond to secure a private tenancy.

#### **5. Monitoring and promotion of improved property standards within rented accommodation through inspection.**

The Private Sector Housing Team is currently working in conjunction with the recently introduced Choice Based Letting Scheme in order to expand the housing choice of residents throughout the District. A pilot scheme is in operation allowing private Landlords to promote their properties on the Home Choice Plus website provided a satisfactory inspection has been undertaken establishing that the dwelling meets the Decent Home Standards.

#### **6. Investigation into levels of under-occupancy of housing throughout the District to promote more efficient use of housing stock and reduce the number of empty homes.**

Bromsgrove District Council is working in conjunction with BDHT to assess the requirements of residents that are considering downsizing. The recent Housing Market Assessment identified a large demand for smaller 2 bed accommodation. Survey work is essential in identifying the areas and the extent of under-occupancy throughout the District to enable the Local Authority provide assistance and develop incentives.

#### **7. Improve standards and energy efficiency within Mobile Home sites.**

Mobile Home Site inspections form an essential part of the Private Sector Housing Function to ensure health and Safety of residents and to develop initiatives to combat thermal inefficiency. A consultation event with site owners and residents is to assist with the full implementation to the Mobile Home Model Standards and improvement initiatives.

#### **8. Apply Value for Money measures to the grants process, the supply of materials and contractors and implement the optional use of the equity release Kick Start Scheme.**

Effective and speedy response to requests for home adaptation by disabled residents necessitates the careful monitoring of performance. Between 2007 and 2009 the average time taken to implement adaptations was reduced from 52 weeks (average) to 33 weeks (average) for a Category 1 DFG as a result of all policies, and paperwork being reviewed and procedures re-engineered.



# SECTION 7-Avaliable Resources





## 7. Available Resources

A realistic assessment of the availability of current and future resources to support the Private Sector Housing Strategy is fundamental to the Councils ability to deliver upon priorities and actions set.

The table on this page sets out the resources available to support the key Private Sector Housing Services which primarily consist of:

- The provision and support of the Council's Private Sector Housing Team (4 F/T staff members).
- Financial support to enable the provision of Home Improvement Agency services for the Bromsgrove District.
- The provision of Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants.
- The provision of a range of Discretionary Grants:
  - Home Repair Assistance Grant
  - Renovation Grant
  - Landlord Fire Safety Grant
  - Empty Property Grant
  - Home Insulation Project
  - Renewable Energy Grant

The Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy (Appendix I) sets out the criteria for the application of grants and the council's intervention in the private sector, taking into consideration the powers contained within the Regulatory Reform Order.

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>	<b>2009/10 Budget</b>
<b>Private Sector Housing Team</b>		
BDC Revenue		<b>£127,022</b>
<b>Home Improvement Agency</b>		
Revenue Support	67,884	<b>£148,884</b>
Supporting People Funds	30,000	
Fee income	51,000	
<b>Disabled Facilities Grants</b>		
Central Govt Grant	£310,000	<b>£510,000</b>
Local Authority	£200,000	
<b>Discretionary Grants</b>		
West Midlands Regional Housing Pot L A Grant	£63,000	<b>£100,000</b>
Local Authority	£47,000	
<b>Renewable Energy Grants</b>		
Local authority	9,000	<b>£9,000</b>
<b>Home Insulation Project</b>		
Local authority	36,000	<b>£36,000</b>
<b>Grants For HMO Fire Safety</b>		
Local authority	20,000	<b>£20,000</b>
<b>Kick Start Equity Release Scheme</b>		
West Midlands Regional Housing Pot allocation	110,000	<b>£110,000</b>



# SECTION 8- Outcomes and Key Performance Targets

## Private Landlords Newsletter

ISSUE 13 SPRING 2009

### Book early for the Landlord's Forum

Bromsgrove District Council would like to welcome you to our annual Private Landlord's Forum on 5th February 2009.

...ent will offer all private landlords, letting agents and potential landlords the opportunity to find out important news that affects the private rented sector, information on new Council led initiatives.

...are pleased to announce that we have managed to secure speakers to you on "How the economic climate affects private landlords", "New - potential future changes to the private sector" and "How to advertise your private rented properties now, for free, using Lettings Systems".

...will be a variety of stalls provided by local agencies who will be able to provide you with useful information.

...where you will be able to browse information on the services available. Presentations will start at 6.30pm.

**NEWS STORY 1**  
How to advertise your private rented properties now, for free, using Lettings Systems

**NEWS STORY 2**  
New grants for Landlords Available

**NEWS STORY 3**  
Energy Performance Certificates are now Required

**NEWS STORY 4**  
A Helping Hand from the CAB

**citizens advice**

## HOUSING

### HOUSING SEES STARS

Our Housing Team's hard work paid off when independent housing inspectors gave the service a one star rating.

**Housing services from council are improving**

...At a previous inspection in March 2008 the service was given a one star rating with 'little or no prospect of improvement'. The Audit Commission confirmed the Authority is continuing to make progress and was given the Strategic Housing Service a 'one star' rating with 'promising prospects for improvement'.

...An emphasis in the delivery of affordable housing services has been to ensure that the service also meets Government targets on reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation. Two years ahead of schedule and having no households staying in bed and breakfast.

