



# Housing Strategy Statement

2003-2004



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This year the strategy statement is again written against a background of change.

Kingston has a newly elected Council and is undergoing its first Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The Housing Strategy forms part of the Royal Borough of Kingston's corporate approach to creating the best opportunities, services and environment for the people of the Borough.

There are two main documents:

- This Housing Strategy Statement, dealing with housing needs across the Borough.
- The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, which looks at the plans for Council homes in more detail.

We are also consulting residents on two other important documents:

- A draft strategy on the housing needs of Black and Ethnic Minority people in the Borough (the "BME Strategy"); and
- a draft Homelessness Strategy

We have tried to write these documents so that they are readable, concise and readily accessible to people in Kingston.

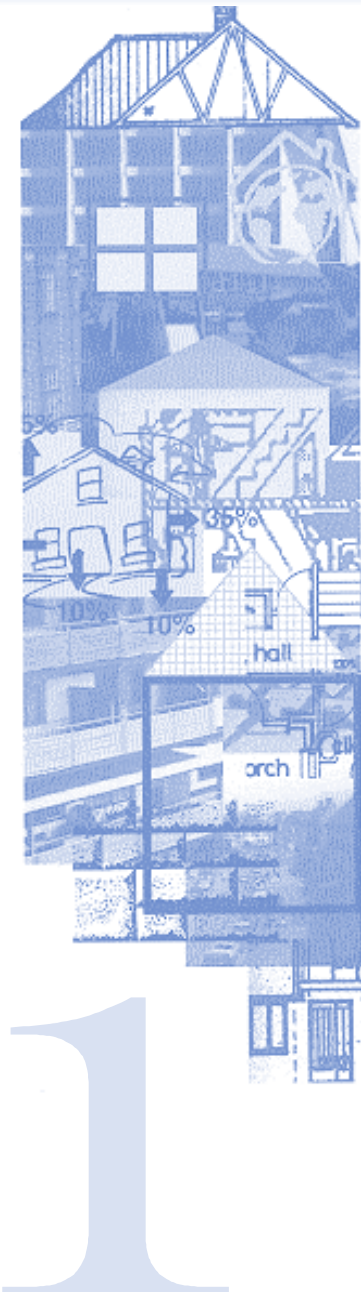
Our Housing Strategy has been developed around a vision of...

***all citizens enjoying decent and affordable homes  
and receiving quality services***

The Council's housing plans have been reviewed in the light of the Council's wider aims to ensure a direct link between the Housing Strategy and the Council's overall policy programme. There are, however, strong links with themes developed in previous years. The Council has six priority themes which have set the context for Housing's principal objectives:

- ***Providing Best Value.....***

Housing Services will continually seek to improve performance by setting high standards and making best use of resources.



# Introduction



- ***Enhancing Quality of Life.....***

Housing Services will ensure resources are targeted at those in greatest need.

- ***Working in Partnership.....***

Housing Services will improve housing conditions and tackle the issues of social exclusion, poor health and poverty.

- ***Putting People First.....***

Housing Services will provide all services on the basis of equality of opportunity and citizenship with residents having a proper say in decisions.

- ***Caring for the Environment.....***

Housing Services will promote a healthy, safe and energy efficient environment for all residents.

- ***Developing Staff.....***

Housing Services will promote a skilled and motivated workforce through investment in our staff.

**Chapter 2** of this Statement provides a "pen portrait" of Kingston. In **Chapter 3** we look at how the borough measures its performance while **Chapter 4** puts housing in Kingston in a London context.

In **Chapter 5** we look at how Kingston will work with its partners. **Chapter 6** sets out the scale of the housing needs and problems we face in the borough and we go on in **Chapter 7** to summarise our priorities for action. **Chapter 8** describes the main options the Council has in using its resources. Our strategy is found at **Chapter 9**. In **Chapter 10** we show how we will deliver our programme and our specific targets can be found at **Chapter 11**.



# 2

The Royal Borough of Kingston is located in one of the most prosperous parts of London and the South East. It plays a major role as a commercial and employment centre serving a wide area of South West London and North East Surrey.

Kingston is a major retail centre, rated as the best retail centre in London outside the West End in a recent Experian Retail Survey.

The economy of Kingston is dominated by service industries and by small and medium-sized businesses. Over half the borough's firms employ five or fewer people. Around 50% of residents live and work in the Borough. Reliance on sectors such as retail, restaurant and leisure has given rise to high levels of part time employment compared to London as a whole.

While Kingston is a prosperous area, there are pockets of deprivation and wide disparities between Wards. House prices in Kingston are high and the social housing sector is small. Affordability and a shortage of affordable housing has been identified as one of the main concerns for the residents of the Borough.

The Council's housing stock is the smallest in London (excluding the City). The Council owns 5,109 rented properties and 1,311 leasehold properties. A significant proportion of the rented housing stock is sheltered housing for older people. The majority of general needs properties are flats on estates across the borough. The following table summarises the nature of the Council's housing stock.

	Flats/Maisonettes	Houses/bungalows
Sheltered Housing	1,111	28
Bedsit/1 bedroom	640	136
2 bedroom	1,492	266
3 bedroom	485	951
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,728</b>	<b>1,381</b>

From this table it can be seen that 74% of the Council's properties are flats and maisonettes and only 23% are family sized houses or bungalows. This makes it particularly difficult for the Council to meet the rehousing aspirations of the majority of households on the housing register who are families wanting houses with gardens.

## The Council's Performance



# 3

The Council's corporate commitment is to help create the best opportunities, service and environment for the people of the Borough of Kingston.

Based around this overarching vision, and taking account of the issues that residents say are most important to them, the Council has developed an overall strategic framework setting out the priorities for the Borough.

The Council's six strategic priorities are:

- (i) Working in partnership.
- (ii) Caring for the environment.
- (iii) Putting people first.
- (iv) Enhancing quality of life.
- (v) Developing educational life long learning.
- (vi) Providing best value.

These priorities have been translated into a Policy Programme which has been integrated with the Best Value Performance Plan. The Policy Programme focuses around 25 key objectives and the Performance Plan links a range of national and local indicators to ensure a clear and consistent direction across all services is achieved.

The Council has developed a community vision, informed by quantitative and qualitative research undertaken by MORI. This research is now being used by the Local Strategic Partnership to develop a Community Plan for the Borough.

MORI have found that residents are positive about Kingston now, but are less positive about the future. Residents main concerns are fear of crime and liveability issues, particularly affordable housing.

### Priorities for change - the top 10

more recycling facilities  
improve state of roads/pavements  
clean up the Borough  
community safety  
more affordable housing  
long-term planning  
tackle problem of young people and petty crime  
improve civic education  
better traffic control systems  
improve parking



MORI



### ■ Resident Consultation

The Council has well developed systems and structures for consulting with residents. The Council's decision making process and resident's role in this is set out in more detail in Appendix 1. Consultation arrangements for the Housing Strategy and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan are also included in this Appendix.

### ■ Corporate Asset Management

During 2002/02 a Corporate Asset Management Group was established to develop and co-ordinate the asset management planning process. The Group comprises representatives from all Council services including Housing. The Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan have been prepared for submission to the Government Office in July 2002.

## The London Picture



As a London Borough, Kingston faces all the same housing problems and challenges of other Councils in the capital.

The London Housing Statement 2002 lists a set of main priorities which Councils like Kingston should be addressing.

### ■ **Delivery of Affordable Housing**

The need for more affordable housing in Kingston is described in Chapter 6.

