

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary presents the highlights of the city council's strategy for housing in Portsmouth. The emphasis is on identified priorities which require immediate attention, but key background information is also described. Topic headings in these two pages follow the sections in the main text.

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Portsmouth's distinctive characteristics influence our response to the city's housing needs:

- The number of households is increasing
- Household incomes in Portsmouth are the lowest in Hampshire, thereby affecting property prices, among the lowest in the S E Region
- Portsmouth shows sharp economic contrasts: while some areas are affluent others score highly on the Government's Deprivation Indices
- Portsmouth's geography constrains housing development which is limited to 'brownfield' sites
- Portsmouth's housing market is one of the most active in the south Hampshire sub region, especially for the sale of terraced houses
- Portsmouth has strong employment and housing market links with communities in SE Hampshire.

Strategic links with other policies and strategies are many and complex but those with the Portsmouth Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and its *Community Strategy* are especially marked.

Consultation has been extensive involving techniques such as surveys, seminars, meetings and questionnaires with residents, the LSP Housing Partnership, city council tenants & lease-holders, elected Members, and housing and social care providers.

Sub regional housing policy is reflected in this Housing Strategy as the city council contributes to the activities of PUSH, the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire, and also responds to the Regional Housing Strategy and the South East Plan.

INFORMING THE STRATEGY

Four principal sources inform this Strategy: new data from commissioned research, existing data from public and Government agencies, city council management information, and discussions with residents, service users and housing & service providers. Details are presented in the Appendices.

Housing reviews include a study commissioned from Fordham Research in 2004. Fordham found that Portsmouth has an estimated shortfall of nearly 3,000 affordable homes every year for the next five years. They concluded that it would be reasonable for planning policy to include a site target of up to 50 percent affordable housing.

2005 began with an assessment of the south Hampshire housing market by consultants DTZ Peda and one of their conclusions was that between 30 and 40 percent of new homes should be affordable.

Home ownership and private renting markets are thriving in Portsmouth. Home purchase prices averaged £153,000 in 2004 compared to £223,000 for the South East Region. But affordability is still an acute issue as these prices are six times average household incomes. Private renting comprises 13 percent of the city's housing and is an essential source of accommodation, bolstered by demand from the University's student population.

Demand for affordable housing, especially low cost social renting, remains huge, although interest in alternative housing solutions (shared ownership for example) is now very great. Applications to the Portsmouth Housing Register have increased by nearly one third in a generation, with families feeling the pressure most as the supply of larger rented homes has declined. Homelessness requests still exceed regional averages.

The need for supported and special housing is immense. Managing *Supporting People* contracts confirms that demand for specialist housing and support services is well in excess of current levels of supply. A strategic priority is to review and revise data collection for each of the main client groups.

Managing council housing involves the repair and maintenance of over 17,000 rented and leasehold properties which must reach the Government's *Decent Homes* standard by 2010. Successive stock surveys demonstrate that at present half the city council's housing met the standard in March 2005.

Private housing renewal refers to the repair and standards agenda for an estimated 70,000 privately owned dwellings in Portsmouth. The 2003 housing condition survey is the main evidence source which informs us that three quarters of the private stock dates before World War II while 9 percent of dwellings are legally unfit, twice the national average.

Regeneration schemes in recent years at Wecock Farm and the John Pound Centre at Portsea have provided invaluable information and expertise about creating mixed and sustainable communities – and new housing - which will be applied to future projects at Somerstown and Leigh Park.

FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Resources for this Strategy are summarised on pages 26 to 30 and presented by two main themes:

- Community housing – many activities including new homes provision, Portsmouth Housing Register, homelessness, housing renewals etc
- Managing the city council's stock of housing.

OUR PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Our proposals for implementation are presented as five themes which commence on page 33 of the Strategy. The subject matter and objectives are wide ranging and backed up by operational detail in a number of business planning documents. Readers wanting an understanding of where responsibility lies for particular functions may wish to refer to the tables commencing on page 46.

Affordable housing and regeneration

The immediate priority is to ensure a greatly increased supply of housing of all kinds to meet the undoubted gap between demand and supply in the housing market. However the city council, as strategic housing authority, must ensure an increased supply of *affordable* homes. By affordable we mean social renting at lower, usually subsidised, prices by the city council and housing associations. It can also mean *intermediate* tenures of which shared ownership purchase is just one example.

We therefore aim to commission at least 2,000 affordable homes in the six years to March 2011, an average of at least 300 each year. We will expect a significant proportion of these homes to be created for larger families. Delivering this programme will require the co-operation and good will of many, including our housing association partners and house builders. But the city council will contribute in a number of ways for example by revising its planning policies to create more opportunities for affordable housing using planning agreements. Regeneration programmes will be the catalyst and vehicle for achieving more homes. Inter authority working across the south Hampshire sub region will also create opportunities which have become more evident with publication of the Regional Housing Strategy in 2005. Principal actions and targets are listed on page 35.