...It was over the coming months and in partnership with Bromsgrove Youth Centre, the opportunity to talk to a group of young people in Bromsgrove.

## Home Sweet Home

IMPROVEMENT

...Mrs T is the one of many residents who has benefited from the partnership in many ways.

...The North Worcestershire Care & Repair Agency reserved the right to be first to be in to see the property.

...The Council has been able to do this because of the partnership with the Agency.

...The Council has been able to do this because of the partnership with the Agency.

## Regional Centre of Excellence

IMPROVEMENT

...The Council has been able to do this because of the partnership with the Agency.

...The Council has been able to do this because of the partnership with the Agency.

...The Council has been able to do this because of the partnership with the Agency.

## Getting greener

Renewable Energy Grant for Bromsgrove District has reduced energy bills for many homes.

...The Council has been able to do this because of the partnership with the Agency.

...The Council has been able to do this because of the partnership with the Agency.

## Together

SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND WELL BEING

### Home Sweet Home

Bromsgrove District Council spent over £647,157 last year (an increase of 71% on the previous year) helping elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people stay in their own homes.

...The money, given through Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Repair Assistance, has helped 137 families (58% up on the previous year) by improving, adapting and repairing their properties.

...What are the grants used for? Disabled Facilities Grants are available for both BDHT and privately owned properties to provide disabled facilities such as level access showers, ramps, stair lifts and bedroom/bathroom extensions.

...Home Repair Assistance Grants are used for repairing the building to make sure it is safe, habitable, weather-proof and warm.

...How do you find out if you are eligible for a grant? A Disabled Facility Grant is available to local residents on referral through the Occupational Therapists from the Princess of Wales Hospital and each case will be individual assessed.

...For Home Repair Assistance Grants you can visit or call the Customer Service Team for advice and a referral form. You can e-mail your request direct to private.sector.housing@bromsgrove.gov.uk or write to the Private Sector Housing Team, Bromsgrove District Council, The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove. B60 1AA.

### Giving Ken back his independence

Eighty-three year old Ken Hill thought his world had collapsed when he found himself a prisoner in his own home.

...For the once active ex-Army Sergeant could no longer get out and about when a stroke left him having to use sticks to walk. His steep front doorstep was too much for him to negotiate. The outside world was suddenly out of bounds. But, then, through the Occupational Therapist, Bromsgrove District Council was able to come to his rescue and make things better.

...A ramp leading to his front door was installed outside his Rubery home which gave him back his independence.

..."The ramp has given me a new lease of life because before I could only go out when friends and family were able to help. It really has made a world of difference. I'm even ready to start courting again!" he chuckled.

...Ken's daughter Janet agrees. "The ramp has given him back his independence. He can now go out when he likes and does not have to rely on someone else. It has also taken years off his life because he hated being trapped in his own four walls. It made him very depressed.

...The ramp has not only helped my dad, but the whole family too," she added.

### Partnership Working Brings More Choice

Choice Plus will offer a range of housing options for those with a private rented property who are struggling to pay their rent.

...The common areas using just one simplified policy for all applicants across all six areas will be consistent.

...The Department for Communities and Local Government is really good news and will be one of the first sub-regions to be allocated the funding.

...The ramp has given me a new lease of life because before I could only go out when friends and family were able to help. It really has made a world of difference. I'm even ready to start courting again!" he chuckled.

### Reducing your carbon footprint

Help is on hand for householders who want to reduce their carbon footprint.

...Renewable Energy Grants are available from our Private Sector Housing Team for a selection of energy saving technologies, including Solar Hot Water, Ground Source Heat Pumps, Solar Photovoltaics, Wind Turbines, Small Scale Hydro Turbines, Wood Fuel Boilers and Pellet Stoves.

...Certain criteria, however, must be met to qualify for the 50% grant on costs of up to £1,000. Loft insulation to the highest property is required, to meet current building regulations, cavity wall insulation where applicable, low energy light bulbs in all appropriate fittings and basic controls on the heating system to include room thermostat and programmer/timers.

...For more information and to find out how to apply for a grant, please contact the Private Sector Housing Team on 01527 881436.

### Looking for Sites

Landowners and developers were asked to help identify sites for future housing as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

...The purpose of the study is to inform planning policy decisions on locations to meet housing targets set through the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

### Home Insulation Project

For a limited period Bromsgrove District Council is offering free insulation to those over 60 living in privately owned or rented property within the district and who are on a low income.

...It's easy to apply - just call Action Energy on 0800 888 2881 and they will arrange for an approved contractor to visit your home to see whether you are eligible.



## 8. Outcomes and Key Performance Targets

### Key Strategic Outcomes

**Sustained long term 'Decent' housing conditions, improved quality of privately rented accommodation (including HMOs), higher standards for healthier and safer homes.**

**Improved energy efficiency of homes.**

**Better support and assistance to older and vulnerable people in making home improvements and adaptations, healthier and safer homes.**

**Increased access to private rented accommodation for the homeless, increased choice and increased support and assistance to landlords.**

**KEY TARGET** - To increase housing energy efficiency by 30% from 1996 – 2010 and 32% by 2014.

Performance

to March 05 = 20.69%,

to March 06 = 22.68%,

to March 07 = 24.64%

to March 08 = 25.94%

**KEY TARGET** – To increase the proportion of vulnerable households achieving Decent Homes Standard to in excess of 70% by 2010 and 80% by 2014.