The Council will continue to adopt a proactive approach to achieve the delivery of affordable housing. Our effective corporate working includes strengthening of the Council's Unitary Development Plan to provide 40% affordable homes on sites yielding 10 or more units; the release of Council owned land at nil cost; and the provision of Local Authority Social Housing Grant.

The Council is also supporting specific schemes such as the Starter Home Initiative for key workers. Further work is being undertaken to assess the need for key working housing culminating in a Members Seminar scheduled for Autumn 2002. Special needs housing projects remain a high priority and the Council is maximising the opportunities arising from Supporting People to extend support for vulnerable households.

Kingston is committed to cross Borough working and other partnership schemes to meet regional, sub-regional and local priorities. In delivering affordable housing the Council is mindful of its new responsibilities under the Homelessness Act 2002 and its emerging BME strategy.

### ■ **Better Use of the Social Housing Stock**

London's existing social housing stock is diminishing. Amongst the steps the Council is taking to make the best of what is there are:

- Cash incentives to allow Council tenants to buy in the private sector - the TAPS scheme;
- payments to encourage Council tenants to move to a smaller property;
- participation in the LAWN scheme to allow tenants voluntarily to move to another part of the country.



### ■ **Decent Homes**

Four out of ten Council homes do not meet the Government's Decent Homes standard. The Government's target is to deal with a third of these by 2004 and all of them by 2010. The Council has plans to meet the first target. The second will depend upon the outcome of the Housing Options project, which is discussed further in this statement and in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

### ■ **Regeneration**

The outcome of the Housing Options Project will also partially determine the extent to which Council estates can be regenerated over the next 10 years. Major progress is already being made on privately-owned development sites in the Borough, on many of which new affordable housing has been secured.

### ■ **Addressing the Housing Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic People**

Kingston is a diverse community and is home to people from a large number of ethnic minority groups. However, people from these groups are disproportionately represented amongst people in housing need in the Borough.

The Council has developed a strategy (the "BME Strategy") to look at this issue. This new initiative covers the quality of consultation with ethnic minority groups, policy on racial harassment, the provision of information, the role of housing associations and a range of other matters.

Groups and individuals will be asked for their views on the Strategy before it is approved towards the end of 2002.

### ■ **Homelessness**

In Kingston, as across London, homelessness is a major problem. At present, the Council houses about 600 households in different types of temporary accommodation.

The Council's Homelessness Service has recently

## The London Picture



undergone an inspection by the Audit Commission. It was judged to be a "Good, two star service, with promising prospects for improvement" - amongst the best in London.

A new law - the Homelessness Act 2002 - places new duties on the Council. These include giving help to a wider group, reviewing the service provided and preparing a comprehensive homelessness strategy. Although the last of these is not required until 2003, the Council is well placed to start now. A draft approach to the Homelessness Strategy has already been produced and will be the subject of consultation during the rest of 2002.

The Government has now made a separate commitment that by March 2004, Councils will ensure that no homeless family with children will live in a B&B hotel except in an emergency.

Through its Temporary Accommodation Action Plan, the Council has been very successful in restricting the use of B&B. At 8, in March 2002, it was one of the best performers in London.

The Council intends to continue its strategy of expanding its private leasing scheme (involving private landlords), the Tenant Finder scheme and the number of hostel bed spaces. A successful bid for resources from the Government's Bed and Breakfast unit will allow the Tenant Finder Scheme to be expanded to include the prevention of homelessness.

### ■ Supporting People

The Supporting People programme aims that vulnerable people receive the support they need in their home and have the opportunity to live independently.

The Council has produced a project plan for the Government which plans for implementation of the new system in April 2003. Kingston has been given "Green" status by the Government, achieving 61 points out of a maximum 66, showing that the Borough is on target to introduce the system.

The Council is well on the way to mapping the existing supply of services within the Borough. A comprehensive "needs mapping" exercise has been



commissioned from a consultant and the results of this are due in July 2002.

The Council's interim Supporting People Strategy will be in place by September 2002 and a full 5 year strategy by April 2004. A new staff team has been established to develop the strategy; an early focus of the team is the IT needed to back up the implementation of the Supporting People project.

Further details on Supporting People are provided elsewhere in this document and in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. This includes a major project to look at the services provided within the Council's sheltered housing schemes.

### ■ **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a major priority for the Council and the Government.

The Council has recently reviewed its policies and procedures in this area, including the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts ("ABCs") with Council tenants. This is discussed in more detail in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

### ■ **Private Sector**

The private rented sector makes an important contribution to meeting housing need in London. However, the Government is concerned that it is becoming increasingly expensive and scarce.

The Council is supporting the sector both by providing high quality advice to landlords and by bringing together tenants and landlords in its private leasing and Tenant Finder schemes.

In response to Government proposals, the Council is undertaking a complete review of the grant and other support it provides to owners whose properties are in need of repair or improvement. The details are discussed later in this statement.

### ■ **Delivery of Housing Services**

The Government is keen to see improvements in the delivery of three housing services in particular:



### **Housing Benefit**

The Council's performance on Housing Benefit has improved considerably over the last two years, since the service was brought back in-house. A joint Best Value of Revenues, Benefits and Rent Collection has just been completed. A series of improvements are planned, including measures to speed up dealing with HB claims and providing HB expertise in Neighbourhood offices. More detail is provided in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

### **Repairs**

The Housing Repairs Service has just been subject to an inspection by the Audit Commission. The judgement was a "Fair, one star service with promising prospects for improvement". This confirmed the Council's view that while some areas of the service were sound, there was scope for marked improvement. The plans for improvement are summarised later in this document and in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

## ■ **Housing Advice and Prevention of Homelessness**

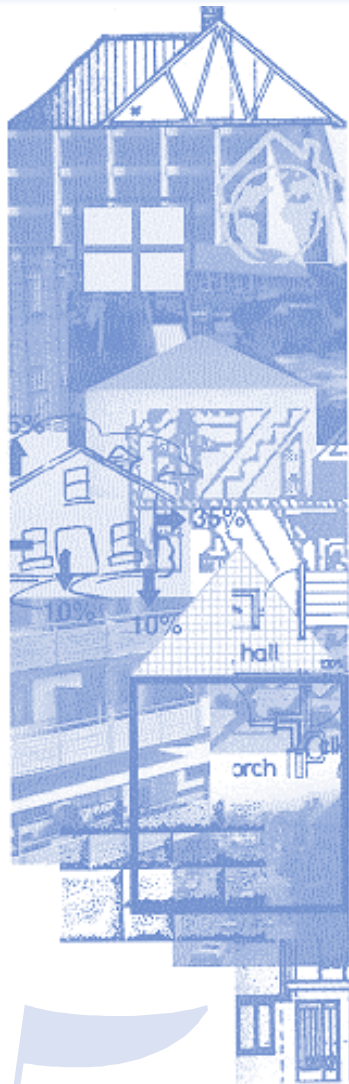
Audit Commission inspection of the Homelessness Service recognised that within the resources available, it provided a good service to those in housing need and those threatened with homelessness. The Council also has an officer, placed within the Children and Families Service, responsible for supporting tenants whose tenancies are in danger through rent arrears or inappropriate behaviour. The Council has expanded its Resettlement Team to support vulnerable people in new tenancies. Further proposals to co-ordinate and expand these services will be developed under the new Homelessness Strategy.

