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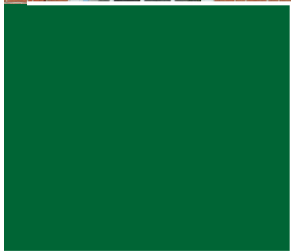


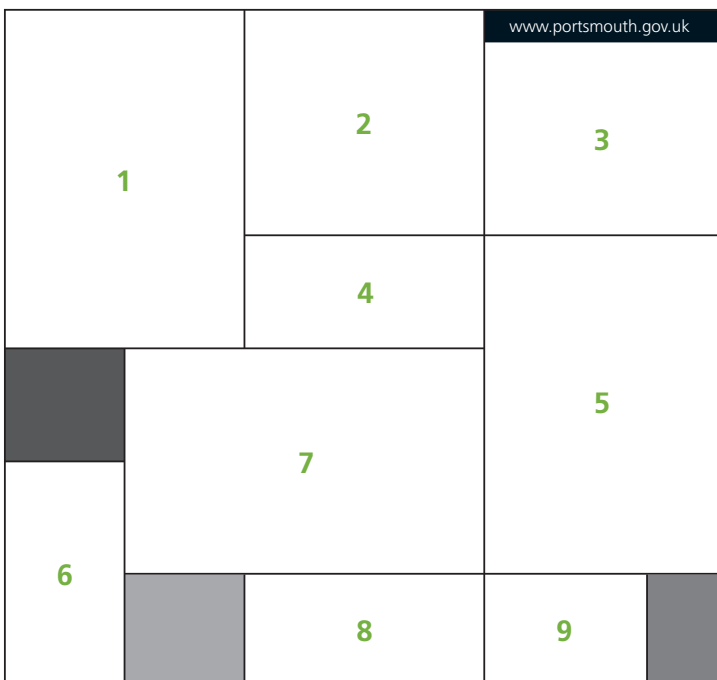
# Shaping the future of housing

## A strategic plan for Portsmouth

For four years 2011–12 to 2014–15

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





- 1 This listed building in Fratton was converted to flats for social renting and shared ownership housing.
- 2 Specially commissioned gates at the John Pounds Centre in Portsea.
- 3 Houses in Farlington.
- 4 Social and intermediate renting with shared ownership purchase at Cumberland Gate, Fratton.
- 5 Admiralty Tower, Portsea.
- 6 Social rented flats at St James Street, Portsea.
- 7 New homes for rent under construction at Warwick Crescent, Somerstown.
- 8 Social rented family homes with four bedrooms at Waterside Park, Milton.
- 9 Social rented family homes with three and four bedrooms at Kirpal Road, Baffins.

## Shaping the future of housing

# Foreword

‘Everyone needs somewhere to call home’. Simple enough to say, but a statement that becomes complex and challenging to bring to reality.

Quality, affordable housing will always be one of life’s essentials. I am constantly reminded of this fact when talking to people across the city, whether they are living in their own home, renting privately or struggling to find permanent accommodation.

The importance of housing in relation to employment, the economy, health and educational attainment cannot be understated. It is the reason why we must plan and deliver in a strategic way to ensure these relationships are understood and the best provision made to satisfy the needs of the people who live in our city.

Portsmouth has a resilient economy, an ageing housing stock, a significant demand and need for social housing and housing related support; so the challenge to maintain the right supply of homes

available to meet those needs remains a difficult one.

Nevertheless I hope you can see in this document that shapes the future for housing and its related services for the next 4 years – awareness, ambition, commitment and drive to deliver the right homes in the right places to meet the needs of the right people. It also highlights the right support services for those homes to be enjoyed in the long term.

I can assure you that the city council will continue to play its part, alongside private organisations and community sector partners who are currently involved or just interested in maintaining an active, accessible and affordable housing market.

I expect future supply and services to be delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible and welcome the opportunities for partners to continue to collaborate, ensuring Portsmouth remains a city where people want to live, work and visit into the future.



*Cllr Steven Wylie*  
Cabinet Member for  
Housing, Portsmouth  
City Council

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## Section 1

# Executive summary

**A great deal has changed since the city council's last housing strategy was published in 2005: the housing market, political and financial environments, sustainability standards for new and existing housing. For these reasons 2011 is the right time to adjust and update priorities for a four year period ending March 2015.**

### The context

- The greater Portsmouth economy, which is successful and resilient
- The age of Portsmouth's housing stock which is much older than many towns
- The city's housing market which is active and thriving when viewed over the long term
- Increasing recognition of the essential links between housing and the economy, health and educational opportunities.

### There are five themes

#### Advice and accommodation

A portfolio of services will continue to be offered to all residents by the city council and several independent organisations acting in partnership. These include crisis assistance for homeless households; managing the housing waiting list for allocating social rented housing; the private rental Access Scheme; a Tenancy Rights Service.

#### Housing-related support

This strategic plan illustrates several support programmes and services: Supporting People, Tenancy Support, Telecare communications, Homecheck home safety, sheltered housing for older people; and dwelling design for special needs as part of affordable housing development.

### Creating more homes

Portsmouth must continue to provide new homes, both market and affordable, and this strategic plan's intentions are presented as three priorities:

**Improving availability:** more housing is essential to meet growing demand and support the economy. Planning policy identifies several sites in Portsmouth on which new housing for families will be a priority.

**Improving affordability:** maximize development opportunities for homes that local residents can afford.

**Improving quality:** the latest design and sustainability standards will continue to feature in housing scheme requirements.

### Management principles

A framework is proposed to ensure estate management standards for affordable housing are achieved during an era of increasing change.

### Portsmouth's housing stock

The strategic plan focuses on physical conditions for all dwellings, tenures and ages:

- Private housing: improving standards through grants and loans backed by a professional surveying service and, where necessary, applying legal powers to raise standards. Proactive promotion and working will continue to apply to the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and the Empty Property Campaign
- Affordable housing: summarising and illustrating ways in which social landlords will be improving their properties to meet energy conservation and generation objectives using new programmes such as Green Deal.

Section 2

# Why this plan is essential

# 2

**This Strategic Plan is about housing in Portsmouth and the challenges being addressed by the city council and its partners over a four year period to March 2015 – a period that covers Central and Local Government budget cycles for the Comprehensive Spending Review. The approach is strategic, meaning a broad overview of the issues and solutions, leaving the detail to be explained in operational plans published annually.**

Finding solutions matters for several reasons: first, because 200,000 people live in Portsmouth and are either occupying or searching for a home, so this is a personal experience shared by almost everyone; second, because of the substantial sums invested in the city by individuals, households, businesses, Government agencies and not-for-profit organisations; and third, because of the interplay of social and economic elements like personal incomes, employment and unemployment, population growth and commuting that in combination influence the health of Portsmouth’s housing market – a market that extends across the city’s boundaries to include south east Hampshire and beyond.

This section identifies these influences for an informed understanding of what lies behind the proposals in this Plan.

## This plan has a history

Portsmouth City Council has treated housing – its provision, availability and quality – as a priority for the last 100 years. The 2011 Plan is therefore built upon decades of endeavour. It is also the successor to the 2005 Housing Strategy, whose planning life expired in March 2011, and has been renewed to reflect

recent social, economic and political changes. These can be better understood through themes first expressed in the 2005 Strategy that in summary are:

- Providing sufficient housing of all kinds, tenures and prices
- Ensuring the city’s older privately owned housing is in a decent state of repair
- Managing the city’s substantial stock of social housing
- Responding to the growing need for specialist housing with support
- Partnership working to deliver housing services to all residents.

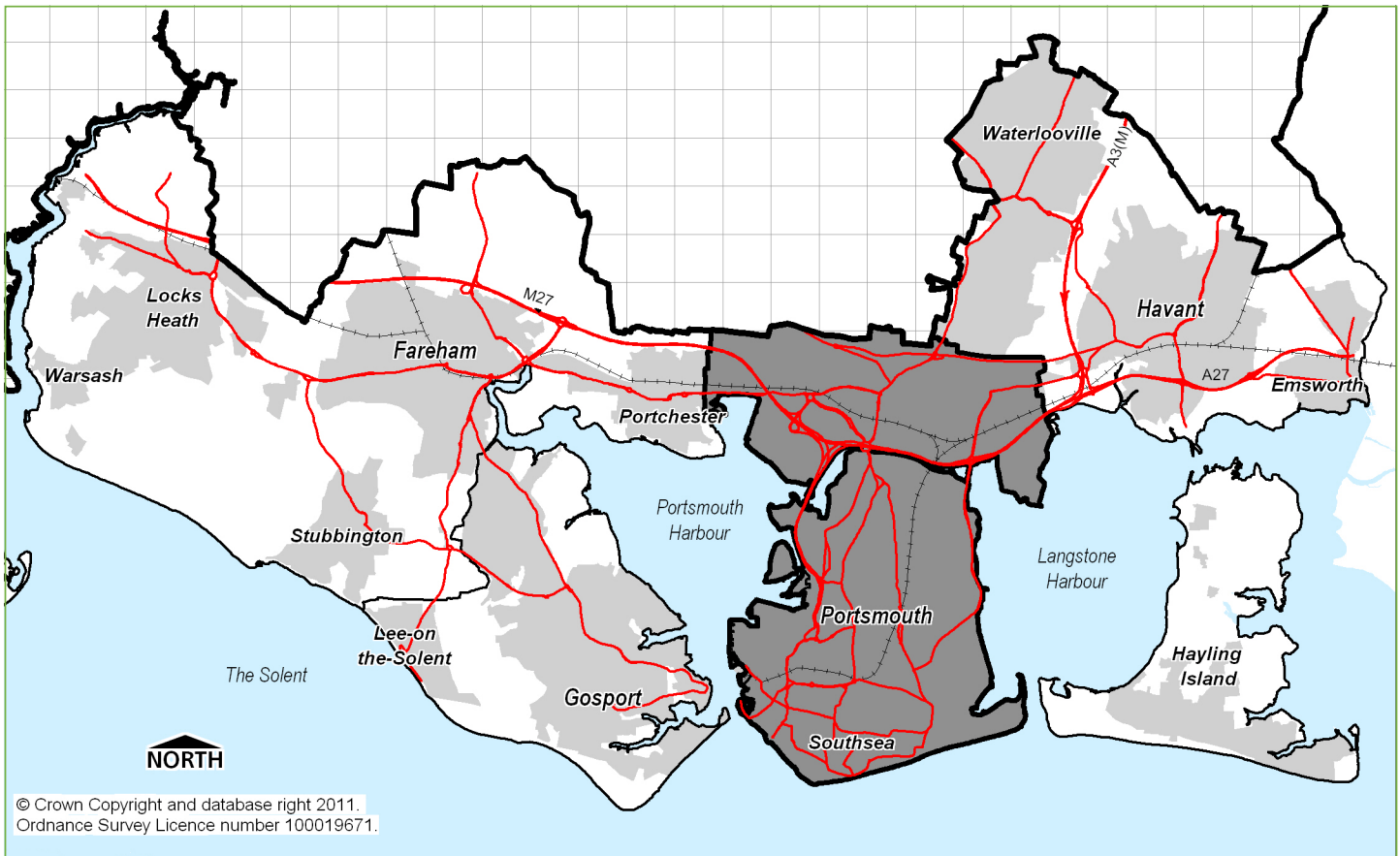
These themes continue to be valid today with partnership working remaining a strong focus while the ‘green agenda’ has become even more prominent since the previous housing strategy was published.