Performance

March 04 = 76.1%,

March 06 = 76.33,

March 07 = 76.66%,

March 08 = 77.30%

**KEY TARGET** – To return private sector dwellings into occupation each year as a result of action by the Local Authority.

Performance

06/07 = 8 units,

07/08 = 19 units

08/09 = 33 units

09/10 Target = 25

**KEY TARGET** – (NI187) To monitor the proportion of households containing someone on means tested benefit (MTBs) that occupy a dwelling with a AP rating less than 35 or greater than 65

	Below 35 (SAP)	Above 65 (SAP)
08/09	8.77%	36.11%
09/10	<b>7.27% TARGET</b>	<b>37.61% TARGET</b>
10/11	<b>5.77% TARGET</b>	<b>39.11% TARGET</b>
11/12	To be agree countywide	
12/13	To be agree countywide	
13/14	To be agree countywide	

**KEY TARGET** – To monitor the time taken in weeks to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant from referral to final payment for separate Categories

DFG Category	2007/08 Performance	2008/9 Performance	2009/10 Targets	2014 Target
Category 1	52	35.2	34	30
Category 2	52	41.4	38	34
Category 3	52	57.6	52	50

# APPENDIX 1- Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy



**Housing Leaflet No. 17**

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Strategic Housing Department  
Bromsgrove District Council, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire B60 1AA  
Tel: (01527) 881388 Fax: (01527) 881318  
Email: private.sector.housing@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Internet: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**This leaflet can be provided in large print, braille, CD, audio tape and computer disc.**

Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages  
Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages  
Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages

**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with



**Housing Leaflet No. 18**

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Strategic Housing Department  
Bromsgrove District Council, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire B60 1AA  
Tel: (01527) 881388 Fax: (01527) 881318  
Email: private.sector.housing@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Internet: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**This leaflet can be provided in large print, braille, CD, audio tape and computer disc.**

Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages  
Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages

**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with



**Bromsgrove District Council**

**OTHER TYPES OF HELP AVAILABLE**

As well as financial help, we can also help you with other things like:  
- getting a new boiler or heating system  
- getting a new roof or gutters  
- getting a new window or door  
- getting a new kitchen or bathroom  
- getting a new garden or driveway  
- getting a new fence or gate  
- getting a new driveway or path  
- getting a new shed or garage  
- getting a new garage door  
- getting a new garage roof  
- getting a new garage floor  
- getting a new garage wall  
- getting a new garage window  
- getting a new garage door  
- getting a new garage roof  
- getting a new garage floor  
- getting a new garage wall  
- getting a new garage window

**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with

**Housing Leaflet No. 19**

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Strategic Housing Department  
Bromsgrove District Council, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire B60 1AA  
Tel: (01527) 881388 Fax: (01527) 881318  
Email: private.sector.housing@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Internet: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**This leaflet can be provided in large print, braille, CD, audio tape and computer disc.**

Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages  
Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages

**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with

**Housing Leaflet No. 10**

**Housing Assistance Scheme Charities and Trusts**

**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with

**Housing Leaflet No. 11**

**GRANT REPAYMENT CONDITIONS**

There are no repayment conditions attached to a DFG, however applicants will have to sign a certificate stating if they intend to remain in the property throughout the grant period, which is currently five years.

For information regarding funding from external agencies please see Housing Assistance Scheme Charities and Trust Leaflet.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Strategic Housing Department  
Bromsgrove District Council, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire B60 1AA  
Tel: (01527) 881337 Fax: (01527) 881433  
Email: strategic.housing@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Internet: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**This leaflet can be provided in large print, braille, CD, audio tape and computer disc.**

Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages  
Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages

**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with



**Housing Leaflet No. 10**

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Strategic Housing Department  
Bromsgrove District Council, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire B60 1AA  
Tel: (01527) 881388 Fax: (01527) 881318  
Email: private.sector.housing@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Internet: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**This leaflet can be provided in large print, braille, CD, audio tape and computer disc.**

Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages  
Need help with English? Bromsgrove Local Tel: 01527 881327  
Interpretation services in English - interpreters in a variety of languages

**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with



**STEP 2**  
The BT will then assess each case on its priority based on the level of need. This ensures that more urgent cases are dealt with in a timely manner.

**STEP 3**  
A grants officer will then contact you to make an appointment to complete a test of financial means application form. During this time evidence of your income and savings are required. Following this visit you will receive a letter advising whether you have to make a contribution to the cost of the works. (An appeal can be made at this time)

**STEP 4**  
A schedule of works will be drawn up and an estimate for the works will be obtained. Written confirmation of the required works and start date for the work to begin will be made within 4 months of all valid paperwork received. There is a limit of 12 months to complete the works, once the grant has been approved.

**STEP 5**  
Once the building works have been completed, you will be asked to confirm that you are happy with the works so that the payment can be made.