## ■ **Cross Boundary Working**

Many of the challenges that Kingston faces in meeting its housing needs and delivering high quality cost effective services are not unique and are shared by other local authorities. A group of South West London Authorities, including Kingston, has recently been established to look jointly at issues such as maximising new social housing supply through planning policies, making choice based lettings work,



key workers and community leadership. The group propose strengthening partnership working by sharing information, ideas and best practice.



Partnership working within the Council is well developed and great emphasis is placed on working with the local community and local organisations to achieve the best for the people of Kingston.

The Housing Service has an important contribution to make to the quality of life. The importance of a decent home to the quality of people's lives is well documented. People who are decently housed have a stronger sense of security. Decent housing strengthens communities and provides a better setting for families to grow. It improves health and educational achievement and contributes to the reduction of crime and disorder. The Housing Strategy identifies the contribution which the Housing Service in Kingston is making to the broader responsibilities of the Council and the quality of life in the Borough.

### ■ Improving Health

One of the Government's priorities is to improve the health of the worst off in society and to decrease the health gap. Factors affecting health include poverty, employment and the housing and wider social environment.

While Kingston is generally considered to be a relatively affluent area, there are pockets of serious deprivation. Among the most serious areas of deprivation is the Norbiton Ward.

In response to concerns about the level of deprivation in the Norbiton Ward, a number of initiatives have been developed to improve the health and well being of residents in the area. In partnership with the Health Authority, a Healthy Communities initiative has been operating on the Cambridge Road Estate since 1998. Previous strategy documents have detailed the projects which have been undertaken over the last four years. Recent initiatives include a community garden, which incorporated design features arising from extensive consultation with the community and the appointment of a dedicated Community Development Worker (funded by the Health Authority and employed and managed by the Housing Service). At a strategic level, the Housing Service makes an important contribution to the Health and Social Care Improvement Programme for the Authority.



### ■ **Community Safety**

Housing is one of the lead partners in the borough-wide Crime and Disorder Reduction Group. Community safety priorities are identified in the borough's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and annual action plans prioritise new initiatives. A multi agency Housing Crime Prevention Group allows residents representatives to feed directly into the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategic process. Community safety priorities this year include the development of a borough-wide Housing Ranger Service which is part funded by the National Street Warden Initiative. Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts have also been successfully introduced during the last year and will continue to be an important element of the Borough's response to anti-social behaviour by young people.

### ■ **Caring for the Environment**

In support of the Council's objective to protect and improve the local environment and save resources, the Housing Service has continued to prioritise energy efficiency initiatives within its capital programme. Targets have also been set within the Best Value Performance Plan to further improve the SAP ratings of our homes. The Caretaking Service has been restructured as part of the Best Value Review Improvement Plan and now directly tackles graffiti on housing estates.

### ■ **Working in Partnership**

During 1999/2000, two independent inspections were carried out to review the way the Council delivers its services. The Improvement and Development Agency undertook a review of the Council under its Local Government Improvement Programme and commended the Council on its strong partnership working. The Housing Service has developed strong links with a wide range of organisations and agencies. Innovative projects for people with special needs have been established in partnership with registered social landlords and the private sector. An initiative to help private residents on low incomes improve heating and energy efficiency in their own homes has been developed in partnership with the Croydon Energy Network.

## Working in Partnership



A joint review of Social Services undertaken by the Social Services Inspectorate again commended the inter-agency working and effective partnerships which have been established with other services and organisations. The Inspectorate also highlighted some areas of untapped potential between Housing and Social Services. An action plan has been drawn up which includes initiatives for joint training and more joint protocols between Housing and Social Services to ensure residents have the best possible access to the services they need. The Inspectorate also recommended a review of the use of low demand sheltered housing with a view to making schemes available for Social Services client groups and the creation of a specific post to enhance liaison at an operational level. Following the advice of the Inspectorate, a Housing liaison officer has recently been appointed within the Children and Families Division of Community Services and a working group to review the provision of accommodation for older people has been established.

Meeting the housing needs of key workers has presented a new challenge during the last year. The Council has welcomed the opportunity to work in partnership with other London Boroughs to implement a cross-boundary allocation from the Housing Corporation for Starter Home Funding for key workers in South West London.

The Council is keen to further develop cross-borough working and has recently joined a group of South West London authorities which meets regularly to consider sub-regional housing issues.

The approach that the Council has taken towards providing Best Value will further develop the way the Council works with external organisations and agencies. For example, the Housing Service has included within its Best Value Review Groups a wide range of representatives from external bodies to ensure the highest level of challenge and external scrutiny. It is also hope that this approach will allow greater opportunity for joint working and joint solutions in the future.

During 2000/01 the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Review has progressed and is now at First Deposit stage. The Housing Service and the Planning Department have worked closely together in respect



of the affordable housing component which has been enhanced from a requirement for 25% affordable homes on development sites providing 20 or more new units, to the current requirement for 40% affordable homes on sites yielding at least 10 new units or any site over 0.5 hectares in size. The new affordable housing obligation also requires at least 25% of the new homes to be social rented housing, while the remaining 15% can be other forms of affordable housing such as shared ownership.

The Housing Service continues to work closely with the Planning Department on the review of the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The plan is at the Second Deposit Stage and pre-enquiry changes are due to be published in September 2002.

The requirement for affordable homes has been further enhanced from 25% affordable homes on development sites capable of yielding 20 or more units to an overall 40% target of affordable homes on sites yielding 10 or more units or any site over 0.3 hectares in size. The new housing obligation requires at least 25% of the new homes to be social rented housing. The remaining 15% may be forms of intermediate housing such as shared ownership. The Public Enquiry is scheduled for March 2003.

## Housing Needs and Problems in Kingston



The majority of people in Kingston are well housed - 85% according to the draft of the recent Housing Needs Survey.

But 1 household in 7 is living in unsuitable housing. The main reason for unsuitability is the physical condition of the property - its state of repair or its lack of proper facilities.

Most of these households live in the private sector. But looked at proportionally the problem is most acute in Council homes. Just over 1 in 10 people who own their own homes in Kingston live in unsuitable homes. The figure for Council tenants is nearly one in three. Four out of ten Council homes fall below the Government's "Decent Homes" standard.

All types of household live in unsuitable housing, but there is a particular problem for single parent families. Over 40% of them live in unsuitable housing.

Overlying this are stark differences in income, particularly between one tenure and another. The average household income of an owner occupier with a mortgage is £42,000. The same figure for Council tenants is £4,500.

In this chapter, we look at the broad range of housing needs and problems in the Borough.

### ■ The Need for Affordable Homes

Kingston is an area of brisk and rising house prices and private sector rents. There is little prospect of this situation changing over the next few years. This makes it very difficult for people on no income, on low incomes or even on modest incomes to house themselves in the private market.

#### ***Housing Needs Survey***

The Council's housing needs survey assessed the backlog of housing need in Kingston as being equivalent to 117 affordable homes required each year. It also estimated the number of homes required to meet newly arising need as being 1,695 each year, making a combined annual requirement of 1,812 affordable dwellings.

The survey then estimated the supply of affordable homes over the next five years as being 447 per year.

By taking the estimated annual demand of 1,812

## Housing Needs and Problems in Kingston



affordable homes and deducting the anticipated annual supply of 447 from existing and newly built homes, the survey estimated the shortfall of affordable housing in Kingston as being 1,365 homes per year over the next five years.

The Housing Needs Survey also explored the definition of affordable housing and made recommendations on the proportion of affordable homes Kingston should be seeking on new developments.

The Borough's need for affordable housing is increased by virtue of the new duties to accommodate a wider range of homeless households under the Homelessness Act 2002.