The rationale for the proposals set out in this Plan will become clearer when placed

*This plaque commemorates the first houses commissioned by the City Council which were completed during the early years of the First World War*



Portsmouth, the harbours and nearby towns and suburbs



within the context of four elements to Portsmouth life: location, population, the sub regional economy, and the housing market. These are explained below.

**Portsmouth's location influences everything**

Geography and location are the fundamental influences to have affected Portsmouth's life and opportunities back to the era of Roman settlement in Britain, and continue to be important today. These are the basic facts: Portsmouth's urban expansion is constrained by water, for it is surrounded by two natural harbours, opposite the Isle of Wight, the Solent and the English Channel – see [map](#) of south east Hampshire.

Portsmouth is 80 miles from central London and under 100 miles from the Normandy coast of northern France. The consequence today is seen, firstly, in the city's *economy* which is distinctive because of its successful ferry port and diverse

military, scientific and industrial sectors, many of which are of international significance; and, secondly, in the city's *built environment* since Portsmouth has one of the highest urban densities in the country, outside central London.<sup>1</sup> This dictates policies for developing new housing, conserving older housing and in the way the housing market operates, as will be outlined below.

**Portsmouth's population is increasing**

Changes in population and household formation affect demand for housing. Portsmouth's population remained stable at around 185,000 for 20 years.<sup>2</sup> It subsequently rose year-on-year for the first decade of the 21st century and now exceeds 200,000. Other estimates<sup>3</sup> see this population rising a further 10 percent by 2026. However, *households* in Portsmouth are increasing even faster.

1 The Office of National Statistics ranks Portsmouth as the 18th most densely populated urban area in England & Wales.

2 Office of National Statistics mid year estimates.

Although stable for years, household numbers are forecast to rise by nearly a third over the next generation, according to Government estimates.<sup>4</sup>

Portsmouth’s cultural and ethnic diversity has also grown in recent years. Official estimates<sup>5</sup> put the city’s black and minority ethnic population at between nine and 13 percent depending on the definition used. New arrivals, often single but increasingly with families, have added to the demand pressures for affordable housing.

## Portsmouth’s economy embraces south east Hampshire

Despite the national and global downturn the local economy has proved to be resilient although there remain significant challenges. The term ‘local’ in this context applies to Portsmouth and the neighbouring borough of Fareham, Gosport and Havant – the south east Hampshire conurbation with a combined population of around 500,000. This urban area has one of the country’s highest employment rates (at 75 percent) and, conversely, a low Job Seekers Allowance claimant count<sup>6</sup>, an indicator for monitoring unemployment.

A distinctive aspect of Portsmouth’s economy is that most of the resident

population (nearly 70 percent) work *within* the city contrasted to neighbouring communities such as Fareham and Havant where the proportion is lower at about 50 percent.<sup>7</sup> As a result commuting to and from Portsmouth and the nearby towns is an essential feature of the sub region’s economic life with, by implication, a direct influence on the housing market which will be profiled in the next section.

Information about pay conveys two contrasting messages. Pay at the *place of work* in Portsmouth (which includes those commuting into the city) is the highest in south Hampshire. But pay earned *within* Portsmouth is lower, and also lower compared to boroughs within commuting distance. Table 1 illustrates these contrasts:

Incomes are not the same within individual local authority districts, but range widely between neighbourhoods even when located close to one another. This particularly applies to Portsmouth, as portrayed by the map on the adjoining page. Household income, including benefits, is plotted as small areas - with dark shading indicating the highest and light shading the lowest income levels. Differences such as these have a direct bearing on the way the city’s housing market operates and affects property values for home purchase and the demand for rented housing.

**Table 1: Pay levels – two messages about portsmouth<sup>8</sup>**

Ranked by place of work		Ranked by home address	
Local authority	£pa	Local authority	£pa
<b>Portsmouth</b>	<b>28,903</b>	Winchester	32,715
Winchester	28,601	East Hampshire	30,677
Southampton	27,105	Fareham	27,609
East Hampshire	26,107	New Forest	27,104
Eastleigh	25,852	Great Britain	26,000
Havant	24,959	<b>Portsmouth</b>	<b>25,439</b>
Fareham	24,261	Gosport	25,072
Gosport	X	Southampton	23,352

Source: Office of National Statistics ASHE 2010; annual gross pay for full time employment. Work place pay for Gosport is not recorded as the 2010 data is statistically unreliable according to the ONS.

- 3 Hampshire County Council long term population projections, by district to 2026.
- 4 Household projections by district for England 1991-2033; Communities & Local Government, Oct 2010.
- 5 Office for National Statistics 2007: estimated resident population by ethnic group (experimental statistics).
- 6 Cities Outlook 2011, Centre for Cities, January 2011: tables 10 and 12. This report monitors the economies of city conurbations, one of which is the greater Portsmouth area.
- 7 Census 2001.
- 8 On the recommendation of the Office of National Statistics this table records median (midpoint) pay and not averages because they can be misleading when influenced by exceptional pay received by a minority.

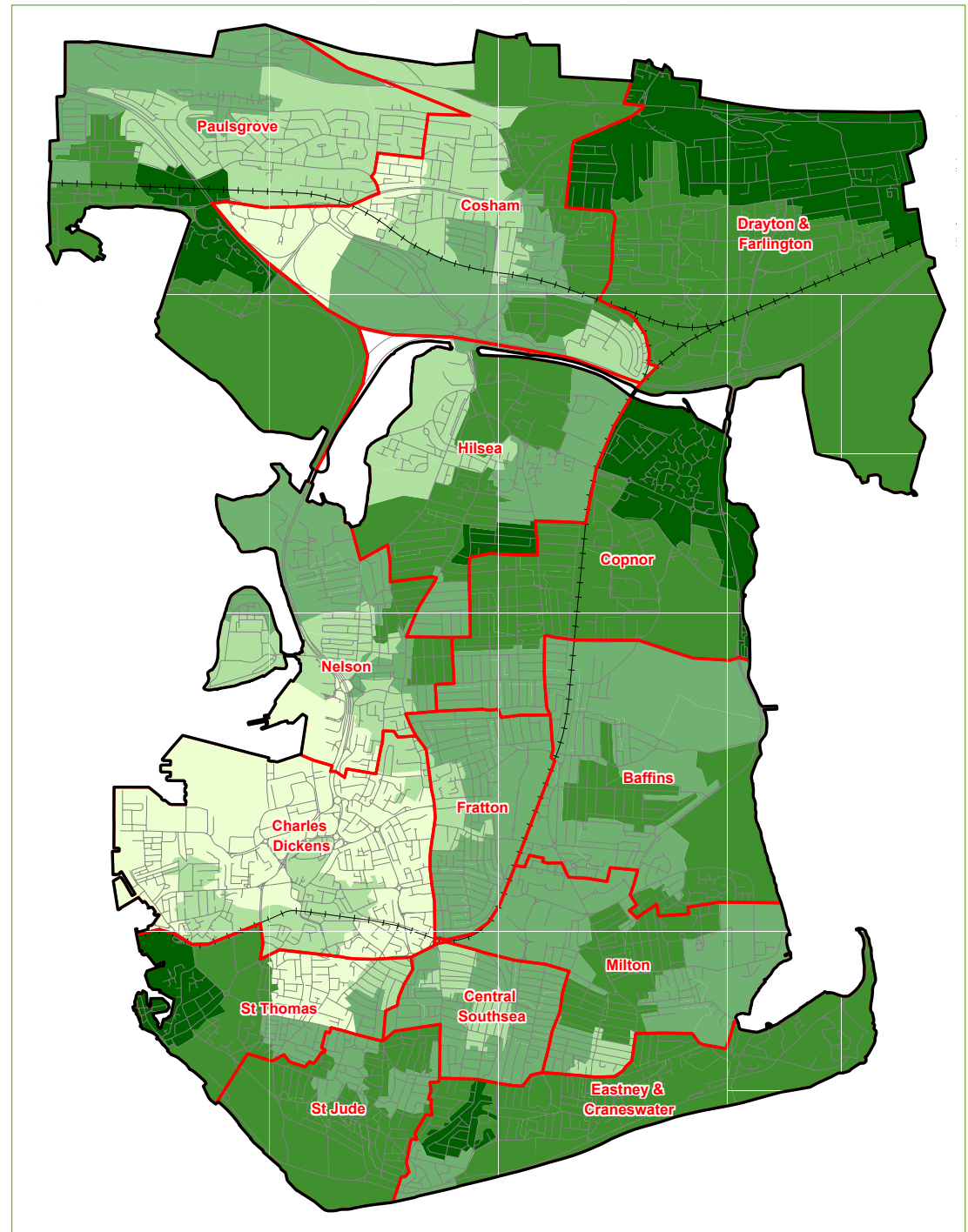
## Household incomes vary across Portsmouth<sup>9</sup>

Neighbourhoods marked with darkest tints have the highest household incomes averaging over £40,000 annually; while those with the lightest tints have the lowest household incomes of less than £25,000.

Estimated average gross household income from all sources, 2009  
(lower super output areas)

### Average gross household income (£) 2009

- 40,000 or more (9)
- 35,000 to 40,000 (37)
- 30,000 to 35,000 (44)
- 25,000 to 30,000 (21)
- Up to 25,000 (12)



Source: CACI Limited 2009 All rights reserved

2001 Census, Super Output Area Boundaries. Crown copyright 2004. © Crown copyright Licence No. 100019671. Crown copyright is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO.

<sup>9</sup> Created from data for 2009 by CACI, a market research company.