**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with



**Bromsgrove District Council**  
The Council House, Barstall Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA,  
Tel: 01527 881388 Fax: 01527 881318

**WOLVING PARTNERS**  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

**care & repair agency**  
In partnership with



## **Bromsgrove District Council**

### **Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2009**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy is designed to contribute towards the Council's strategic aims and objectives by assisting;
- a) The improvement of housing quality in all tenures.
  - b) Improving energy efficiency and eliminating fuel poverty.
  - c) Renovating unfit houses and bringing empty properties back into use.
  - d) Enabling people to stay in their home as they get older and provide disabled persons with maximum ability around their homes.
  - e) Improving social care, health and social wellbeing.

#### **2. Key Priorities**

- 2.1 The Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy recognises that there is a need to address the issue of people on low incomes who cannot afford to maintain their properties in good repair.

#### **3. Resources Available**

- 3.1 This Private Sector Housing Assistance policy sets out to provide a balanced programme of support to occupants of private sector housing within the resources that the

Council has available for the provision of discretionary grants (currently £100,000 pa) to supplement the wider national resources that are accessed by the work of the North Worcestershire Care & Repair Agency.

#### **4. Purpose of Housing Assistance**

- 4.1 Housing assistance may therefore be offered (subject to financial resources being available) by Bromsgrove District Council ('the Council') in accordance with this policy, to assist with the cost of the following:
- The improvement, repair or adaptation of a home including houseboats and mobile homes
  - Home energy efficiency
  - Home security and safety
  - 'Home Move'
  - Loans through suitable partner organisations
- 4.2 The assistance may be in any form including but not restricted to grants, provision of materials, carrying out works, loans or loan guarantees.
- 4.3 The Council may specify in detail in their Housing Assistance Scheme the purposes for which applications for assistance are to be invited and may specify different purposes from time to time to reflect current priorities and budgetary constraints.

## **5. Persons eligible to apply for Housing Assistance**

5.1 Any person who makes an application for assistance must: -

- a) live in the dwelling as his or her only or main residence (except where the applicant is a landlord), and
- b) have an owner's interest in the dwelling or be the tenant or licensee of the dwelling either alone or jointly with others, and have the power or duty to carry out the works or have the owners consent to do so in writing, and
- c) satisfy such test(s) of financial resources as the Council may impose from time to time, more specifically explained in the Housing Assistance Scheme.

## **6. Applications for Assistance**

6.1 All applications must be in a form prescribed by the Council and shall include the following:-

- a) full details of the proposed works including plans and specifications of the works for which the assistance is sought ('the assisted works').
- b) at least two estimates from different contractors for the proposed works, unless the Council otherwise direct in a particular case.
- c) particulars of any professional fees and other charges which relate to the preparation for and the carrying out of the proposed works.

- d) proof that the applicant is an owner or a tenant of the dwelling, unless the Council otherwise direct.
- e) consent in writing from all owners of the dwelling to the carrying out of the proposed works, unless the Council otherwise direct.
- f) if the applicant is the owner of the dwelling, an undertaking to repay the grant in the circumstances described at paragraph 15 of this policy.
- g) if the applicant is a landlord, an undertaking to let the dwelling(s) as a residence to persons nominated by the Council throughout the period of five years following the date of completion of works or such other period of time as may be agreed in writing between the applicant and the Council.

## **7. Prior qualifying period**

7.1 Applicants for Home Repair Assistance for houseboats or mobile homes and for major works grants must have owned the residence for not less than 3 years.

## **8. Amount of Housing Assistance**

When dealing with applications where a means test is required the Council will use the Test of Resources currently in use for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants.

## **9. Exclusion of works already carried out**

- 9.1 The Council will not approve an application for assistance if the assisted works have been carried out before the application is approved, except
- a) Where the relevant works have been begun but have not been completed, the application may be approved if they are satisfied that there were good reasons for beginning the works before the application was approved.
  - b) Where the Council decide to approve an application in accordance with a) above they may treat the application as varied so that the assisted works do not include any that are completed.

## **10. Decision and notification**

- 10.1 An application will be processed and the applicant advised as soon as possible, whether the application is approved or refused. The Council will notify the applicant in writing no later than 6 months after receipt of the completed application.
- 10.2 If the application is approved the notification will also specify the works which are eligible for assistance and the form that the assistance will take.
- 10.3 If the application is refused, the Council will at the same time explain the reasons for refusal and provide details of how to make an appeal against the decision. The grounds for appeal are detailed in Appendix A.
- 10.4 Where the cost of works either increases or decreases or additional works are required the Council may alter the

amount of assistance and will inform the applicant in writing.

## **11. Supervision of Works**

- 11.1 The Council will not accept any responsibility, under any circumstances, for omissions by the contractor or defective workmanship. A claim form confirming that the works are complete and that the applicant is satisfied with the work carried out must be submitted before final payment is made.

## **12. Payment of assistance: conditions as to carrying out the works**

- 12.1 The assistance will only be paid if;
- a) the assisted works are completed within 12 months of the date of approval or such further period allowed by the Council
  - b) the assisted works are carried out in accordance with such specifications as the Council determine
  - c) the assisted works are carried out to the satisfaction of the Council
  - d) the Council are provided with an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt for payment for the works and any professional fees and other charges. For this purpose an invoice, demand or receipt is acceptable if it satisfies the Council and is not given by the applicant or a member of his family.