Private housing renewal & standards

Using the long established home improvement agency, the city council will continue assisting with repairing and improving Portsmouth's private housing, work that is mainly focused on older home owners with limited incomes. It is a long term programme with the aim of reducing the percentage of legally unfit dwellings or those in serious disrepair. Monitoring the health and safety of privately rented housing will also continue, as will grant aided works for disabled customers. **A key priority for this Strategy is to attain the Decent Homes standard by 2011: so that 70 percent of vulnerable households live in homes that reach the decency standard.** One of the tools for achieving this will be a new home loans scheme created with the South Coast Money Line, a community bank, and a number of South Coast local councils. Principal actions and targets are itemised on page 37.

Managing our council homes

The Stock Options Appraisal has been completed and the city council's report submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. However the outcome of this process will not be known for some time. Nevertheless our plans for the housing management service have been devised against the background of extensive consultation with residents during 2004 in which they expressed a preference for their homes to remain in the city council's ownership. Our proposals for this Strategy are based on this premise. Central to our planning is continuous service improvement managed in close consultation with residents. **The repair and maintenance of over 17,000 tenanted and leasehold dwellings is an essential element in this programme of activities, linked to attaining the Decent Homes standard by 2010.** We have identified the cost of works and have the necessary financial resources within the Housing Revenue Account budget. Principal actions and targets are listed on page 41.

Supported and special housing

The planning and provision of housing and support services is a growth area, in part due to the substantial *Supporting People* programme, and this Strategy has assessed the current and future requirements of many specialist needs. They are too diverse and complex to summarise here but the reader may wish to review our proposals on pages 42 and 43. Principal actions and targets are listed on pages 47 and 48.

Housing Choices

This is the term we have chosen to describe a collection of services managed for everyone in Portsmouth who requires affordable housing (sometimes with support), or help with the upkeep of their existing home. The gateway to these services is often through the city council's Housing Options team which is part of a network of organisations who have specialist expertise in their particular field.

Our proposals in this Strategy cover a range of activities: advice and assistance in obtaining accommodation; the homelessness service; managing the Portsmouth Housing Register; improving access to private renting; and giving support to people in their home with services such as Home Check and community alarms. **A key proposal over the next two years will be to design and implement a Choice Based Lettings system which will be more flexible and quicker for many applicants than the present housing register.** Other plans include

- An on-line Internet housing information service
- Preparing a new Homelessness Strategy
- A lettings agency for private accommodation.

Principal actions and targets are listed on page 45.

HHSC BUDGET PRINCIPLES – 2008/9 to 2010/11 Budgets

Budgets to be driven by HHSC Strategies to meet PCC Corporate Priorities with particular emphasis on regeneration & creation of sustainable communities to achieve safe, secure, independent & healthy living for our residents, tenants & leaseholders, including the following:

- ensuring there is appropriate home care for those who need it
- offering access to respite care and other support for carers and service users
- assessing individuals needs and developing care/support to those needs
- contributing to effective rehabilitation for people leaving hospital
- promoting healthy eating and lifestyles & improving young people's health
- enabling and contributing to the provision of good quality low cost homes with well-planned infrastructure
- delivering and promoting high quality house design combined with exceptional environmental performance.
- tackling fuel poverty
- working to reduce carbon emissions and to eliminate negative environmental impacts from all areas of work.

Budgets to be prepared in consultation with residents, tenants & leaseholders & reflect their views

Balanced budgets to be prepared for a minimum 3 years for revenue budgets & 5 years for capital budgets

Work with suppliers & partners, particularly the Health Service, to try & co-ordinate services in the best interests of residents, tenants & leaseholders.

Support effective preventive measures wherever possible

Maintain & improve homes by:

- Tackling disrepair in private housing to meet the target of 70% of vulnerable people housed in decent homes by 2011.
- Reducing the number of unfit and inaccessible private sector homes
- Maintaining the cycle of planned external inspection & repair of council dwellings.
- Improving the quality of council dwellings to meet decent homes standards by the 2010 Government target.
- Working towards a "Decent Environment" for all council dwellings.
- Improving energy efficiency and opportunities for microgeneration.
- Encouraging the reduction, reuse and recycling of materials.

Maintain high management standards for council dwellings

To be affordable and avoid an unreasonable burden on rents, charges and Council Tax.

Get the best return possible from non-core activities i.e. provision of garages

Achieve continuous improvement through systems thinking methods, designing services against customer demand

Comply with the law.