## Portsmouth's housing market has a presence beyond the city

### Renting distinguishes Portsmouth's housing market

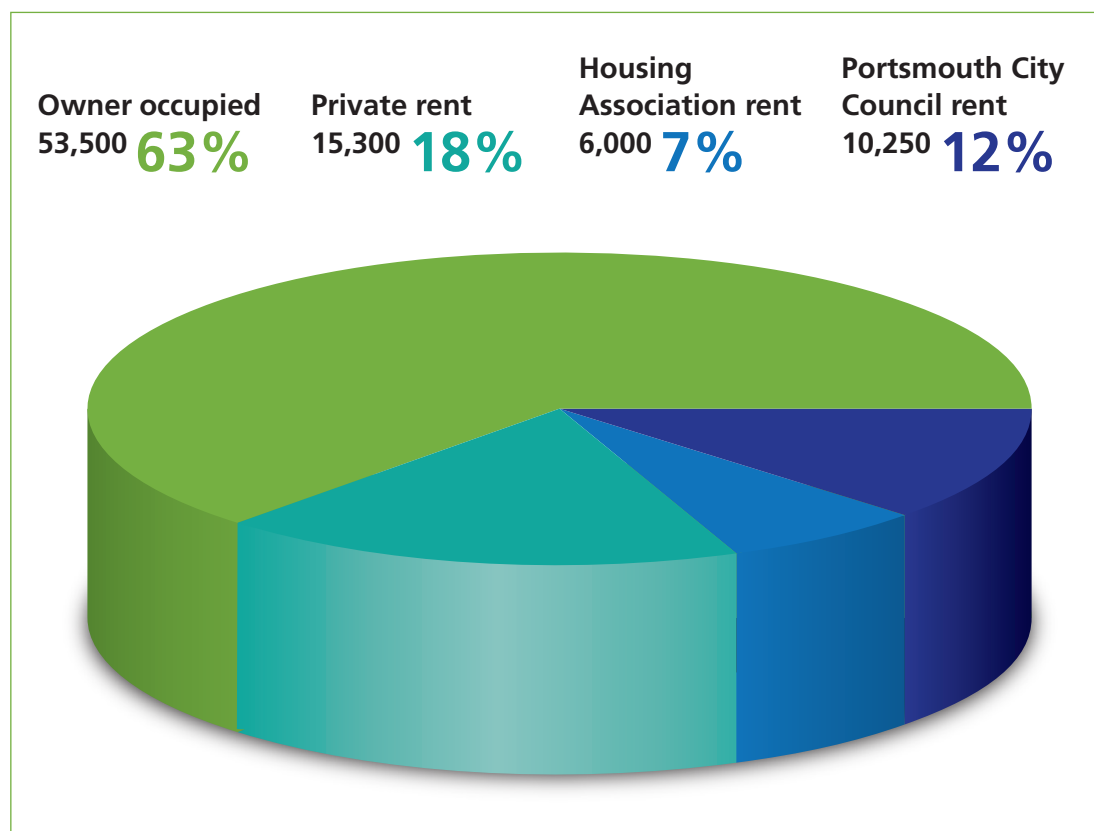
Many influences affect the way a housing market operates but ownership patterns and the type and age of housing are important. In Portsmouth the proportion of dwellings that are owner-occupied (roughly six out of ten) is below the regional average, and in consequence the number of rented properties (four out of ten), is well above the norm for most urban areas in the South East. **Chart 1** summarises the shape and size of Portsmouth's housing market in terms of dwellings and tenure. The city's rented sector is divided almost equally between social (not-for-profit) renting and private (commercial) renting. Current evidence suggests that

private renting has been increasing and the 2011 Census is expected to corroborate this.<sup>10</sup> Social renting is considered in more detail below.

### Much of Portsmouth's housing is over a century old

The age of the city's housing has implications not only for market values but also for policies on repair, maintenance and improvement. Studies into residential property conditions commissioned by the city council demonstrate that nearly half (compared to a fifth for England) of Portsmouth's housing is terraced, pre-dates the First World War, and is therefore around 100 years old. Social rented housing is newer, particularly when owned by housing associations because most of their property in Portsmouth has been built in the last 30 years. By contrast almost half the city council's stock pre-dates

**Chart 1: Portsmouth's tenure profile shows renting is popular**



Sources: Portsmouth House Condition Survey 2008; Tenant Services Authority 2010; PCC stock records. Numbers are approximate. City Council dwellings, at 10,200, refer to stock within Portsmouth: a further 5,000 properties are located in Havant.

<sup>10</sup> The Portsmouth Private Housing Condition Survey published 2008 estimates private renting as 18% of all dwellings, up from 13% reported in the 2004 survey report.

1960 and is over 50 years old. Repair and improvement is a continuing feature of Portsmouth's urban life, undertaken by private owners, landlords and public institutions. The city council, as one of these bodies, has invested in successive improvement programmes, particularly for the older neighbourhoods; and as a landlord has invested substantially in the maintenance of its rented stock. This continuing investment reinforces and maintains the stability and operation of the housing market.

### Portsmouth's property prices and rents are often lower

Portsmouth's housing market is characterised by considerable activity in all sectors. This is mainly due to lower property prices – for home purchase as well as renting – compared to nearby towns and cities, but also because there is an ample supply of private housing to rent. A large stock of older terraced properties (twice the regional average) provides a regular supply of housing at more affordable rents and purchase prices. Lower household incomes, as mentioned above, have also been a constraining factor. The effect of lower property prices can be observed in [table 2](#).

Portsmouth's prices are lower compared with immediate neighbours, including

Winchester. The first column records purchase prices for cheaper properties of the kind that may appeal to first time buyers; the last column records private (market) weekly rents. Home purchase is more affordable – because less expensive – in Portsmouth and Gosport, when compared to Fareham, Havant and Winchester.

### The search for housing is a two-way flow between the city and south Hampshire

Studies commissioned by the city council,<sup>12</sup> and also by PUSH, the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire,<sup>13</sup> confirm there are long-established links between adjoining housing markets across southern Hampshire. The latest evidence<sup>14</sup> on this sub regional market reports that although sales have fallen prices are rising but have yet to reach the peak of 2007, while demand for renting remains strong for all tenures. These inter-market links continue to be experienced in many ways. For example the city attracts an inflow of people (especially young singles and couples) seeking to rent privately or become a home owner for the first time; some will be students. But there is also an outflow of people to the boroughs of Havant and

<sup>11</sup> Data sources: buying: CLG housing market statistics, tables 582 and 583. Social rent: CLG rent statistics tables 702 and 704. Market rent: data combined from Dataspring, University of Cambridge and Hometrack reported in the 2010 South Hampshire Housing Market Annual Report published by PUSH.

<sup>12</sup> *Building Communities: understanding Portsmouth's Housing Market*; and *The South East Hampshire Housing Market* by Cambridge University and London School of Economics, 2003; *Portsmouth Housing Needs Survey* by Fordham Research, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> *South Hampshire Housing Market Assessment* by DTZ 2005 and 2006.

<sup>14</sup> *Housing Market Monitoring Report* by DTZ published December 2010.

**Table 2: Buying and renting is often cheaper in Portsmouth<sup>11</sup>**

Local authority	Buying		Renting – weekly rents		
	Cheapest Average of lowest 25%	Median mid point	Council all dwellings	Housing association all dwellings	Market 2 beds
	Qtr 4, 2010	Qtr 4, 2010	2010-11	31 Mar 2010	2010
Fareham	£165,000	£210,000	£71	£90	£148
Gosport	£118,000	£150,175	£62	£86	£129
Havant	£145,000	£195,500	-	£89	£144
<b>Portsmouth</b>	£123,438	£152,000	£69	£85	£141
Southampton	£134,000	£165,000	£65	£88	£148
Winchester	£220,000	£295,500	£79	£95	£170

*Rents for Havant Borough Council are not stated as the council's housing stock was sold to an independent housing association, now part of the Guinness Group.*

Fareham in search of larger family properties because of the shortage of this kind of dwelling in Portsmouth: detached homes, for example, comprise fewer than five percent of the city's dwellings compared to 30 percent in the South East region.

A more recent aspect of the market in the last decade has been an interest by purchasers seeking upmarket homes with views of the Solent or the harbour, of the kind now available at Port Solent and Gunwharf Quays and along Southsea sea front. Some of these properties are owned as second homes.

### 'Affordable housing' is a key feature of the market

One in five households in Portsmouth lack the income necessary to engage with the housing market unless assisted by the housing benefit system, or have access to housing at cheaper rents. This has been an economic fact of life for many years and is why Portsmouth has needed a considerable housing stock for letting at social (below market) rents. The city council's involvement in rented housing provision predates the First World War while housing association activity expanded from the mid 1970s. Together they currently own around 16,000 properties within Portsmouth's boundary, but the city council also manages a over 4,000 properties in Havant. Social rents in Portsmouth are approximately half market



levels, those charged by the city council averaging about £70 per week while housing associations are greater at £85 (see [table 2](#)).

Demand for affordable renting is substantial and continuing in Portsmouth and monitored by a Housing Waiting List managed by the city council. Priority is given to overcrowding, poor health and homelessness. New requests are rising.<sup>15</sup>

[Table 3](#) summarises the situation in late 2010. This table presents two long-running aspects about the need for social rented housing in Portsmouth.

### Social rented housing in Portsea

**Table 3: Social tenants<sup>16</sup> often need a move to larger housing**

No of beds needed	Applicants		Transfers		Combined	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
One	935	62%	247	20%	1,182	43%
Two	333	22%	266	22%	599	22%
Three	191	13%	507	42%	698	26%
Four	46	3%	175	14%	221	8%
Five	4	0%	23	2%	27	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,509</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,218</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,727</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>55%</b>		<b>45%</b>		<b>100%</b>	

Source: Portsmouth Housing Waiting List, autumn 2010.

<sup>15</sup> The average monthly rate of new registrations was 153 in 2008 and 198 in 2010 – a 29% increase.

<sup>16</sup> Social tenants are tenants of non-profit landlords like Portsmouth City Council and housing associations of which there are over 30 in Portsmouth; rents are less than market levels, usually about half.

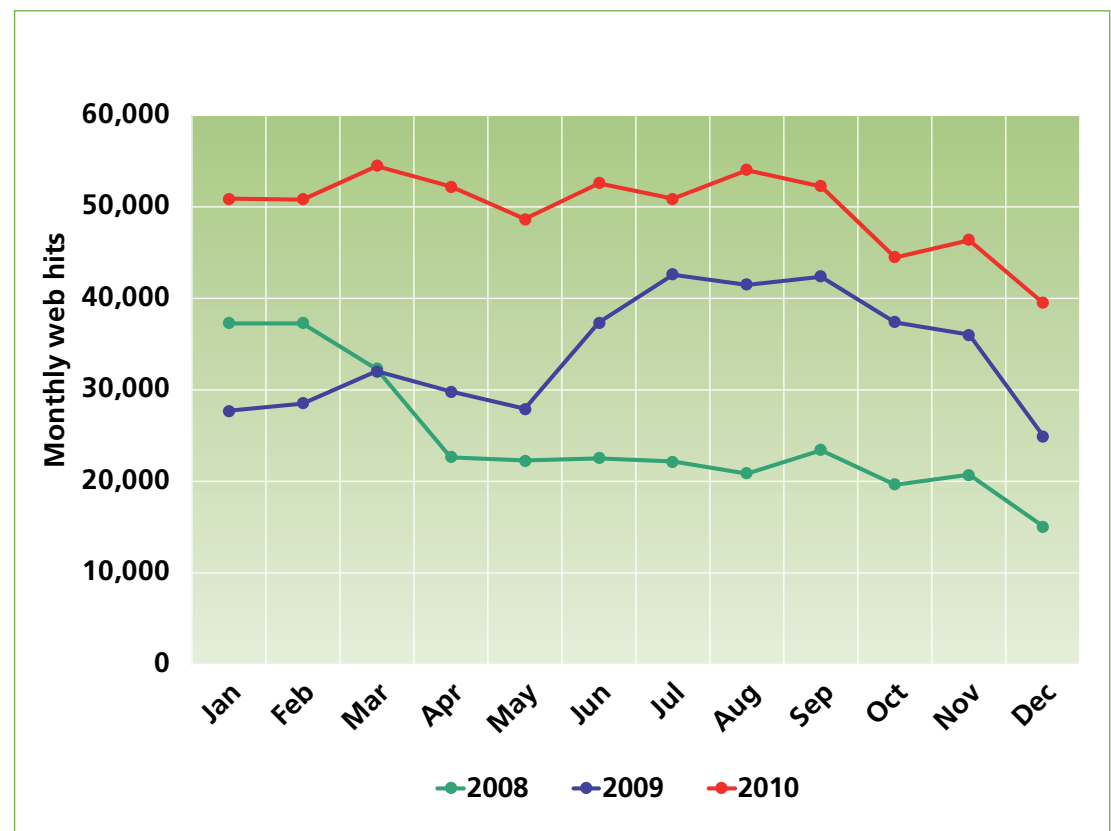
First, are 'applicants' applying to rent an affordable home from the city council or a housing association and who often require smaller accommodation – two thirds are registered for a one bedroom property. Secondly, are 'transfers', that is, existing tenants of the city council and housing associations whose families have increased in size and therefore need to move to a larger home. The majority of these households require two or three, and to a lesser extent, four or five bedrooms. Overcrowding is the principal criterion of need on the Housing Waiting List, affecting two thirds of registered cases.