### **13. Payment of assistance**

- 13.1 The Council will normally pay the assistance direct to the contractor and will be either to the full amount, on completion of the works, or in instalments as work progresses.
- 13.2 Where assistance is payable, but the assisted works have not been executed to the satisfaction of the applicant, the Council may at the applicant's request and if they consider it appropriate to do so withhold payment from the contractor. If they do so, they may make the payment to the applicant instead.

### **14. Repayment where applicant not entitled to assistance**

- 14.1 If an application for assistance is approved but it subsequently appears to the Council that the applicant (or in the case of a joint application, any of the applicants) was not, at the time the application was approved, entitled to assistance of that description no payment shall be made or, as the case may be, no further instalments shall be paid, and the Council may demand that any payments that have already been made be repaid forthwith, together with interest from the date on which they were paid until repayment is made, at such reasonable rate as the Council may determine.

### **15. Conditions for Repayment of Assistance**

- 15.1 If an owner of the dwelling to which the application relates ceases to be the owner before the works are completed he shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of any assistance that has been paid.

- 15.2 If an owner of the dwelling(s) to which the application relates ceases to be the owner within 10 years from the date the works were completed he shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of assistance that has been paid plus interest over the period calculated using the Land Registry Residential Property Price Report based on the increase / reduction in value over the period since the grant was given.
- 15.3 If an owner of the dwelling(s) to which the application relates, having undertaken to let the dwelling(s), ceases to let the dwelling(s) in accordance with his undertaking, within 5 years from the date the works were completed, he shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of assistance that has been paid.

- 15.4 Where the Council has a right to demand repayment but there are extenuating circumstances they may determine not to demand repayment or to demand a lesser amount.

### **16. Additional Conditions**

- 16.1 Where the Council approve an application for assistance they may impose additional conditions with the consent of the applicant:
- 16.2 The additional conditions may include but are not restricted to the following:
- a) Applicant to make a contribution towards the proposed work.
  - b) Right of the Council to recover specialised equipment when no longer needed.

## **17. Security of Assistance**

- 17.1 Any condition above, which creates a liability to repay the assistance, shall be registered as a charge against the property at the Land Registry
- 17.2 The liability to repay any assistance may be discharged at any time by payment to the Council a sum equal to the amount of assistance and interest as specified under 15.2 or such lesser sum as the Council may agree.

## **18. Proposals/Loan Fund**

- 18.1 It is proposed to consider the introduction of a Kick Start Equity Release Scheme under the Home Improvement Agency via the Supporting People fund initiative.
- 18.2 As part of this initiative, the introduction of more extended loans/equity release schemes will be investigated.

## **19. How to apply for Assistance**

- 19.1 The qualifying criteria for each type of grant are listed in Appendix B (Housing Assistance Scheme). In order for your name to be registered for assistance, the following options are available:
- a) By phoning the Bromsgrove District Council on 01527 881288 and ask for the Private Sector Housing Team Leader or the Private Sector Housing Grants Administrator. who will take your details and deal with them, or forward them on to the relevant agency.

- b) By emailing [strategic.housing@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.housing@bromsgrove.gov.uk) stating in your communication that the enquiry is for the attention of the Private Sector Housing Team.

- 19.2 In each case an acknowledgement of your enquiry will be sent out.

## **20. Complaints about the Strategy / Policy and it's Implementation**

- 20.1 Should you wish to make any comments or complaints regarding this Strategy/ Policy, please write to Mr. A Coel, Head of Strategic Housing, The Council House, Bromsgrove, Worcs. B60 1AA. Tel 01527 881270 or email [a.coel@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:a.coel@bromsgrove.gov.uk).
- 20.2 Alternatively, you may go onto the Bromsgrove District Council Website [www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk) and you can e-mail your complaint. Please give your name, address and contact number.
- 20.3.1 All complaints / comments will be considered and The Strategy/ Policy adapted as deemed necessary. A written reply will be sent to the complainant.

## **21. Commencement Date**

- 21.1 This Strategy / Policy will commence April 2009 and be subject to regular review.

## Appendix A

### BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT SERVICES

### GRANT ASSISTANCE

### APPEALS

#### **APPEALS CRITERIA (subject to available resources)**

Applicants must be able to demonstrate special circumstances for example:

- failure to carry out works may place the applicant and/or the family's health and safety at immediate risk; (and/or)
- the applicant or a member of his/her family has a specific and serious medical condition which would be worsened by the condition of the property; (and/or)
- the condition of the property poses a threat to the ability of the existing family to continue to live together; (and/or)
- the condition of the property is likely to lead to the intervention of other statutory services (i.e. statutory re-housing, children being taken into care under the Children Act 1989; (and/or)
- the work would be of wider benefit than to the applicant and his/her family, e.g. where other properties are affected;

#### **AND IN ALL THE ABOVE CASES**

The applicant has no other means by which he or she could reasonably be expected to fund the work - either privately or with Department of Social Security assistance.

In deciding the case the Appeal Panel will consider whether the circumstances are so severe that the case should be considered as an exception to normal policies.