In addition, the Council's need to contribute to Regional and Sub-Regional priorities may place additional demands on the limited land and financial resources available to the Authority. However, improved cross Borough working may also provide new opportunities which the Council will seek to maximise.

These have been reflected in changes to the Council's planning policies referred to elsewhere in this document.

### **Homelessness**

The Housing Needs Survey estimates that on current plans, 447 affordable units will become available annually. This closely matches total lettings of 444 Council and housing association homes in 2001/02. This relatively low number of lettings reflects Kingston's unusually small social housing sector of 5,109 permanent Council homes and 2,023 housing association properties.

Combined with this low level of supply, Kingston has an unusually large problem of homelessness which has resulted in 60.3% of permanent lettings in 2001/02 being allocated to this group. This proportion increases to 74% of permanent lettings when those to sheltered housing are excluded. Despite this, the gap between homelessness demand and supply has led to a further increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation, 14% in the last year.

## Housing Needs and Problems in Kingston



In 2001/02 the number of homelessness applications totalled 1,178, with 372 households being placed in temporary accommodation. The number of households in temporary accommodation grew from 593 at 31 March 2000 to 694 at 31 March 2002, an increase of 3%. During 2001/02, a rehousing duty was accepted in 421 cases.

The Council estimates that without special measures the underlying demand for accommodation would mean 350 households in bed and breakfast by 2005. The Temporary Accommodation Action Plan has succeeded in restricting the number to 8 by March 2002, though a peak of 39 was reached in the autumn of 2001. Key amongst a range of measures has been a rapid expansion of both the Private Leasing and Tenant Finder schemes. The latter now houses over 70 households. The Council hopes to meet the government's target of no families with children in bed and breakfast by 2004.

### **The Housing Register**

The Council operates a Common Housing Register in partnership with nine local housing associations who, with the Council, jointly fund a post to administer the scheme.

The number of households on the register has increased from 3,723 at the beginning of 2001/02 to 4,069 at 31 March 2002. This has been the trend over the past 5 years.

The Register includes those seeking access to social housing for the first time, but also existing Council and Housing Association tenants seeking a transfer. This latter group includes 52 households seeking to move to smaller accommodation as under occupation transfers.

### **The Demand for Housing Advice**

The demand for Housing Advice services also continues at a high level. During 2001/02, 1,309 households received housing advice. This matched demand during the previous year.

The prevention of homelessness work is a key Housing Advice activity, with 132 cases of priority need homelessness prevented in 2001/02. All these

## Housing Needs and Problems in Kingston



households would have been entitled to rehousing under the homelessness legislation, had prevention not been achieved.

Housing Advice also prevented 25 cases of non priority homelessness in 2001/02 and continued to help homeless households not entitled to rehousing but eligible for advice and assistance.

The Council continues to provide grant funding to Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness who provided advice to 381 households in 2001/02, of which 73% were single homeless people.

### **Special Needs**

The Housing Needs Survey asked a sample of people whether they had special housing needs but was not designed to assess the demand for special needs housing for different client groups. However, this remains a substantial area of need in Kingston and supported housing schemes have featured in the Borough's development programme every year for a number of years, with approximately 20% of the programme devoted to these projects as compared to a target of at least 10%.

Housing, Community Care Services and Children and Family Services form part of the Council's Community Services Directorate. There is close joint working between these services and with outside organisations to identify unmet need and develop new projects. This work has taken on greater significance in preparation for the introduction of Supporting People in 2003.

Table 6.1 overleaf summarises the need for additional special needs provision.

The table shows that one significant shortfall is in respect of people with mental health problems who represented 19% of all homelessness acceptances last year. Patchwork have developed four projects using Major Repairs Initiative funding to provide 12 permanent homes with support for people with mental health problems and 4 homes for ex-offenders. The Council has also made available a property to Richmond Churches Housing Trust to develop four permanent homes for people with mental health problems, for which Housing

## Housing Needs and Problems in Kingston



Corporation funding has been provided. Hestia are progressing a 10 unit floating support scheme for existing tenants with mental health needs.

Meeting the needs of people with multiple problems such as personality disorder, substance misuse and non-compliant behaviour remains a major challenge. A temporary accommodation project with nine bed spaces for this group has been opened by Kaleidoscope who are currently developing a six bed space rehabilitation project for drug misusers.

Special Needs Groups	Total Demand	Existing Supply	Estimated Vacancies 2002/2003	Estimated Shortfall	Comments
Adults with disabilities	30	86	6	24	
Families with children with disabilities	3	*	2	1	*Demand met by main-stream housing with adaptations
Older People	187	1,242	93	94	
Adults with learning disabilities	7	33	2	5	
People with mental health problems	126	88	106	20	
People with alcohol and drug misuse problems	12	9	7	5	
People with HIV/AIDS	Demand not know	*			*Demand met by mainstream housing with adaptations
Young people leaving care and homeless 16-17 year olds	39	27	10	29	

Accommodation for young people, including single mothers and those leaving care, is a priority. The Council has adopted the revised Code of Guidance for housing young people made homeless and is

## Housing Needs and Problems in Kingston



seeking to achieve the Government's targets for providing supported accommodation for teenage mothers. It has made available a property to Richmond Churches Housing Trust which is developing a five unit scheme for this group with Housing Corporation funding.

The Council is making provision for the new priority need groups by negotiating greater access to the YMCA, reviewing referrals arrangements to Kingston Women's Aid move-on accommodation and giving priority to new projects which meet the needs of these groups.

We continue to recognise the importance of providing wheelchair accessible housing as a part of the housing association programme, and have maintained a 4% target for this type of accommodation within our preferred dwelling mix.

The priorities described above will be reflected in the Council's Investment Priorities Submission to the Housing Corporation for schemes to be funded in 2003/04.

Initial supply mapping from the Supporting People process confirms that there may be gaps in provision for people with drug and alcohol problems, offenders or people at risk of offending, young people at risk or leaving care and women at risk of domestic violence. The Council will look to meet these shortfalls within the supporting people process.

Within that framework we are conducting a major review of Older People's Housing in the Borough, concentrating on the future use of the Council's sheltered homes.

### ■ **Housing Need in the Private Sector**

The Borough's private sector homes are a major housing resource and the need for investment within the sector has been clearly established.

The Council's strategy towards the private sector is informed by a comprehensive stock condition survey that was undertaken in 1998 by consultants NURAS Limited, with advice and assistance provided by the London Research Centre.

## Housing Needs and Problems in Kingston



The survey had the following key findings:-

- 5.0% of private sector properties were identified as being unfit.
- 29.0% of the private sector housing stock were assessed as being 'borderline unfit'. These are properties which are likely to fall into unfitness unless they receive investment in the short/medium term.
- There was an immediate need for £6.2 million of investment to deal with unfit properties and £1.2 million to deal with urgent repair and renewal.
- £37 million is needed to deal with 'borderline unfit' properties. This is equal to an additional demand for Council grants of £18.2 million.
- 31% [15,462] of private sector properties have an energy rating of less than the national average.
- 3,932 properties with an energy rating of less than the national average contain households in receipt of benefit.
- The need for disabled adaptations is estimated to be some 5,587.

The new Housing Needs Survey has provided additional information. It has found that 7,397 households are in unsuitable housing within the private sector. The main reason for unsuitability was major disrepair and unfitness, and most such households may be best helped with a solution in their existing home.