### Home ownership is a frustrated aspiration for many

A trend that emerged in 2008 is the increase in unmet demand from people

who would have formerly participated in Portsmouth's first-time-buyer market by purchasing a small terraced property with a maximum mortgage sometimes exceeding 95 percent of value. This market collapsed when lenders, in response to the international financial crisis, raised their deposit requirements to between 15 and 25 percent of property values. The consequence, nationally and locally, is a huge demand for assisted home purchase such as shared ownership. *HomesinHants*, part of the Radian Housing Group, monitor visits to their website as a way of tracking interest in affordable home purchase not only in Portsmouth but across Hampshire: see [chart 2](#). It will be noted that enquiries during 2010 have been consistently higher than the previous two years, and they have continued to rise during 2011.

**Chart 2: Interest in low cost ownership grows year-on-year**



Source: Radian Housing Association. Radian manage HomesinHants, a marketing organisation promoting affordable housing, such as shared ownership, on behalf of housing associations.

## Section 3

# What we wish to achieve: our priorities

# 3

**The remarks at the beginning of this Strategic Plan explained that this document presents a high-level approach and matters of operational detail are contained in relevant business planning documents that are updated annually.**

Housing priorities summarised in this third section are derived from social and economic evidence, published strategies,<sup>17</sup> and a policy context in which the importance of housing is articulated by both the Portsmouth Local Strategic Partnership and the city council. The **Local Strategic Partnership** confirms its long term priorities in *Vision for Portsmouth 2008 to 2018* and the housing priority is to “Deliver affordable quality housing where people want to live”; this is interpreted and acted upon by the LSP’s Housing Partnership, a standing sub-group whose members represent several property interests in the city. The city council in its Corporate Plan for 2010-13 explains its housing priority is to “Increase the availability, affordability and quality of housing”. Behind these statements of priority objectives lies the need to plan for housing and housing related services for an increasingly diverse population, while attempting to balance resident’s competing requirements either individually or as groups.

## The green agenda influences much of what we wish to do

With residential properties accounting for one quarter of carbon emissions,<sup>18</sup> the ‘green agenda’ must be closely allied to the provision and upkeep of housing, whether newly built or existing. Because of the significance of these ‘green’ issues they will be treated as integral elements

to several themes, rather than being reported separately. Local priorities are influenced by national aspirations and one example is the Government’s *UK Low Carbon Transition Plan*.<sup>19</sup> This aims to comprehensively improve the nation’s housing stock over the next 40 years so that by 2050 every home, new and existing, will have a *zero carbon* rating. The *Code for Sustainable Homes*<sup>20</sup> is one of the tools to attain this national objective and the specific implications for Portsmouth are explained in Section Four below. Similarly the *Green Deal* is a Government initiative involving power supply companies with new financial arrangements for funding energy efficiency measures through customer utility bills: national implementation will commence from 2012 but much in terms of policy and procedure has yet to be defined as at spring 2011. The city council’s *Sustainability Strategy*<sup>21</sup> and the *Portsmouth Plan*<sup>22</sup> incorporate these aims and standards within principles that apply across all areas of activity including Portsmouth’s built environment.

## Advice & housing for those in greatest need

Access to informed advice about housing rights and help in obtaining accommodation has been a priority for years in Portsmouth. A consequence of this commitment is that a network of advisory services has grown up which is available without charge to Portsmouth’s residents. Two are operated by the city council, the Housing Options Service and Tenancy Rights Service, while others are operated by independent organisations, one of the largest being the Portsmouth Advice Centre (PAC) which is jointly run by the You Trust and the Citizens Advice

<sup>17</sup> Key strategic documents published by the city council include: *Corporate Plan* (2010); *Regeneration Strategy* (2011); *The Portsmouth Plan - Pre-Submission Draft* (2011); *Tackling Poverty in Portsmouth* (June 2011); *Aging Population Strategy* (2010); *Sustainability Strategy* (2010). Relevant strategies published by PUSH (Partnership for Urban South Hampshire) include *Economic Development Strategy* (2010); *Local Investment Plan: A Framework for Homes and Communities* (2010).

<sup>18</sup> *UK Climate Change Indicators*, Statistical Release, Table 3; published by Dept of Energy & Climate Change (DECC)

<sup>19</sup> *UK Low Carbon Transition Plan* published July 2009 by DECC.

<sup>20</sup> *Code for Sustainable Homes*, launched 2006, replaces EcoHomes rating scheme and is now mandatory.

<sup>21</sup> *Portsmouth Sustainability Strategy* published September 2010.

<sup>22</sup> The draft *Portsmouth Plan* was agreed March 2011 for by public examination in Autumn 2011.

*A view looking south across the rooftop gardens of Admiralty Quarter, with the Spinnaker Tower in the distance*



Bureau, with financial support from the city council. Requests for help received by these services are considerable: personal callers, for example, to the Housing Options Service exceed 10,000 annually. This is because, as outlined in Section Two, Portsmouth has high levels of demand for social renting, for which there is insufficient supply, which in turn increases reliance on the private rental sector. Whilst thousands need to rent a home, others need advice (often urgent) due to threatened homelessness and legal problems with their existing, usually private, tenancy. The scope for these services for the four years of this Strategic Plan is summarised in Section Four.

### **A helping hand – housing related support**

The provision of appropriate housing with related support is an integral part of the commissioning and development of new properties, as well as for residents in their existing homes. Example will be found across all domestic situations and housing tenures in Portsmouth. Services provided

are immensely varied and essential for the recipients, thereby enhancing their independence and quality of life. For these reasons alone, and despite the budgetary challenges expected to at least 2015, continuance of support services will be a priority. Other important reasons for prioritising expenditure include:

- Stabilising client's health in their home minimises emergency hospital admissions
- Digital technologies are enabling new forms of support to be created
- The 'personalisation agenda' introduces an expanded element of customer choice
- Home-based support is more economic than hospital and other institutional care
- Flexibility of care is improved, such as extra-care facilities for frail older people
- For some needs a communal environment is necessary for intensive support.

More information to illustrate these services in practice is provided in Section Four.

## Creating more homes

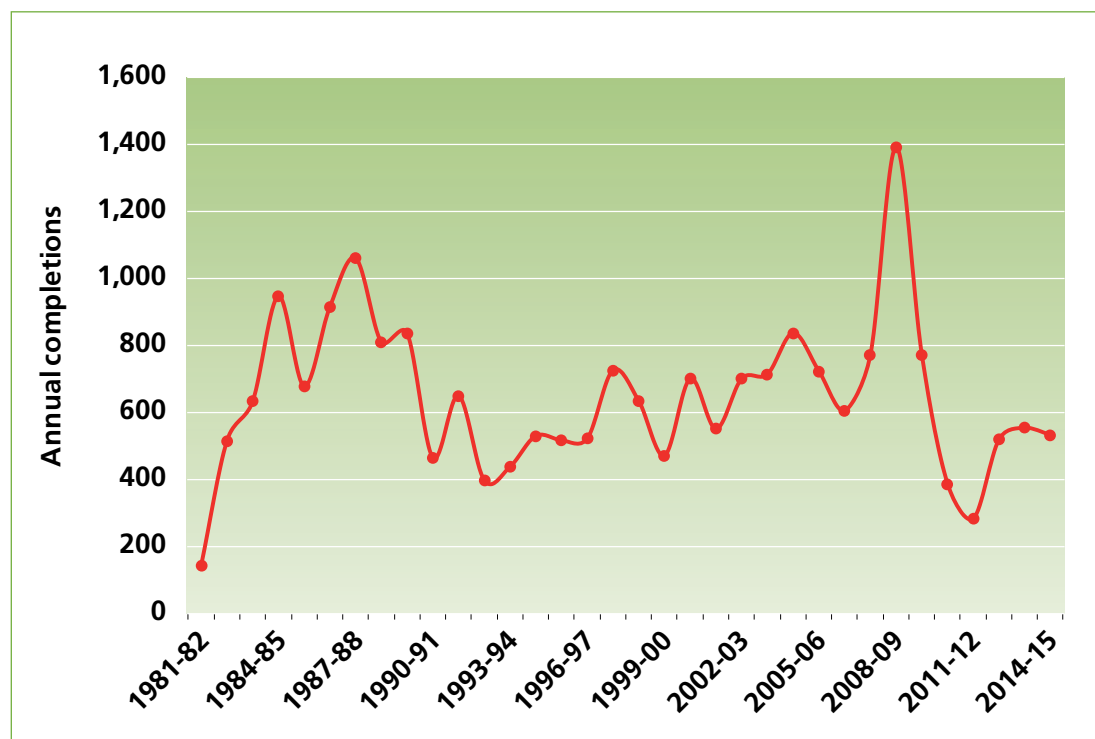
City council policies create the context for housing development, a priority informed by research<sup>23</sup> that includes resident opinion surveys.<sup>24</sup> It is given shape by a planning regime that has the new *Portsmouth Plan* as the principal element of the *Local Development Framework (LDF)*.<sup>25</sup> As a result homes for sale by commercial developers have been encouraged and partnership arrangements with housing associations have been productive. The outcome has been 4,300 additional homes built or refurbished in various programmes such as the Empty Property Campaign over the six years to March 2011. Over one third are affordable with rents and sale prices set at below market levels. The city council has also created a housing development team that is focusing on sites held in the Housing Revenue Account and operated by the Housing Management service. In consequence new council housing is being planned for the first time in years, with over 40 homes on sites at Buckland and Somerstown in the development pipeline as of spring 2011.