**N.B. Medical evidence will be required if medical or health related circumstances are cited.**

#### **APPEALS PANEL**

- The appeals panel will be made up by members of the Council.



**Appendix B**  
**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL HOUSING ASSISTANCE**  
**SCHEME**

**Criteria for the award of Mandatory Disabled Facilities**  
**Grants.**

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants will continue to be awarded for prescribed works as per the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

The Regulatory Reform Order 2002 extends the eligibility to those living in park homes and houseboats.

These grants are awarded to enable applicants to have access to and around their homes, or to use essential facilities in the home to enable them to live independently.

Eligible applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any applicant registered or capable of being registered under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and requires adaptations to be provided.</li> </ul>
Qualifying criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referral from the Occupational Therapist via Social Services confirming that the works are 'necessary and appropriate'.</li> <li>Works must be 'reasonable and practical'.</li> </ul>
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject to a financial assessment of resources (prescribed by statute)</li> <li>Proof of title required.</li> </ul>
Maximum grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£30,000.00</li> </ul>
Implementation date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed April 2009</li> </ul>

**Outcome.** With an annual budget (2009/10) of £500,000 this will improve the suitability of homes for over 80 disabled households each year.

**Notes.** This is a mandatory grant and the Council receives subsidy from the Government up to a specified amount. As demand outstrips the budget a prioritised waiting list has been developed.

**Criteria for the award of Discretionary Home Repair Assistance Grants.**

Eligible applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owners or private sector tenants who have a duty or power to carry out works.</li> <li>• Applicants must be 60 years old or over, and must be in receipt of one of the following benefits: Income support / job seekers allowance / Working tax credit / Housing benefit / Disability working allowance / Council tax benefit / Guaranteed Pension credit.</li> <li>• Disabled persons who are in receipt of Attendance allowance or Disability Living allowance and have savings of less than £6,000.00</li> </ul>
Qualifying criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property in need of essential repairs and improvements in order to make the property healthy, safe, wind and weatherproof. Assistance will be offered to qualifying people whose homes are unfit, or whose health and well-being is detrimentally affected by the housing conditions under which they are living.</li> </ul>
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will only consider grant applications up to a maximum of £5,000 within any 3-year period.</li> <li>• Grant repayable in full (plus interest over the period calculated using Land Registry Residential Property Price Report based on increase / reduction in value of property) to the Council should the property be disposed of within a 10 year period and registered as a local land charge against the property.</li> </ul>
Minimum grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £200.00</li> </ul>
Maximum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £5,000.00</li> </ul>

grant	
Implementation date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed April 2009</li> </ul>

**Outcome.** Based on a yearly allocation of £100,000 and an average grant of £2,500.00 this will enable 40 households each year to remain independent within a safe and secure home.

**Notes.** This is a discretionary grant subject to available resources.

**Criteria for the award of Discretionary Renovation Grants.**

Renovation grants are to assist the funding of essential major works due to the property being deemed unfit for human habitation.

Eligible applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner/Occupiers</li> </ul>
Qualifying criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant has owned the house for a period of not less than 3 years.</li> <li>• Applicant must be in receipt of one of the following benefits: Income support / job seekers allowance / Working tax credit / Housing benefit / Disability working allowance / Council tax benefit / Guaranteed Pension credit.</li> <li>• Disabled persons who are in receipt of Attendance allowance or Disability Living allowance and have savings of less than £6,000.00</li> <li>• Existing home is deemed to be unfit for human habitation.</li> </ul>
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will only consider grant applications up to a maximum of £10,000 within any 3-year period.</li> <li>• Grant repayable in full (plus interest over the period calculated using Land Registry Residential Property Price Report based on increase / reduction in value of property) to the Council should property be disposed of within a 10-year period. Registered as a local land charge against the property.</li> </ul>
Maximum grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £10, 000.00</li> </ul>

Implementation date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed April 2009</li> </ul>
---------------------	---

**Outcome.** Based on a yearly allocation (2004/5) of £20,000 this will reduce the number of unfit properties within the district by 2.

**Notes.** This is a discretionary grant subject to available resources.

**Criteria for the award of Discretionary Empty Homes**



### **Grants.**

The Council has produced an Empty Homes Strategy to tackle this issue and a range of initiatives has been developed to encourage re-occupation. However, in terms of this policy the issue of grants offered by the Council are detailed below. The options will be tailored to specific needs taking into account the condition and location of the empty property, the potential for letting and the securing of an affordable rent

Eligible applicants	Owners
Qualifying criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Planning permission (if necessary) for any works prior to application.</li><li>• Subject to financial assessment.</li></ul>
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grant repayable (plus interest over the period calculated using Land Registry Residential Property Price Report based on increase / reduction in value of property) to the Council if property disposed of within a 10-year period. Registered as a local land charge against the property.</li><li>• For tenanted property subject to nomination rights being vested in the District Council for a period of 3years</li></ul>
Maximum grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• £5,000.00</li></ul>
Implementation date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviewed April 2009</li></ul>

enable 2 properties to be brought back into use.

**Notes.** This is a discretionary grant subject to available resources

**Outcome.** Based on a yearly allocation of £10,000 this will

**Criteria for the award of Discretionary Landlord Grant.**

improve the suitability of homes for over 2 households each year.