Considerable resources are therefore needed to address the problems in the private sector in Kingston. In particular, without significant investment around 29% of properties will deteriorate in the short or medium term and become unfit.

Houses in Multiple Occupation provide an important source of affordable housing and it is therefore important to retain and improve them as they can make a valuable contribution towards the provision of low cost rented housing.



Dealing with substandard Houses in Multiple Occupation [HMOs] is a key part of the Council's strategy for improving standards in the private rented sector.

The Council's Registration Scheme has proved to be very effective in improving health and safety conditions within HMOs. Since the scheme was introduced, 206 HMOs have been registered and it has been found necessary to require works to 174 of these properties.

### ■ Housing Needs in the Public Sector

Overall Council tenants in Kingston are satisfied with the service they receive. In the annual residents' survey in 2000, 78% said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

The same applies when residents are asked about many individual aspects of the service - such as repairs or caretaking. Nevertheless, such surveys still reveal that many residents are not satisfied with individual aspects of the service and that improvements are needed. This is particularly true of the repairs service where major improvements are planned.

In many cases, the type of homes being provided by the Council do not match the type of demand for them. There are too few houses as opposed to flats and insufficient houses with gardens. In many sheltered housing schemes the units are not self-contained and facilities are shared.

At the same time, the expectations of many residents are rising. There is the expectation that Council services should be of the highest standard and in a relatively prosperous area such as Kingston, there are many examples of high quality homes in the private sector against which the standard of Council homes can be compared.

Many residents are worried about anti-social behaviour, safety on Council property and more widely. Increasingly the Council is being pressed to take action against perpetrators in consort with other agencies, such as the Police. Although not as great

## Housing Needs and Problems in Kingston



as in other parts of London, there is concern about the perceived level of crime in and around Council homes and about the standard of the environment.

But by far the greatest problems facing public sector housing in the Borough is under investment in its fabric.

At present, the Council's capital programme is dealing only with the most urgent items - such as urgent Health and Safety works and welfare adaptations.

It is not making significant inroads into those areas given most priority by residents. There are insufficient resources going into:

- Dealing with the backlog of major repairs;
- renewing kitchens and bathrooms
- providing or upgrading central heating;
- improving security.

At present there are not enough resources to deal comprehensively with the physical requirements of the housing stock or to meet the Government's target of bringing all homes to the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. Its condition is probably deteriorating.

The Council's recent survey of its housing stock revealed that £100m is required over the next 10 years to bring it up to standard.

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for 2002/03 provides more detail about the position on Council homes.

In the next Chapter we go on to look at the priorities for action in meeting the challenge set by these needs and problems.

In the last chapter we looked at the scale of housing needs in Kingston. In this one, we briefly summarise the areas for priority action. Again, it is divided into three areas of need.

### ■ Meeting the Need for Affordable Homes

Our priorities for action in meeting the need for affordable homes are:-

- Meeting the needs of those households living in unsuitable housing by providing funding and services to help them households retain and improve their existing accommodation.
- Making best use of existing resources, bringing empty properties back into use and encouraging the release of existing homes for those in housing need.
- Maximising the resources available to provide more affordable homes by pursuing all funding avenues and making use of planning powers.
- Contributing to meeting the Government's Regional and Sub-Regional Priorities.
- Making greater use of Private Sector accommodation, for example, via Tenant Finder.

### ■ Improving Conditions in the Private Sector

In the private sector our priorities are:

- Meeting the needs for investment.
- Continuing to undertake the Council's programme for private sector renewal grants in a very efficient and effective manner in order to improve the standard of properties and enable people to stay in their own homes.
- Publicising the availability of private sector renewal assistance by way of a publicity campaign.
- Promoting energy efficiency, for example, through the provision of advice to owner occupiers, private tenants and landlords and





working with partners on bulk discount schemes.

- Administering the Council's "Coldbuster" Scheme in partnership with Creative Environmental Networks and promoting the Government's "Warm Front" initiative in order to tackle fuel poverty.
- Dealing with all enquiries and applications for disabled facilities grants promptly and efficiently in order to meet the needs of disabled people.
- Improving standards in the private rented sector by working with private landlords to improve housing standards and by carrying out the Council's statutory enforcement duties in a consistent and clear manner.
- Continuing to improve conditions within HMOs through the Council's Registration Scheme.

### ■ **Improving Conditions in the Public Sector**

Our priorities for action in the public sector are:

- Exploring how to secure the investment required to bring Council homes up to decent modern standards.
- Making the best use of the resources we do have available, especially property, financial resources, staff and the involvement of residents.
- Striving to improve our basic services.
- Increasing resident involvement in developing our services.

More detail on the public sector is provided in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

In the next Chapter we explore the strategic options available to the Council and the choice to be made about how resources are used.



This Chapter looks at the resources available to the Council and the key choices that have to be made in trying to meet different priorities for action.

### ■ **How Decisions are made**

Major decisions about Housing are made by the Council's Executive. These key decisions are published and the Executive meetings themselves are open to the public.

Usually, before a major decision is taken, the views of Neighbourhood Committees and Housing Consultative Committee are sought.

During 2002, it is intended to devolve more responsibility for housing management to Neighbourhood Committees.

Other, more routine decisions are delegated to the Chief Officers of the Council including the Head of Housing.

### ■ **Our Resources**

Here we look at the options open to the Council in using its resources. Against the scale of needs and problems described earlier, we do not have the resources to resolve them all in the short term. We therefore have to make choices. We want to make those choices explicit.

The resources we have include:

- Money - both capital money for investment and revenue funding for employing staff and carrying out repairs. This is discussed in more detail below.
- Land - mainly already developed with tenanted or leasehold property, but occasionally pockets of vacant land.
- Residents - a resource to provide advice and feedback on the services.
- Our staff.

## Our Main Options



- Our partners inside and outside the Council, who work we can use to improve the housing service and make the resources we have stretch further.

These resources as they relate to the Council as a whole, are discussed further in the Council's Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy.

### ***Options for Using our Capital Resources***

The estimated capital resources available to the Housing programme over the next three years are shown in the table below. They do not at this stage take account of changes arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review announced in mid-July 2002.

Capital Resource	2002/03 Programme £000	£2003/04 Estimated £000	2004/05 Estimated £000	2005/06 Estimated £000
Borrowing (Basic Credit Approval)	599	2,411	2,411	2,411
Disabled Facilities Grants	238	290	290	290
Useable Capital Receipts	635	635	635	635
Revenue Contributions	820	1,800	1,800	1,800
Major Repairs Allowance	3,766	3,800	3,800	3,800
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>6,058</b>	<b>8,936</b>	<b>8,936</b>	<b>8,936</b>

In addition to these sums, and potentially available within the Borough, (though not to the Council), are resources from the Housing Corporation in support of Housing Association development.

Some of the resources in the table can only be used for particular purposes. The revenue contributions from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Major Repairs Allowance can only be used in relation to HRA property. Resources for Disabled Facilities Grants can only be used for that purpose. However, in principle, both useable capital receipts and the Basic Credit Approval can be used either for HRA or non-HRA property.



### **The Choice of HRA and Non-HRA Programmes**

In recent years, the Council has taken the view that it wished to support housing associations in developing both new affordable housing and schemes to meet special needs. It has been regarded as better value for money for an association to do this rather than the Council, through a Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) programme.

In addition, the Council has obligations in law to provide grant assistance to private owners needing to carry out adaptations to their property. In recent years, the Council has also taken the view that in order to tackle some of the most urgent examples of disrepair and deficiencies described earlier in this document, it would run a programme of discretionary grant assistance within its renovation grants programme.