In the present environment this momentum will be difficult to sustain. Prospects for the four years 2011-12 to 2014-15 are highly uncertain due to market conditions and reductions in public expenditure. However, about 1,900 new homes of all tenures, and meeting diverse housing needs, are projected<sup>26</sup> to March 2015. Just over one third will be for rent or purchase at below market prices by housing associations and the city council. Some of the homes are expected to be developed on land released by the city council and other public agencies. Others will be part of mixed-use developments in the city centre or above existing retail premises across Portsmouth. **Chart 3** uses long-term housing completions data from Hampshire County Council to show that the completion rate for new dwellings, of all tenures, has been in the range of 400-600 annually for many years.

## Nurturing the city's stock of housing

Newly constructed dwellings are rarely more than one percent of any built-up area and thus the standards defined by

Chart 3: Portsmouth's new homes output usually exceeds 400 a year



Source: Hampshire CC, LAMS database and other documents; housing completions all tenures.

<sup>23</sup> *Housing need study 2005* (Fordham); *South Hants housing market study 2006* (DTZ) with annual updates 2008, 2009 and 2010; *Affordable housing economic viability study 2010* (Adams Integra).

<sup>24</sup> Ipsos-MORI published in 2009; more good quality affordable housing was among the top chosen priorities.

<sup>25</sup> The *Portsmouth Plan* was approved by the City Council in March 2011 for consultation and submission to the Government. An Examination in Public is scheduled for November 2011.

<sup>26</sup> *Portsmouth Plan*, appendix 3.



*Tipner: one of the largest strategic development sites in Portsmouth, with up to 1,250 new homes if planned transport infrastructure can be achieved*

Courtesy Tipner Regeneration Company

the *Code for Sustainable Homes* only affect a tiny proportion of Portsmouth’s housing. The other 99 percent, effectively the entire housing stock, are existing properties whose increasing age (as discussed in Section Two) has implications for the future. Hence the continuing priority given to programmes that improve the condition and quality of the city’s housing whatever the tenure. This work has taken on a new urgency owing to the importance attached to better energy efficiency by the nation’s housing, as set out in the *UK Low Carbon Transition Plan* referred to earlier. Current proposals are explained further in Section Four.

### **Management principles for affordable housing**

As the Second Section above explains, the affordable housing sector is a very significant element of Portsmouth’s housing market, with one in five dwellings and well over 30 not-for-profit housing providers. The city council is the

largest social landlord, with around 15,000 properties in Portsmouth and neighbouring Havant. Other providers, although having a smaller presence in the city, are often national or regional organisations with substantial stock holdings totalling tens of thousands. Some local housing providers are long established charities with less than 50 dwellings. But the market for affordable housing is changing and new forms of housing provider are emerging who intend to develop affordable housing *without* public subsidy: the momentum for such change is expected to increase during the coming decade.

With the affordable housing market experiencing such rapid change there is a need to protect the interests of the individual householder by ensuring that estate management is of a high standard across Portsmouth. The city council recognises its responsibilities to occupiers of affordable social housing and is therefore establishing broad principles for these services which are explained in Section Four below.



## Section 4

## A planned approach

# 4

**Based upon priorities explained in the preceding pages this Section sets out proposals for the provision of housing and housing-related services in Portsmouth to March 2015.**

What needs emphasising however is the variety of housing types, tenures and housing-related services, many of which are interlinked with one another; and that this provision is a response to the city's increasing diversity of incomes, social and ethnic backgrounds and employment occupations – all of which influence demand in the housing market seen as a whole. As this is an increasingly complex situation these proposals are presented as six main themes; details about implementation will be provided in business plans amended from year to year.

### Housing advice and accommodation when needed

The provision of informed help and advice about affordable housing, and associated allocations, is a continuing priority explained in Section Three. The principal aspects are described below.

#### Advice and information

In Section Two we explained why the demand for affordable housing is so considerable in Portsmouth. One consequence is that over 10,000 personal enquiries are received in a typical year by the city council's *Housing Options* team. Many apply for registration on the Portsmouth Housing Waiting List as the first stage in obtaining social rented housing or are formally referred to a private landlord via the *Access Scheme* (see below); or to *HomesinHants* for access to shared ownership housing and

other intermediate solutions.<sup>27</sup> A minority are referred for more specialist and in-depth assistance: to the Tenancy Rights Service also managed by the city council; or to the Portsmouth Advice Centre. Both services provide intensive assistance with the legal aspects of accommodation problems that can sometimes escalate to a threatened or actual illegal eviction necessitating direct intervention with the landlord; or advising a landlord about correct legal possession procedures. This range of activities by the city council and the network of independent organisations and landlords will continue as a core feature of publicly available housing services in Portsmouth.

#### The Portsmouth Housing Waiting List

Management of the city's Housing Waiting List<sup>28</sup> has changed in recent years following a major review of allocations and lettings systems. This has resulted in the creation of a new scheme that focuses not only on those with substantial housing needs but who also have a realistic possibility of obtaining a rented home within a reasonable period. The priority now is to develop the Housing Waiting List so that, in addition to being a tool for managing and allocating scarce rented housing, it can deliver two further requirements: provide better information for customers, especially about likely waiting periods until the first offer of accommodation; and provide an analysis of the waiting list to inform the commissioning of new homes. This is a continuing project, developed incrementally.

<sup>27</sup> See Section Two, Chart 2. Intermediate refers to homes for rent or purchase, usually by housing associations, where the prices are lower than the open market because they are subsidized.

<sup>28</sup> See Section Two, Table 3 for an indication of the scale and variety of demand for social rented housing.

Table 4: Most social lettings are for smaller homes

Dwellings owned by	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ beds	Total	Percent
Portsmouth CC	471	262	165	18	916	76%
Housing Associations	140	115	26	5	286	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1,202</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percent	51%	31%	16%	2%	100%	

Source: Portsmouth City Council. This data reports for 2010.

### Allocating social rented housing in Portsmouth

The city council is required to have a published allocations policy and is undertaking a review that includes consulting with existing and future customers; the outcome will in due course influence the city council's Allocation Scheme. The two main methods of offering and letting rented housing are summarised below.

#### Social housing

Lettings arranged through the Portsmouth Housing Waiting List currently averages about 1,200 annually: three quarters are city council properties and one quarter owned by housing associations, as can be seen from **Table 4**.

The allocation process for Portsmouth city council properties has changed over recent years to create a more flexible approach. New tenants will continue to be given more choice on where they want to live, the tenancy start date, and what repair works are required prior to occupation.

#### Private housing – the Access Scheme

Introducing new tenants to private landlords through the Access Scheme has been successful with 760 introductions since the launch in 2007 and it is intended to continue the scheme for the period of the strategic plan. In most cases landlords manage their properties themselves. However, the city council also offers landlords the option to delegate management to the city council, or

*Gary Hallett found the Access Scheme was the right option: Gary and his wife Barbara, and Charlie the cat, found their home in Copnor which they rent privately*



a housing association, for periods of three to five years, in exchange for a guaranteed rent that is up to a quarter less than market levels. As of spring 2011 the city council is managing over 60 properties and the scheme is showing considerable long term potential. But whichever arrangement is used, demand from prospective tenants is considerable. The main limitation to expanding the Access Scheme is new landlords. The priority is therefore to increase the number of participating landlords by promoting the scheme in various ways.

### Homelessness and managing crisis interventions

Homelessness is a significant cause of housing need in Portsmouth, and applications accepted for re-housing have grown in recent years.<sup>29</sup> Managing this volume of requests for help, their investigation and resolution, occupies considerable resources, both within the city council and its partner organisations. Current and future practice will be to prevent homelessness where possible through early intervention; and to reduce the time homeless households spend in short term temporary accommodation.<sup>30</sup>

### Tenancy Rights Service

This service is an integral part of the city council's Private Housing team. The aim is to provide informed and intensive casework assistance to landlords and members of the public who may either apply directly, or be referred from the city council's Housing Options team or independent organisations such as the Portsmouth Advice Centre. Casework enquiries average 450 to 500 annually. The focus is on prevention of homelessness and landlord and tenant disputes, using housing powers and enforcement procedures. The intention is that this service will continue during the life of the Strategic Housing Plan.

## Housing related support

The terms *housing* and *support* have greatly different meanings that vary with the client group and nature of assistance provided – as illustrated above in Section 3. The city council's approach, working with many service providers, is to maintain services where possible. Some budget reductions may be inevitable owing to the Comprehensive Spending Review, but wherever possible housing related support services will be retained and adapted to meet changing circumstances. The following paragraphs explain the application of this approach in general terms to different services, chosen to illustrate the range and variety of support being offered.

### Supporting People programme:

Helps around 3,000 individuals and households, works with 23 organisations, and commissions services for which there is a £7 million budget for 2011-12. Priorities are described in the *Supporting People Commissioning Plan*. Some rationalising and remodelling of support services for the years ahead is in progress. The aim is to retain an essential service core that delivers the best outcomes in terms of achieving and maintaining independence for vulnerable people, in consequence helping them so they do not require expensive residential care or health services.

Stakeholders and service providers have been consulted with the result that a more bespoke approach has been used for implementing budget reductions. Rather than applying identical percentage cuts across the board, agreed priorities are applied by reviewing projects individually. This has meant decommissioning a few services in order to safeguard the majority. The commissioning process itself will be reviewed during the currency of this Plan to assess alternatives to tendering and the potential for long term contracts.

<sup>29</sup> Applications accepted under the formal terms of the Housing Acts increased by 46 percent between 2008 and 2010 – with average acceptances rising in this period from 24 to 35 per month.

<sup>30</sup> *Preventing Homelessness: A Strategy for Portsmouth* (2008/13); March 2008.



*Telecare user John Beech*

**Tenancy Support Service:**

This service is offered by the city council's housing management service to help tenants sustain tenancies by, for example, maximising income and benefits, or helping a return back into education and employment. On average around 350 households are supported at any one time; referrals have increased 10 percent year-on-year since the service began. There is also a specialist money advice service available to the city council's tenants. Both these services will continue during the period of this Strategic Plan.

**Telecare emergency communications service**

This *Telecare* service, one of a number in Portsmouth, is managed by the city council. It is centred upon telecommunications technology that links customers to selected helpers in case of an emergency such as a fall within the home; co-ordination is provide by a specialist central control team. Customers at present

exceed 1,000 and comprise residents of city council sheltered schemes, home owners and private tenants.

Changes within society and health care delivery, summarised in Section Three above, mean that *Telecare* Services have considerable long term potential, with the number of customers expected to grow over the next decade. *Telecare* will continue to expand the use of the latest technology including *Telehealth*, to support people managing their medical conditions from their homes. This further enables people to remain independent and improve their quality of life.