Landlord Grants are to assist the funding of the installation of Fire Installation works within Houses in Multiple occupation (non-licensable).

Eligible applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owners</li> </ul>
Qualifying criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning permission (if necessary) for any works prior to application.</li> <li>• Owned property for 3years</li> <li>• Category 1 Hazard present</li> <li>• House in Multiple Occupation</li> </ul>
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant repayable (plus interest over the period calculated using Land Registry Residential Property Price Report based on increase / reduction in value of property) to the Council if property disposed of within a 10-year period. Registered as a local land charge against the property.</li> <li>• For tenanted property subject to nomination rights being vested in the District Council for a period of 3years</li> </ul>
Maximum grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £5,000.00 (match funded)</li> </ul>
Implementation date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed April 2009</li> </ul>

**Outcome.** With an annual budget (2007/8) of £10,000 this will

**Criteria for the award of Renewable Energy Grant.**

Renewable Energy Grants are to assist the funding of the installation of Renewable Energy technology within a residential or non profitable organisation property.

Eligible applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owners</li> </ul>
Qualifying criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning permission (if necessary) for any works prior to application.</li> <li>• Owned property for 3years</li> <li>• Low Carbon Eligibility criteria</li> </ul>
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant repayable (plus interest over the period calculated using Land Registry Residential Property Price Report based on increase / reduction in value of property) to the Council if property disposed of within a 10-year period. Registered as a local land charge against the property.</li> <li>• For tenanted property subject to nomination rights being vested in the District Council for a period of 3years</li> </ul>
Maximum grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £1,000.00 (match funded)</li> </ul>
Implementation date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed April 2009</li> </ul>

**Outcome.** With an annual budget (2009/10) of £9,000 this will improve the suitability of homes for approx 9 households each year.



**Criteria for the award of a Discretionary ‘Home Move’ Grant.**

Where an owner/occupier or tenant qualifies for assistance but their existing home is unsuitable and a move to different accommodation would be a better option to adaptation or repair, then financial assistance may be awarded.

Some homes are physically unsuitable for adaptation. Sometimes owners would be unable to afford the maintenance and running costs of their home, even after improvement. In such cases it would be more cost effective to help a willing person to move to more suitable accommodation

Eligible applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner/occupiers and private tenants.</li> </ul>
Qualifying criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing home is unsuitable for improvement, or adaptation and a move is the most cost effective and practical option.</li> <li>• Evidence of new property and inspection by Grants Officer and Occupational Therapist.</li> <li>• Subject to financial assessment.</li> </ul>
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject to written approval.</li> <li>• Only one grant allocation every 5 years.</li> <li>• Grant repayable (plus interest over the period calculated using Land Registry Residential Property Price Report based on increase / reduction in value of property) in full to the Council should property be disposed of within a 10-year period.</li> <li>Registered as a local land charge against</li> </ul>

	<p>the property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant to be spent at the discretion of the Council e.g. legal costs, removal costs, estate agents fees etc.</li> </ul>
Maximum grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £2,500.00</li> </ul>
Implementation date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed April 2009</li> </ul>

**Outcome.** Based on a yearly allocation of £5,000 this will enable 2 applicants to move to alternative premises.

**Notes.** This is a discretionary grant subject to available resources.



# APPENDIX 1- Private Sector Housing Action Plan



**MEB**  
Your Supply Has Been  
Disconnected.  
**WARNING: — THE MEB  
MAIN SUPPLY CABLE**



## PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ACTION PLAN – IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

Action and Priority	Target Completion Date	Milestone	Progress upon implementation of action as at 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2007	Status
<b>Proposed Outcome – Sustained long term ‘Decent’ housing conditions, improved quality of privately rented accommodation, higher standards for healthier and safer homes.</b>				
<p><b>Monitor performance target for achieving ongoing improvement in Decent Homes Standard</b></p> <p><b>HIGH</b></p>	Ongoing	<p><b>Maintain min 70% of vulnerable households decent by 2010</b></p> <p><b>80% of vulnerable households decent by 2014</b></p> <p><b>85% of vulnerable households decent by 2020</b></p>	<p>The 2004 Bromsgrove District Private Sector Housing Survey advised that 76.1% of vulnerable households already lived in Decent Homes. Full monitoring and updating of this baseline data began in 2007/08 with the introduction of new Decent Homes forms for inspecting officers and our SLA partners whom also inspect properties. Performance is updated based upon home repair grants allocated. Performance to March 2009 = 77.83%.</p>	
<p><b>Assist in developing a Corporate Enforcement policy as a result of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 and Compliance Code.</b></p> <p><b>MEDIUM</b></p>	October 2009	May 2009 – discussions with Project Leader.		
<p><b>Promote services through the development of Bromsgrove District Council’s website for specific clients groups, i.e. landlords, tenants and owner-occupiers to include info on running costs, maintenance and energy efficiency and provide articles for Together Bromsgrove and local press.</b></p> <p><b>HIGH</b></p>	Ongoing	Write up information for publication June 2009	<p>Quarterly promotion in Together Bromsgrove.</p> <p>New pamphlets designed and circulated.</p>	
<p><b>Establish the quality of private rented housing through the 2009 stock condition update.</b></p> <p><b>HIGH</b></p>	December 2009	Completion of survey update October 2009		
<p><b>Inspect all privately rented accommodation prior to being advertised on the Home Choice Plus Choice Based Lettings Scheme.</b></p> <p><b>HIGH</b></p>	July 2009	Piloted from April 09		
<p><b>Maintain an HMO Risk Based Data Base.</b></p> <p><b>HIGH</b></p>	Ongoing			
<p><b>Provide ‘Decent Homes’ and ‘Affordable Warmth’ training to the PCT Occ Therapists, LA officers and Basement staff.</b></p>	October 2009			