In summary, this has meant using the Basic Credit Approval for these "non - HRA" purposes rather than for HRA property. This is in line with Government guidance that local authorities should take a wide view of their housing responsibilities and this policy is assumed to apply over the next 3 years.

Within this non HRA programme, there are choices available over the balance between the LASHG programme and the renovation grants programme over and above provision for Disabled Facilities Grants. Generally speaking, the Council's policy has been to meet the scale of needs in the private sector by funding a steady renovation grants programme and by adjusting the LASHG programme accordingly.

### **Choices within the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme**

A number of choices are available within the HRA capital programme. This statement highlights the following:

- Prioritising works to bring properties above the Government's Decent Homes standard rather than the most urgent Health and Safety works;
- prioritising urgent Health and Safety works and repairs rather than improvements to homes or the environment;

## Our Main Options



- top-slicing resources for the TAPS programme. These are grants paid to Council tenants to allow them to buy their own home elsewhere. This benefits the residents concerned and creates a vacancy which can be used to house a homeless household, though does not in itself provide more investment for Council homes;
- top-slicing some resources for providing new directly owned hostels for the homeless, rather than using this money to invest in existing homes for secure tenants.

### **Choices for Funding within the Housing Association Programme**

Most of the investment carried out by Housing Associations in the Borough is directed to associations by the Housing Corporation, though with advice from the Council. The Corporation is keen that association development in the Borough tallies with the Council's housing strategy. The Council itself directly supports development through its LASHG programme.

The key choices in this area are as follows:

- The balance between new affordable housing to meet general needs, including those of the homeless, and special needs schemes. In the last few years, there has been a strong emphasis on the former, though the Council usually seeks to achieve at least one new special needs scheme each year;
- the type and size of home to be provided; the Council usually tries to achieve a mix in any one scheme that matches demand on the Housing Register and from the homeless;
- the balance between rental homes and homes owned or part owned by the occupier. In any one year, a number of units of shared ownership or Homebuy units are available but it is difficult to make these schemes work in Kingston and the Council's general preference is for rented homes.



### **Supporting People**

From April 2003, the Council will be responsible for supporting services under the Supporting People programme. This will involve making choices as between client groups and providers. The Interim Strategy is now in preparation. In future strategy statements, full cross reference will be made to the Supporting People Strategy.

### **Options within the Housing Revenue Account**

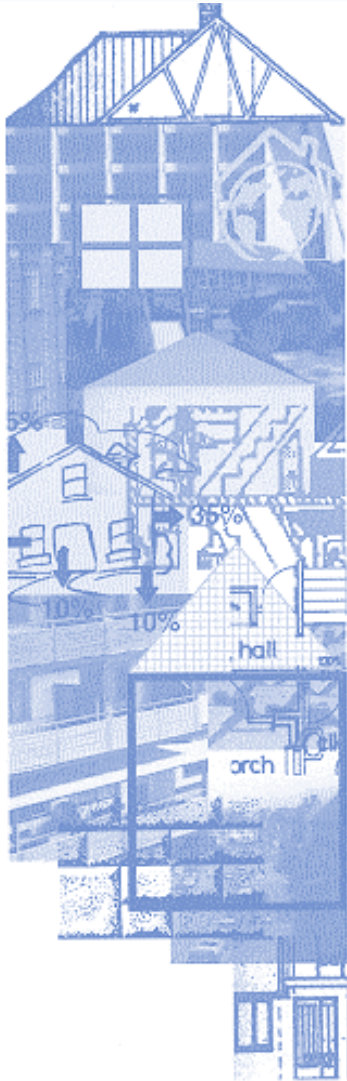
Within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) there are large areas of expenditure which are difficult to adjust. These include charges for the repayment of debt and the payment of Housing Benefit.

However, there are other areas where choices can be made. These are discussed annually by Members and by Housing Consultative Committee and in future will also be discussed by Neighbourhood Committees.

The discussion above about capital resources assumed a given level of contribution for that purpose from the HRA. This, however, is a matter of choice for the Council from one year to the next; some of that money could be directed instead to, for example, day to day repairs or additional staffing. In recent years, the Council has tried to maximise this contribution in order to meet the overall shortfall in investment in Council property. The same level of funding is assumed over the next few years.

There are choices also to be made about how to spend the resources available for planned maintenance, such as external repairs and decorations or gas servicing, and for day to day responsive repairs. In recent years the Council has aimed to achieve the balance recommended by the Government and the Audit Commission - that is 60% of expenditure on planned maintenance and 40% on responsive repairs. The principle behind this is that it is more cost effective to carry out regular maintenance to a whole block than to respond to ad hoc repairs requests. The Council will continue to aim to achieve this ratio. New information from the Stock Condition Survey means that we shall be reviewing the planned maintenance strategy over the next year.

## Our Main Options



The two major controllable elements within the HRA are expenditure on staffing and expenditure on works to property (mainly repairs). In future budget rounds it is intended to more openly address the question of the balance between the two.

Despite the overwhelming need to secure additional investment for Council property, the Council has recently chosen specifically to carve out resources in a number of areas:

- Support for the Residents' movement;
- environmental improvements;
- special pilot initiatives such as an Estate Ranger;
- an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer.

The aim is to continue to prioritise these areas in future budget rounds.

### **Housing Options Project**

During 2001, the Council completed Phase 1 of its Housing Options Project, consulting residents about how to secure the investment needed to bring Council homes up to modern standards. Phase II, a more detailed consideration of the options, will be complete by October 2002.

One option is for the Council to stay as it is, to make the best use it can of the resources available to it and to hope that more resources are made available by the Government. The other options identified are:

- A partial or complete stock transfer;
- an Arms Length Management Company.

More details on these are provided in the HRA Business Plan.

### **Choices within the Allocations System**

The Borough has a policy for the way in which it allocates people to vacancies arising within its own property. This scheme is public and open to scrutiny. However in drawing it up and reviewing it, the Council is making choices and balancing priorities between different types of household.

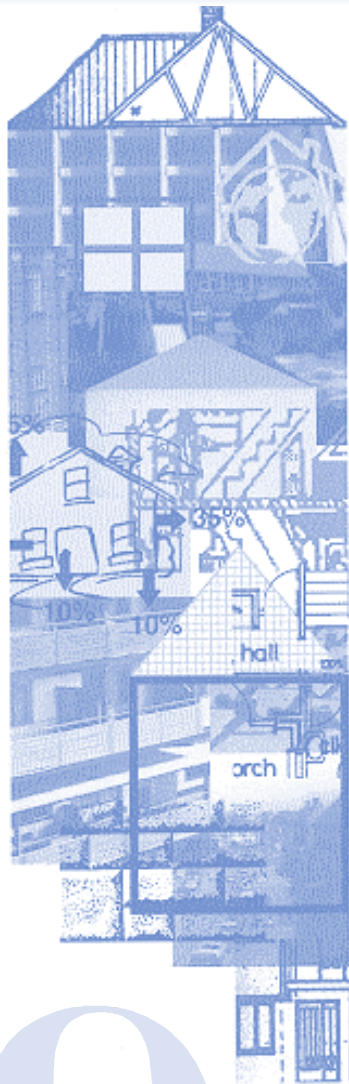


These can be summarised as follows:

- Giving high priority to discharging the Council's legal responsibilities towards homeless households by providing them with permanent accommodation and minimising the use of temporary accommodation; this inevitably lessens the opportunities for transfers for existing tenants and for other households on the Housing Register; it also limits opportunities for key workers.
- Providing some quotas for transfers, special needs and first time applicants in the most urgent cases.
- Prioritising transfers for people who are under-occupying their property to free-up a larger home for a homeless household.