**Homecheck home safety service**

Delivers a range of services within Portsmouth, Havant and Gosport. The aim is to make homes safer for older people, young families and people with disabilities. Small works are provided such as window and door locks, fitting safety gates for young children and electrical repairs. Customers apply to *Homecheck* in various ways that includes referral through Children and Young People's Services or health visitors. Customer case load is currently about 1,500 visits a year in Portsmouth. In the medium term the intention is to ensure the continuation of

*Right: Homecheck is promoted by leaflets and other media*





*The Milton Village development, Portsmouth: an extra-care mixed-tenure scheme with 62 flats developed in partnership with Housing 21, completed late 2010. One third of the flats are shared ownership and two thirds social rented*

this non-statutory service because the service outcomes contribute effectively to the *Better homes, better health* agenda; and also to manage the service so that *Homecheck* and *Telecare* compliment one another.

### **New housing-with-support**

The city council works closely with housing associations and other partners to create purpose-designed specialist housing, as part of its housing development programme described in the next section. A few are individual properties like a single bungalow with design features for a disabled occupier. But others are grouped specialist housing developments, for example, extra-care flats designed for the needs of older residents, some of whom are tenants and others owner-occupiers.

Another example caters for younger people. A new *foyer* is being built in central Portsmouth to provide accommodation, training and support for 54 occupants

aged 16 to 25 years: see the illustration on page 35. This is just one of several supported projects in Portsmouth for this age group.

### **Sheltered housing and older people**

Within Portsmouth there is a substantial stock of sheltered accommodation, much of which is over 30 years of age. The range of services and care offered is considerable and is provided in different tenures, usually for rent but also for leasehold purchase. Most properties are managed by social landlords such as the city council and housing associations but several schemes in the city were created by specialist commercial developers for purchase. Across the sheltered housing sector there are reviews on how best to adapt both buildings and services to meet changing requirements from existing and future customers. An indication of the context for these continuing reviews is available in two strategies published by the city council.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Aging Population Strategy 2010-20* published November 2010; *Joint Accommodation Strategy for Older People 2006 to 2016*, published November 2007.

Promoting affordable home ownership: a large billboard advertises the HomeBuy Show held at Fratton Park. Posters of this kind have proved successful in attracting potential home purchases to these shows

Courtesy of the Radian Housing Association.



## Creating more homes

The intention of this Strategic Plan is to do everything feasible within available powers and resources to balance the housing market. This means doing what is needed to ensure everyone in Portsmouth can access suitable housing, whether to buy or rent, that is affordable in terms of their financial circumstances and which has appropriate support. In other words, planning for a consistent supply of both market and affordable housing.

The city council's *Corporate Plan 2010-13* expresses this aim in the following way: to increase the availability, affordability and quality of housing. This will be achieved through a combination of strategic planning policies, notably the Portsmouth Plan<sup>32</sup>, and implemented by proactive working with housing developers and non-profit organisations; plus schemes developed by the city council itself using new financial powers after reform of the Housing Revenue Account.<sup>33</sup> Over time this will allow the continued development of new homes for purchase and rent that meet the latest sustainable standards; with a larger proportion of family-sized homes than in the recent past; including specialist accommodation whose design and support features cater for particular needs, an example being extra-care schemes for frail older people. Some new

schemes will also develop executive homes because economic and regeneration policies emphasise the importance of meeting this aspect of the housing market.<sup>34</sup>

## Improving the availability of new housing

Despite the down-turn in the housing market, and reductions in public funding for affordable housing, it is estimated that output of new homes (market and affordable) will average 475 a year for the next four years. This is lower than the last decade, but may rise in subsequent years<sup>35</sup> because completion trends since 1980 suggest the long term annual average for Portsmouth ranges from 400 to 600 a year, as discussed in Section Three above. At the same time the intention is to increase the proportion of family-sized housing, with three or more bedrooms, to reflect research outcomes mentioned in Section Two, meaning a 40% objective for new housing schemes whatever the tenure. However this is not a fixed percentage and will be dependent upon individual sites and their development economics.

Underlying these plans is a desire to achieve a significant element of affordable housing on larger new developments of eight or more dwellings, ranging from 20 percent to 30 percent depending on the

<sup>32</sup> Portsmouth Plan, pre-submission consultation draft approved March 2011, formal review autumn 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for councils owning housing, proposed by the Localism Bill 2011.

<sup>34</sup> *A strategy for Economic Growth and Prosperity*, page 19. Portsmouth City Council (2011)

<sup>35</sup> Portsmouth Plan page 87 and appendix 3 page 162-63.

size and circumstances of each scheme.<sup>36</sup> It is also planned to deliver several schemes where support is an essential element reflected in the design and operation of the completed building. Examples include multi-tenure extra-care developments for older people, or for those who are younger but have physical disabilities. A new *foyer*, providing purpose-designed rooms and support, is also planned for a younger client group aged 16 to 25 years.

### Improving the affordability of new housing

As Section Two discusses, Portsmouth's housing market is comparatively more affordable, in terms of purchase prices and rents, than most cities and communities in the South East region. Nevertheless the cost of housing continues to be beyond the budgets of many households in Portsmouth (for example, average purchase prices are five times average earnings even for the cheapest properties). In consequence there remains a fundamental need for more housing of different types and cost that is within the financial means of the city's residents.

Universal reductions in public expenditure imply that the task of delivering our aspirations will prove exceedingly difficult, especially during the four years of this Strategic Plan. It is the intention to explore all opportunities with development partners to seek solutions that are affordable<sup>37</sup> for the intended residents. Current discussions focus on the Government's model to provide rented housing at 80 percent of market levels. To achieve this suggests public subsidies falling to between 10 and 20 percent of gross development costs. Experience in Portsmouth, however, for the five years 2005 to 2010 shows that subsidies should average between 40 and 50 percent<sup>38</sup> for social rents to be feasible (typically half those charged in the open market). Our intention to deliver remains firm, but the way forward is far from clear as of spring 2011.

### Improving the *quality* of new housing

*Quality* has many interpretations but in this context there are at least two aspects to consider. New housing must be of reasonable size for the intended occupants.<sup>39</sup> It is now better appreciated that much of new housing in Britain (for purchase or rent) is among the smallest in Europe and there is a consensus that overall floor sizes ought to be increased. City council policy is therefore to apply space standards for *affordable* housing and they can be viewed on the city council's web site at [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/living/12751.html](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/living/12751.html). They will be extended to the development of *market* housing from July 2011 when the Portsmouth Plan is used to assess planning applications.

Quality also refers to our aspiration for new housing to be sustainable in the widest understanding of the term, but in particular with regard to the package of energy efficiency initiatives promoted by the Government. The Portsmouth Plan provides a timetable for raising sustainability standards for new housing. It adopts the Government's benchmark *Code for Sustainable Homes* that defines six target standards of which 'level 6' is the highest. In Portsmouth all new developments must, from July 2011, meet level 3 for affordable<sup>40</sup> and market housing. From 2015 new homes are to be designed and built<sup>41</sup> to the Code's level 5. How these standards may be implemented is being demonstrated at Copnor in Portsmouth with 14 new homes being developed by Drum Housing Association whose construction will surpass the latest energy efficiency requirements: completion of six houses and eight flats is expected autumn 2012. Post-construction monitoring with the first occupants will inform and influence housing design in future years. The architectural elevation shown on the following page provides a general view of how the scheme will look.

<sup>36</sup> A study by Adams Integra for the city council in 2010 confirms that 30% affordable is reasonable and achievable in Portsmouth.

<sup>37</sup> As the draft Portsmouth Plan explains (page 132) affordable housing includes social renting and intermediate tenures such as shared ownership from councils and housing associations.

<sup>38</sup> Capital grants once averaged 70 percent and more, depending on the project, sometimes 90 percent

<sup>39</sup> Draft Portsmouth Plan, policy PCS 18 page 135.

<sup>40</sup> Affordable housing is cheaper than market levels, usually due to subsidy: draft Portsmouth Plan page 132.

<sup>41</sup> Draft Portsmouth Plan Policy PCS14: Sustainable Design and Construction, page 115)



**New energy efficient homes in Copnor**

Courtesy of Drum Housing Association

**New homes with the highest 'green' standards in Portsmouth**

This scheme will deliver the first exemplar 'low carbon' homes in Portsmouth using modern housing design principles called Passiv-Haus. The design allows maximum energy efficiency and heat retention within a super insulated, air tight building with controlled ventilation. Using practical technologies the homes will meet Code for Sustainable Homes levels 3, 4 and 5 (as a benchmark, the maximum code level that can be achieved in any development is level 6).

**Management principles for affordable housing**

As mentioned in Section Three the city council expects social landlords, developers and others providing management services for affordable housing (rent and purchase), to ensure they accord with six key principles. These principles are intended as a basis for a two-way relationship between landlord and customer that looks beyond the front door to the neighbourhood and the community's sense of well being. They should also form a useful agenda for a continuing dialogue between providers and the city council's strategic housing services.

The six principles are:

**1. Accessible**

Information and services for existing and potential customers should be accessible, with provision for out-of-hours contact in emergencies

**2. Affordable**

Housing provided must be at prices that reflect the economic circumstances of Portsmouth and its residents. For example, service charges and rents should be set at levels that potential occupiers can afford.

**3. Responsive**

Management and maintenance services should be designed and operated in ways that reflect resident's requirements.

**4. Resident involvement**

Residents should be encouraged and resourced by their landlord to be involved in organisational decision making

**5. Support for residents**

Where appropriate landlords are expected to engage with residents and other third parties to provide support services that may include debt advice or the provision of skills training for full or part time employment and other support of a similar kind.

**6. Quality housing**

Accommodation to be designed and maintained to reflect appropriate standards, including the latest sustainability standards. This principle should extend beyond the individual home to the immediate locality and neighbourhood where an estate of properties is managed. In terms of security of tenure, providers should have regard to the city council's Strategic Tenancy Policy<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> This policy is in preparation and publication expected late 2011.





## Eco-friendly homes mean family-friendly bills

We can lend you money for home improvements that could make your home more energy-efficient and cut your bills.

Helping Portsmouth City Council go greener  
Cleaner and greener city

One North End family are already taking advantage of our interest-free loan scheme.

Paul Moroney and Clare Blake took out a five-year loan for a range of energy-efficient improvements to their home, including solar electricity and heating.

They are now earning money for every unit of electricity generated and sold back into the grid through the improvements. And the loan for the solar electricity system should pay for itself through savings in the family's energy bills over the next seven years.

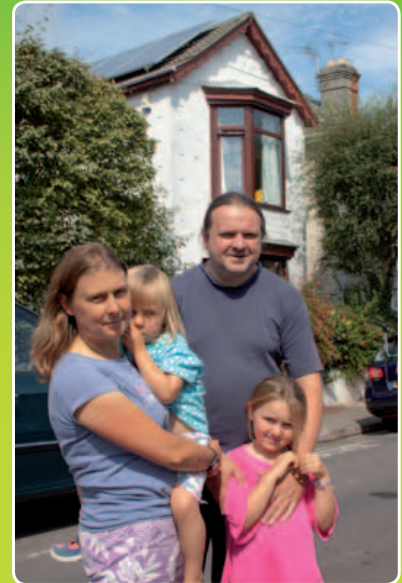
Paul said: "When our hot water cylinder needed replacing I looked at the options available.