<b>MEDIUM</b>				
Encourage Bromsgrove Landlords to attend Landlord Training and gain accreditation.	Ongoing			
<b>MEDIUM</b>				
<b>Proposed Outcome – Improved energy efficiency of homes.</b>				
Work in partnership with Act on Energy to investigate efficient home scheme in conjunction with renewable energy scheme	April 2009	Arrange meeting with WEEAC to discuss possibilities Feb 09	Initial meeting taken place to discuss feasibility of promoting scheme.	
<b>MEDIUM</b>				
Work in partnership with Act on Energy to investigate training parish councillors on energy efficiency.	April 2009	Arrange meeting with WEEAC to discuss possibilities Feb 09	Discussed in LSP Better Environment Theme Group and agreed to develop tier down training.	
<b>MEDIUM</b>				
Formulate proposal to introduce a grant scheme to improve energy efficiency for mobile homes, and submit bid for 10/11 financial year.	April 2010	Submit report to Council Sep 09		
<b>MEDIUM</b>				
Work with Redditch and Wyre Forest to review the contribution toward renewable energy schemes to improve take up of grant	July 2009	Completion of thermal imaging Feb 09		
<b>MEDIUM</b>				
Investigate grant criteria for households in fuel poverty	July 2009	Arrange meeting with WEEAC to discuss possibilities Feb 09		
<b>HIGH</b>				
Target 2% annual home energy saving PA	Target 32% by 2014	Target 30% by 2010	On target for 30% home energy savings by 2010. Year 04/05 20.69%, Year 05/06 22.68% (reaching target of 2% p.a., highest annual % increase in Worcestershire 05/06, March 07 = 24.64, March 08 = 25.94).  Updated annually following HECA report.	
<b>HIGH</b>				
Analyse the results of the County Thermal Fly over to focus future investment	October 2009	Completion of survey June 2009		
<b>HIGH</b>				
<b>Proposed Outcome – Better support and assistance to older and vulnerable people in making home improvements and adaptations, healthier and safer homes.</b>				
Make a minimum of three presentations per year to Parish Council's upon the role of the	Ongoing			

NW Care & Repair Service and Bromsgrove Lifeline in supporting older and vulnerable residents.  MEDIUM				
Implement Multi Agency Meetings for OT referrals that require structural alteration or extension to a home to ensure all alternative options are fully appraised.  HIGH	Ongoing	PCT BDHT Social Services Private Sector Team  Jan 2009	Process has commenced WEF 14.01.09	
Implement procurement Framework Agreement for level access shower installations within RSL properties.  HIGH	June 2009	Bids received and analysed April 09		
Implement Kick Start Equity Release Scheme as an additional option for home improvement.  HIGH	June 2010	Cabinet approval 29 <sup>th</sup> April 2009		
Proposed Outcome – Increased access to private rented accommodation for the homeless, increased choice and increased support and assistance to landlords.				
Investigate opportunities to develop a bridging loan to cover the period between tenancies.  MEDIUM	April 2010	Consider implications of scheme and funding requirements by Aug 09 for Oct bidding round.		
Develop a data base of private landlord portfolios.  MEDIUM	June 2009	Write questionnaire, compile list of landlords June 2009	Currently in process of being compiled.	
Investigate Best Practice Accreditation Schemes and review whether practical and viable.  LOW	July 2009	Review examples of best practice July 2009		
Continue to deliver Private Landlords Forum meetings and training events.	Continuous process of annual meetings.	Development of LL's Handbook.		

<b>HIGH</b>				
Pilot advertisement of private lettings on Home Choice Plus Choice Based Lettings Scheme to encourage supply of privately let accommodation to those in need.  <b>MEDIUM</b>	Complete pilot by Oct20 09	Piloted from April 2009		
Work in partnership with Town Centre Regeneration Manager in surveying and identifying empty accommodation above shop for potential conversion to affordable housing.  <b>MEDIUM</b>	Ongoing			



## Contact List

Andy Coel	Strategic Housing Manager	01527 881270	<a href="mailto:a.coel@bromsgrove.gov.uk">a.coel@bromsgrove.gov.uk</a>
Katie Sharp Fisher	Private Sector Housing Team leader	01527 881437	<a href="mailto:k.sharp-fisher@bromsgrove.gov.uk">k.sharp-fisher@bromsgrove.gov.uk</a>

Bromsgrove District Council  
The Council House  
Burcot Lane  
Bromsgrove  
B60 1AA



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