At present, the Council operates a rather traditional allocations system in which properties are offered strictly according to need, but in which relatively little choice is provided to residents.

During the rest of 2002, we shall be drawing up and consulting on plans to introduce more choice for residents within the lettings system.



# 9

In Chapter 7 we set our priorities for action in each of the three main areas of housing need. In this Chapter we develop that into a summary of our strategy and then outline our proposed investment programme.

### ■ Meeting the Need for Affordable Homes

To meet the needs of people living in unsuitable housing, we will:

- Target Housing Advice services to private sector residents in greatest need, particularly those threatened with homelessness and expand the Tenant Finder scheme to prevent homelessness.
- Develop and consult upon a formal Homelessness Strategy and aim to eliminate the use of B&B for families with children by 2004.
- Improve private sector housing conditions by the use of grants, the HMO Registration scheme and the intervention of Environmental Health Service (see below).
- Using the Supporting People framework, conduct joint work with Social Services and other organisations to help older people, people with disabilities, those with mental health problems and other special needs groups to remain in their existing home with support.
- Continue to operate the Adaptations Unit to co-ordinate works for people with disabilities.
- Development new floating support schemes and extend resettlement services to people living independently with insufficient support.
- Consult upon and adopt the draft BME Housing Strategy.

To make the best use of existing resources the Council will:

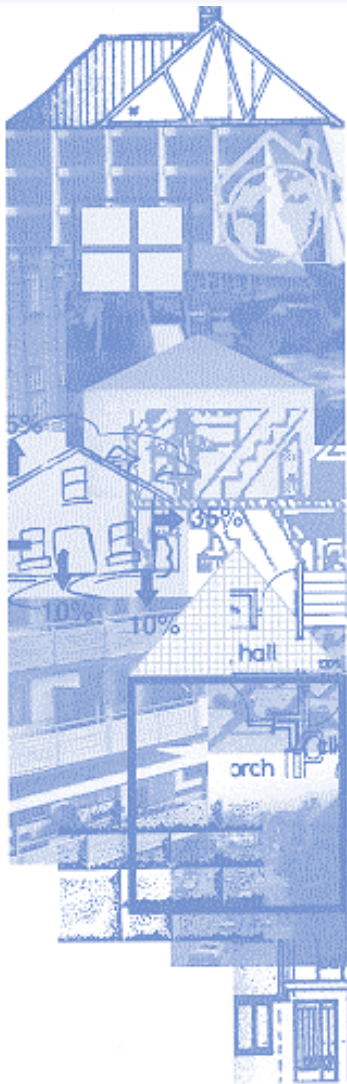
- Bring private sector empty properties back into use via the Tenant Finder scheme, the Private Leasing scheme, conditional grants and targeted housing association acquisitions.



- Minimise voids in Council and Housing Association stock.
- Make available surplus Council buildings or land at nil cost to housing associations to make best use of limited Social Housing Grant.
- Encourage under-occupation transfers and other beneficial moves (such as moves from 2 bedroom to 3 bedroom accommodation).
- Maximise mutual exchanges.
- Maximise take up of Housing Association nominations.
- Utilise Tenants Assisted Purchase Scheme (TAPS), Homebuy and other purchase schemes to create voids for rehousing homeless households.

To maximise the resources available to provide more affordable homes the Council will:

- Make high quality submissions to Central Government for funding via the Housing Investment Programme process and other programmes.
- Encourage Housing Associations to make high quality bids for funding to the Housing Corporation taking advantage of special funding avenues such as Regional Priorities.
- Run a local authority social housing grant programme.
- Utilise the planning process to ensure a supply of affordable housing sites within the Borough, adopting high percentage targets and lower site thresholds wherever possible using the new provisions of the UDP.
- Maximise cross-Borough working in order to develop new projects which meet Regional and Sub-Regional priorities.
- Maximise access to Private Sector Accommodation via schemes such as Tenant Finder.



- Maximise the commuted sums obtained where affordable housing cannot be achieved on site.

### ■ **Improving Conditions in the Private Sector**

To meet the need for investment in the private sector, environmental health will undertake the Authority's programme for housing renewal.

#### **House Renovation Grants**

The Authority's current policy for House Renovation Grants under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act is to approve the following types of grant:

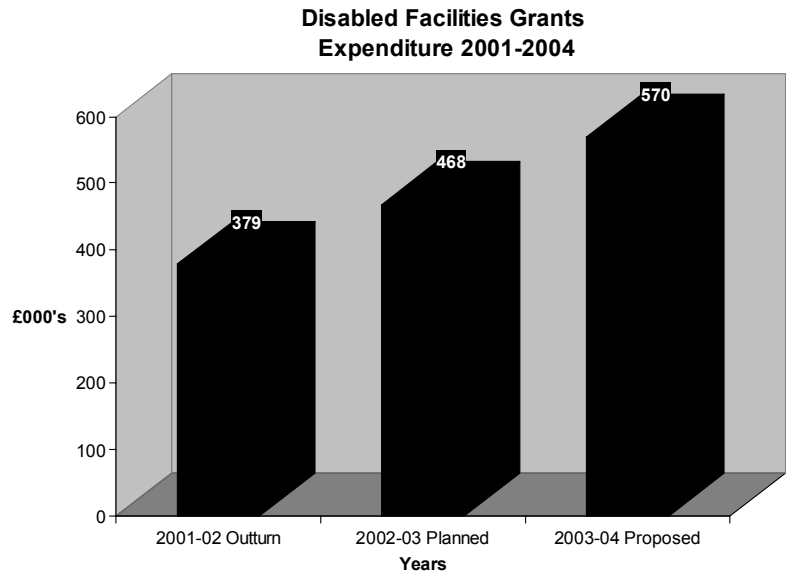
- All applications for mandatory and discretionary disabled facilities grants.
- All valid applications for the following discretionary grants subject to a grant limit of £20,000:-
  - [a] grants for thermal insulation works;
  - [b] grants for works to occupied dwellings and buildings which are unfit for human habitation;
  - [c] grants for works to "high risk" HMOs which are unfit for the number of occupants; and
  - [d] grants to bring empty unfit properties back into use including a guaranteed level of grant where the owner enters into a nominations agreement.
- Home repair grants for disabled and elderly persons on income related benefits and for energy efficiency works where the applicant is on an income related benefit.

The proposed programme is based on this policy and the total proposed expenditure in 2003/04 is £1,200,000.



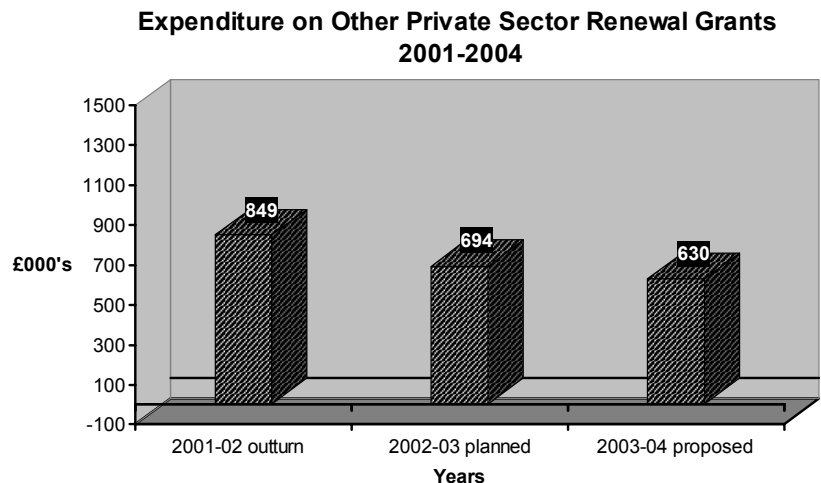
This includes the expenditure required for the provision of disabled facilities grants [DFGs] which is an area of increasing need and demand. The expenditure on DFGs is shown in Figure 9.1

**Figure 9.1**



The expenditure on other private sector renewal grants is shown in Figure 9.2.