Our home was already fully insulated but through this loan from the council, we've been able to invest further

and we now got solar panels on our roof, solar heating and solar electricity and also a new gas central-heating system with more efficient radiators."

The council can help you improve your home's energy efficiency too. We offer advice on energy-saving, and grants and loans for home improvements, as well as practical help with planning and getting work done on your home.

For more information on making your home more energy-efficient, call us on 023 9283 4538 or email [housing.privatesector@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:housing.privatesector@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



## Better housing and better health

Over the four years to March 2015 we will continue to prioritise our resources to overseeing the repair, maintenance and safety of Portsmouth's stock of housing of all kinds but especially for older privately owned or rented properties. As described in Section Two, many of these dwellings are over 100 years old and this can sometimes have a negative affect on occupier's health. Hence the over-arching theme for this portfolio of programmes is *Better housing, better health*.

There are also social, environmental and economic issues relating to houses in multi-occupation where concentrations of this type of housing in particular areas can have a negative impact on existing communities and the supply of family housing. Unless proactively managed the result may lead to a decline in the urban environment for residents. New policies and procedures are now being implemented.

Energy efficiency adds a further dimension, outlined in Section Three, that has considerable long-term implications.

### Eco house to go on view

An exciting project to make a derelict house eco-friendly is to about to start.

A council-owned terraced house, 84 Jubilee Road, Southsea, is being completely refitted before a new family moves in. The work will include the latest techniques to make the house more energy-efficient – better for the environment, and its next occupants' purse.

Open-house events and more information will follow, but if you'd like to know more now, call 023 9283 4729 or email [housing.corp.initiatives@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:housing.corp.initiatives@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



The house before work started

14 Flagship October 2010

Lots more news and information on our website [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk)

This is because of the Government's commitment to its policy published in the *UK Low Carbon Transition Plan*<sup>43</sup> that aims to convert all existing homes to zero carbon sustainability standards by 2050. Given this 40 year horizon, the first steps taken during the four year life of this Plan will be exploratory as new ideas are tested. They will be a local response to an emerging national programme for energy efficiency and power generation applied to the home. The scope, finance, and training implications are immense. Once established nationally by legislation, programmes such as *Green Deal* can be set up locally.

The following paragraphs outline these themes for the four years of this Strategic Plan.

*Flagship magazine is used to promote City Council loans for energy efficiency works*

<sup>43</sup> UK Low Carbon Transition Plan published July 2009 by Dept of Energy and Climate Change.



Typical multi-occupied housing in Southsea

### Privately owned housing Housing improvement

This programme remains a central element in a strategy to minimise serious disrepair among Portsmouth’s older dwellings. One of the principal tools used during the life of this Strategic Plan is the city council’s *Financial Assistance Policy*<sup>44</sup> which provides a framework for helping recipients to repair and improve their homes, an objective that also delivers health, safety and welfare outcomes. It is a comprehensive portfolio of grants and loans for different circumstances. Help with disabled adaptations is mandatory but for other situations financial input will be at the city council’s discretion.<sup>45</sup>

The intention is that the programme will continue to be implemented by the city council’s in-house agency service whose expertise is available to home owners and landlords in order to project-manage repair and adaptation works to their

properties. For 2011-12 the city council’s budget for this service is £4.2 million, but for the remainder of the Plan period annual funding will depend on the outcome of future budget reviews. Most financial assistance will be provided as loans. However, grants will still be provided for disabled adaptations and small-scale minor repairs for qualifying applicants.

The ‘green agenda’ is reflected in this city-wide programme because loans and grants, as well as funding works to remove identified hazards, will also be invested in new energy efficiency technologies for example photo-voltaic panels installed for power generation.

### Health, safety and private housing

Safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of residents living in private housing (eight out of ten of Portsmouth’s households – see [chart 1](#)), is a city council priority; it is also a mandatory legal responsibility. Fulfilling this statutory obligation is not limited to the safety of dwelling structures but has wider and long lasting implications, namely the quality of the total environment in which residents live: for example, pest control, unsafe accumulations of rubbish and issues of general public health. The city council’s private housing team must, and will, continue to address these essential objectives for the benefit of all Portsmouth’s residents and visitors.

### Houses in Multiple Occupation

Also known as ‘HMOs’, these properties are defined as dwellings which accommodate between three and six unrelated individuals sharing amenities such as kitchen and bathroom. Housing of this kind is often older and in a poorer state of repair compared to the rest of the city’s housing.<sup>46</sup> HMOs comprise a significant part of the city’s private residential rental market; an essential source of accommodation, especially for younger people newly arrived to Portsmouth to study or for employment and willing to share facilities. Demand for HMO properties is already high but is likely to increase due to changes in the

<sup>44</sup> *Financial Assistance Policy for Private Sector Housing*, March 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Maximum grants and loans are: home owners £4,000 grant and £35,000 loan; private landlords £35,000 loan; disabled adaptations £30,000 grant and £10,000 loan.

<sup>46</sup> Portsmouth Private Housing Condition Survey, 2008

administration of the housing benefit system: reduced housing benefit for claimants aged 25 to 35 years is expected to drive demand for smaller and cheaper accommodation with shared amenities.

Experience has shown that a concentration of HMOs, in Somerstown for example, results in rising levels of complaints by long-term residents to the city council about problems such as late-night noise and accumulated rubbish. These issues are not about physical property conditions, which in part is being addressed by the Landlord Accreditation Scheme (see below). Rather, it is the proportion of HMOs in a neighbourhood which is viewed as the source of the problem.

The policy adopted by the city council<sup>47</sup> is to reduce potential concentrations of HMOs over the period of this Strategic Plan and beyond, by using the planning system rather than, say, a licensing procedure. From 1 November 2011 a property owner wishing to establish an HMO for between three and six people sharing must apply for planning permission, as is done at present for properties with more than six people.<sup>48</sup>

The intention is to ensure that in future years multi-occupied dwellings do not dominate a local community or exceed one in ten properties in the immediate locality where permission for such a use is being sought.

### Portsmouth's Empty Property Campaign

Three percent of Portsmouth's stock of housing is vacant and of this about a third will, on average, be vacant for periods exceeding six months<sup>49</sup> The reasons are varied such as long term building works or an executor sale with Probate complications. A minority however remain vacant for excessive periods that can sometimes result in serious deterioration in the condition and fabric of the building. There is also an inherent waste when dwellings stand empty for prolonged periods at a time the city's residents need scarce housing.

For these reasons the Empty Property Campaign will continue to be promoted



by various ways that include the Internet, targeted mailing and word of mouth. Although extensive legal and financial tools are used (Compulsory Purchase Orders in extreme cases, for example) this programme relies on persuasion and close working with owners, their agents, housing associations and many others. The Campaign is gathering momentum: during the year to March 2011, 42 residential properties were brought back into use in Portsmouth. The pace will be maintained during the four years of this Strategic Plan. With the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)<sup>50</sup> directing investment to this area of public housing policy, a city council-led bid is planned. This will enable future partnership working with housing associations to create more rented housing from formerly vacant properties.

*An Empty Property Campaign success: this Fratton house was refurbished and sold on the open market. It is now a family home*

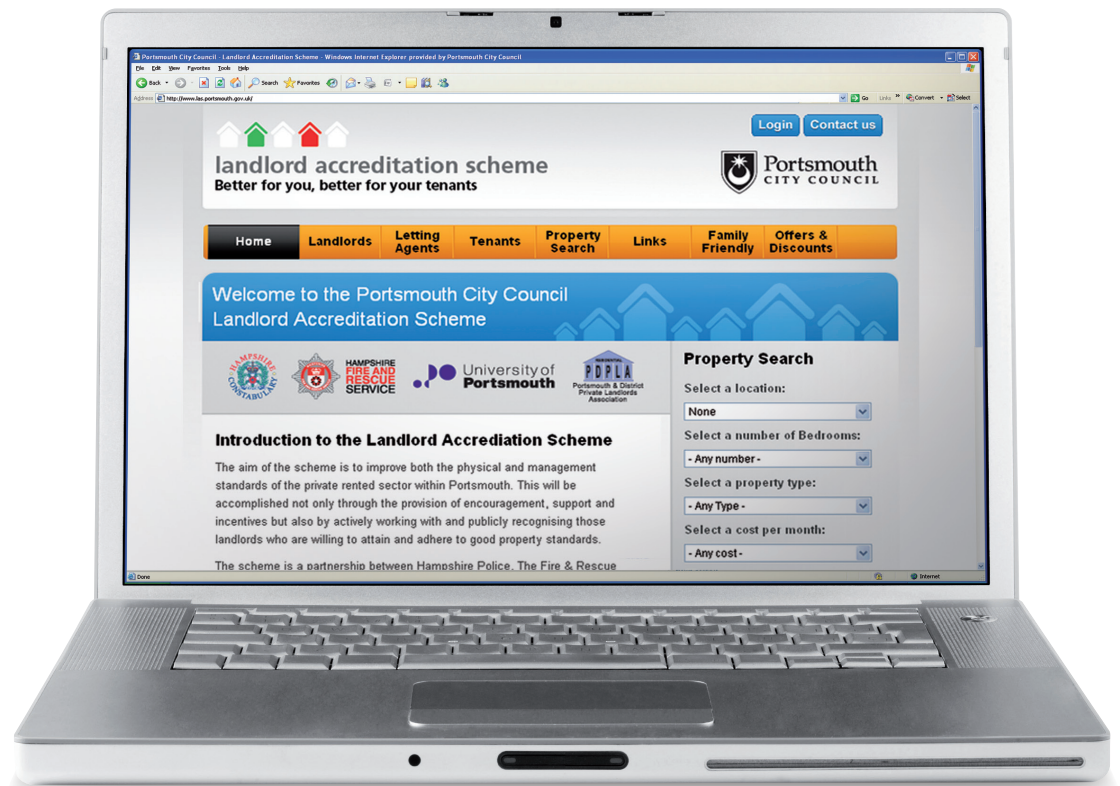
<sup>47</sup> Report on Houses in Multiple Occupation to Cabinet Member for Planning Regeneration & Economic Development 22 September 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Applications will be accessed against Policy PCS19 of the draft Portsmouth Plan. Council tax records, PCC.

<sup>49</sup> The HCA has budgeted £100 million expressly for works to vacant dwellings, commencing 2011-12.

<sup>50</sup> Data for housing associations from the annual Regulatory and Statistical Return for 2010; and city council management data. Section Two includes information about the comparative ages of housing in Portsmouth.

*The landlord accreditation scheme website allows landlord and tenants to be matched*



## Landlord Accreditation Scheme

A scheme to encourage and enable private landlords, letting agents and management companies to improve the quality of their properties, for the benefit of all parties including tenants. Some of the landlords are registered with Portsmouth University for student accommodation. As of spring 2011 the scheme has been extended to nearly 2,000 properties. The intention over the four years of this Strategic Plan is to expand the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and thereby more than double the number of participating landlords, associated agents and companies. This includes accelerating the number of University registered landlords participating in the Accreditation Scheme.

## Maintaining the city's social housing

This theme is identified separately because housing owned by Portsmouth's social landlords (the city council and over 30 housing associations), comprise one in five of the city's total dwelling stock, a significant part of the housing market

that has been profiled above in Sections Two and Three above.

## Maintenance and improvement

Most social housing in Portsmouth had attained the Government's Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2010: 99 percent for housing associations and 93 percent for the city council, the difference due in part to the older age profile of city council housing.<sup>51</sup> The city council's housing service directs a quarter of its repairs and maintenance budget towards 'response repairs', while the remaining three quarters is invested in planned and cyclical works. This 25/75 expenditure profile preserves the long term future of the city council's housing stock, and is an approach that will be continued during the life of this Strategic Plan.

## The green agenda and social housing

Much is being planned in the area of 'green' technologies across the social housing sector, nationally and in Portsmouth, and prospects are significant over the coming decade. Most housing associations have policies in this area, such as Radian and First Wessex Housing

<sup>51</sup> Asset Management Policy, First Wessex Housing Association, June 2010



*Jubilee Road Southsea – demonstrating 'green' features.*

*This typical terraced house, built 1898 and owned by the City Council, has been extensively refurbished.*

*Works included improvements to energy use such as a new central heating system with high efficiency boiler and extensive insulation. On completion, 250 members of the public visited this house and inspected the improvements.*

<sup>52</sup> CESP, managed by the Dept for Energy & Climate Change, runs 2009 to 2012 and requires gas and electricity generators to deliver energy savings measures to domestic consumers in defined low income areas; active schemes set up include those at Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol.

<sup>53</sup> The number and variety of individuals, bodies and organisations involved is very substantial. Individual private landlords, for example, participate in the private rental access scheme. Some bodies are small, voluntary and local with charitable or representational status; others are larger 'not-for-profits' with voluntary and paid staff and a local, regional or national presence; at the other end of the spectrum are substantial commercial companies operating across Britain. Over 100 'organisations' work with the City Council to deliver housing and housing related services in Portsmouth.

Groups. For example, First Wessex are upgrading their existing properties and programmes include installing the latest generation of gas boilers as well as cavity and loft insulation.<sup>52</sup> The insulation programme is run in conjunction with energy company E.On.

The city council's housing management team is testing electricity and hot water generation at several contrasting locations: single dwellings, sheltered housing blocks, low rise flats and offices. Capital costs are significant (£6,000 for a single dwelling and £50,000 for a small low-rise block of flats) and the financial

benefits are being monitored and results will be used to inform future investment decisions.

How these trials, and future trials, will be affected by the Government's proposed Green Deal is not known as of spring 2011, but anticipated investment by energy companies will increase the pace of change dramatically. Social landlords are likely to be at the forefront of these initiatives, one being the Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP)<sup>53</sup> tested in selected low incomes areas until the end of 2012.

# 5

## Section 5

# City council financial resources for housing

The tables in this section provide a headline summary of the city council's expenditure to meet the commitments in this Strategic Plan for the four years to March 2015.

### Private and community housing budget

This budget – summarised in **table 5** – relates to the following range of services:

- Tenancy Rights Service: advises and assists private tenants and landlords
- New affordable housing: commissioned by working very closely with housing providers such as housing associations, house builders and private landlords
- *Telecare* emergency communications service: links customers to selected helpers in case of an emergency such as a fall within the home
- *Homecheck* home safety service: helps make homes safer for older people, young families and people with disabilities
- Home improvement agency service: works with home owners and landlords, offering loans, grants, and professional expertise to reduce serious disrepair among Portsmouth's older housing

- Health and safety programme: monitors and, where necessary, removes hazards affecting individual households and the general public
- Landlord Accreditation Scheme: enables private landlords, letting agents and management companies to improve the quality of their properties
- Empty homes campaign: brings long term vacant residential properties back into use
- Supporting People programme for services such as
  - Homeless hostels
  - Supported housing for people with disabilities
  - Move-on services for young people aged 16-26 years
  - Floating support to vulnerable people with long term needs
  - Sheltered housing support
  - Tenancy advisory and resettlement services.

The Housing Options budget funds the following services

- Managing the housing waiting list
- Advising personal callers about their housing options

**Table 5: Private and community housing budget**

This budget is for all housing services except the management of council housing

Revenue spending	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Community Housing <sup>(1)</sup>	£7,891,500	£8,047,000	£8,217,200	£8,439,100
Housing Options	£1,364,700	£1,392,600	£1,402,600	£1,459,000
Total revenue spend	£9,256,200	£9,439,600	£9,619,800	£9,898,100
Capital spending	£4,761,645	£5,597,098	£5,565,959	£5,525,941

(1) Includes the Supporting People Programme

- Allocating (letting) social rented housing
- Assisting people threatened with homelessness
- Managing the private rented housing Access Scheme.

### Budget for managing the city council's housing

This budget – summarised in **table 6** – does not include the likely effects of the forthcoming reform of council housing finance. When these reforms are implemented, revenue balances in future years are expected to be more favourable.

Principal items of expenditure are

- Repairs and maintenance
- Sheltered housing services
- Sums paid to Government through the subsidy system.
- Developing new council housing
- Regenerating areas of publicly-owned housing such as Somerstown and Leigh Park

Principal income items are

- Rents
- Service charges from tenants
- Service charges from leaseholders

**Table 6: Budget for managing the city council's housing**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
<b>Revenue</b>				
Expenditure	£69,265,342	£74,054,301	£77,747,830	£81,237,255
Income	£69,611,762	£71,813,215	£74,327,449	£76,973,007
Balance	£346,420	-£2,241,086	-£3,420,381	-£4,264,248
<b>Capital</b>	£30,434,260	£20,783,642	£17,956,000	£18,465,000

*Properties like this benefit from the private housing improvement programme*



## 6

## Section 6

## Summing up priorities and intentions

**Many housing themes, often inter-related, are presented in this Strategic Plan. They explain housing priorities which the City Council would like to achieve during the four year life of this Plan by co-operative working on a substantial scale.<sup>52</sup>**

### Theme 1 – The provision of advice and accommodation

**An essential range of services for all residents will continue to be developed and improved:**

- Help and advice offered by city council and independent organisations for people needing affordable housing
- Advice for those renting or managing private housing
- A Housing Waiting List to identify those whose need for housing is greatest
- An Access Scheme introducing new tenants to private landlords
- A social allocations scheme for City Council and housing association properties.

### Theme 2 – Housing related support services

**This is a priority feature of housing services available within Portsmouth and by way of illustration includes:**

- Supporting People Programme continues to help around 3,000 individuals and households
- Tenancy Support Service with about 350 households supported at any one time

- *Telecare* emergency communications with at least 1,000 customers, and growing
- *Homecheck* home safety service making homes safer for older people, young families and people with disabilities
- Designing new housing-with-support will be a continuing element of the affordable housing development programme – sometimes as one-off dwellings whose features make them suitable for wheelchair dependent occupants; and grouped schemes such as extra-care flats for the needs of older residents.
- Sheltered accommodation for older people is an important aspect of the city's housing market with well over 2,000 flats, but on-going reviews will mean changes – sometimes fundamental – in the manner in which these services are delivered.

### Theme 3 – creating more homes

**Planning for a consistent supply of both market and affordable housing is a continuing priority and this is presented as three sub-themes.**

- **Availability:** the intention is to maintain Portsmouth's record of delivering new market and affordable dwellings, with an emphasis on family accommodation where feasible. The aim is between a fifth and a third of new homes to be affordable depending on the size and circumstances of each scheme.
- **Affordability:** the aim is to explore all opportunities with development partners to seek solutions that keep rents as low as possible for the intended occupiers.





Affordable housing – a mix of shared ownership and rented housing at Cumberland Gate

- **Quality:** ensuring that new housing is of sufficient size, attractive and fit for purpose, with designs for special needs, is important and will be safeguarded by standards that are part of the City Council’s planning policy. The Code for Sustainable Homes applies to new housing: Code level 3 for affordable and market housing from July 2011 and Code level 5 from 2015.

## Theme 4 – management principles for affordable housing

Because of rapid changes in the affordable housing sector it is important to ensure that the quality of management services is maintained.

This Strategic Plan therefore publishes six estate management principles for current and future providers to meet, as listed on page 24.

## Theme 5 – Better housing and better health

The maintenance and improvement of Portsmouth’s stock of 85,000 residential properties is a priority which this Strategic Plan presents as several sub themes, some of which are highlighted below.

- **Private housing improvement:** this programme is a central element in a

strategy to minimise serious disrepair among the city’s older housing. It will continue to be encouraged through the City Council’s *Financial Assistance Policy* with loans and grants for different situations

- **Landlord Accreditation Scheme:** an increasing number of privately rented properties are being registered under this scheme. The intention is that during the four years of this Strategic Plan the number of participating landlords, agents and companies will more than double
- **Empty Property Campaign:** this campaign will continue to be promoted in various ways in order to reduce long term vacant residential properties. The number of such dwellings brought back into use is expected to increase owing to the Homes and Community Agency’s commitment to invest in this area
- **Portsmouth stock of social rented housing:** all social landlords are investing substantial sums in the maintenance and improvement of their dwellings but the difference during the period of this Strategic Plan will be the increased emphasis on applying green technologies to energy conservation and production. Social landlords will be at the forefront of Government-sponsored initiatives such as the *Green Deal* although details are awaited pending the enactment of new legislation.

## More information

**Further information on this Strategic Plan is available from:**

**Alan Cufley**

Head of Community Housing and Regeneration  
Portsmouth City Council  
Civic Offices  
Guildhall Square  
Portsmouth

Tel: 023 9283 4450

Email: [alan.cufley@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:alan.cufley@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

**Text:**

Anthony Quail, Community Housing and Regeneration

**Images:**

All by Portsmouth City Council, unless otherwise acknowledged.

**Design and artwork:**

Portsmouth City Council inhouse design team.

Tel: 023 9268 8651

Email: [design@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:design@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



*Portsmouth City Council flats in Buckland*



The new Portsmouth foyer, when built in 2012 will provide accommodation, training and support for 54 young people between 16 and 25 years of age.

- 1 The Camber in Old Portsmouth, with St Thomas' Cathedral in the distance.
- 2 Social and intermediate rental flats at Cosham Interchange.
- 3 System-built social rented flats at Buckland.
- 4 Multi-occupancy housing in Southsea.
- 5 New bungalows at social rents designed for wheelchair users at Paulsgrove.
- 6 Typical older terraced housing in Fratton.

<a href="http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk">www.portsmouth.gov.uk</a>		
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Portsmouth City Council  
Community Housing and Regeneration  
Civic Offices  
Portsmouth  
PO1 2BG  
Telephone: 023 9283 4554  
Email: [housingstrategy@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:housingstrategy@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

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



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