**Figure 9.2**



Grants for improving thermal insulation, including loft insulation and cavity wall insulation are considered to be an essential part of the strategy for energy efficiency. The proposed programme therefore

## Our Strategy



includes for expenditure on necessary insulation works as part of the grant system. It also includes the amount required for home repair grants as part of the Authority's 'Staying-Put' Scheme and the 'Coldbuster' Scheme which is operated in partnership with Creative Environmental Networks.

### **Energy Efficiency**

The Council will continue to work in partnership with a range of organisations in order to promote energy efficiency and meet its requirements under the Home Energy Conservation Act [HECA.].

Great importance is given to the fact that making improvements to the energy efficiency of residential dwellings is a vital contribution to improving the health and the quality of life for the people who live in them. It is also a very cost effective way of reducing carbon dioxide emissions which contribute towards global warming.

Full details of the action taken and proposed are contained in the Council's sixth H.E.C.A progress report.

### **Regulatory Reform Order**

The Council is making full use of the opportunity brought about by the Regulatory Reform Order in order to review its current policy on house renovation grants and to undertake consultation with residents and interested organisations eg Kingston Association for Disabled People, Age Concern, Small Landlords Association and Citizen Advice Bureaux.

Following consideration by a Task and Finish Group and the Community Overview Panel, the Council's Executive has agreed a proposed new policy for consultation. This includes the following proposals:

- a. No change to the current policy whereby all valid applications for mandatory and discretionary disabled facilities grants are approved without limit on the amount, subject to the works being necessary, reasonable and practicable.
- b. Grants to landlords would only be given where:-



- i. the landlord enters into an agreement with the Council that the property will be leased to it; or
  - ii. the landlord makes the dwelling available to Council nominated tenants.
- c. Renovation grants to owner occupiers to be discontinued and instead to introduce an equity release scheme managed by the Home Improvement Trust as part of a partnership arrangement with other local authorities. This would offer three types of loan for people aged 60 and over and those under 60 with a disability. There is a guarantee of no repossession with all of these loans and applicants are helped throughout the process.
- d. To make home repair grants for urgent works affecting the health and safety of applicants who are in receipt of income related benefits. Entitlement to such grants to be extended to people under 60 who are in receipt of income related benefits.
- e. To continue with home repair grants for energy efficiency works and improved heating but to extend the facility to include tenants of Council properties who meet the criteria applicable to the existing policy.

Consultation on the above proposals is currently taking place and the results thereof are to be reported to the Executive in October 2002.

### **Houses in Multiple Occupation**

The Council will continue to give priority to the identification and inspection of HMOs both through the H.M.O. Registration Scheme and in response to tenants complaints. All bed and breakfast establishments used to house homeless families will also be regularly inspected as part of the London-wide Bed & Breakfast Information Exchange Scheme.

Measures have been taken over a number of years in order to produce a clear policy on HMOs. This includes a risk assessment since it is recognised that the 'risk' inherent with any H.M.O. varies greatly, depending on size of property, the quality of



management, etc.

The policy is also aimed at ensuring that the HMOs dealt with meet the statutory standards relating to repair, management, provision of amenities, fire precautions and means of escape from fire.

In accordance with Government guidance, officers have a discretion in applying standards to reflect individual circumstances, subject to the agreement of the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority [L.F.E.P.A.].

### **Enforcement Action**

The Council takes a positive enforcement approach which involves the full use of relevant Housing Act and other legislative powers to deal with individual properties which are either unfit or in substantial disrepair. This includes the carrying out of works in default and/or prosecution where necessary.

The appropriate action is taken following an appraisal of the various options, and cases are monitored to ensure that the necessary improvements and/or repairs are carried out.

## ■ **Improving Conditions in the Public Sector**

The detail of the strategy for Local Authority Housing in the Borough is contained in the HRA Business Plan for 2003/2004.

To explore the options for securing the investment needed in Council homes the Council will:

- Complete option appraisal with a view to the Council taking a decision on the way forward in October 2002.
- Use the new stock condition survey to develop medium and long term programmes for planned maintenance and capital works.
- Seek to reduce the number of properties below the Decent Homes standard by one third by 2004 and develop programmes to deal with all such properties by 2010.



To make the best possible use of available resources we will:

- Increase the proportion of rent collected.
- Reduce the level of voids and the time taken to relet them.
- Provide financial incentives to encourage the transfer of tenants who are under-occupying their homes.
- Ensure that the capital programme is fully spent and concentrate it on the most urgent health and safety and repair work and works to bring properties to the Decent Homes Standard.

To improve our basic services, we will:

- Implement the improvement plans from the Best Value Reviews on:
  - Repairs and planned maintenance,
  - Caretaking;
  - Services to leaseholders, and
  - Rents.

To increase resident involvement in our services we will:

- Implement and review on an annual basis the Residents' Compact agreed in the Summer of 2001.
- Develop and consult upon a choice-based lettings scheme.

### ■ **The Proposed Capital Programme**

The proposed capital programme for 2002/03 to 2004/2005 is summarised in the table overleaf.

## Our Strategy



Type of Expenditure	2001/02 Programme £000	2002/03 Estimated £000	2003/04 Estimated £000	2004/05 Estimated £000
Local Authority Social Housing Grant	250	2,076	2,076	2,076
Tenants Assisted Purchase Scheme	350	350	350	350
House Renovation Grants	1,162	1,200	1,200	1,200
HRA own stock	4,296	5,310	5,310	5,310
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,058</b>	<b>8,936</b>	<b>8,936</b>	<b>8,936</b>

### ■ Housing Association Development Programme

In 2003/04, the Council intends to run a Local Authority Social Housing Grant programme and to attract Housing Corporation resources into the Borough. At this stage, the total sums available are unknown, particularly given the development of new corporation policy on sub-regional sites. The table below shows the rental schemes the Council would wish to pursue, using all sources of funding, and indicates the sums required in 2004/5 where these are known or can be estimated.

Scheme	2003/04 £000	2004/05 £000
Rockware Plastics	3,000	3,000
373 Ewell Road	300	-
London Housing Partnership	500	500
Acquisitions	500	500
American Car	1,000	-
London Road/Coombe Road	100	-
Ely Court	2,300	500
Richmond Park Road	400	400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,100</b>	<b>5,900</b>



Of these sites, pre-allocations have already been made for the Rockware Plastics site, while Ely Court and Richmond Park Road are both redevelopment/regeneration sites previously or currently occupied by Council HRA property. Richmond Park Road is likely to be developed as a special needs scheme.

The next chapter describes the framework for delivering this strategy.

## How we will deliver



# 10

In the last Chapter we outlined the Council's Strategy. Here we discuss how it can be delivered and monitored.

The Housing Strategy feeds in to a number of wider strategies to ensure that Housing is meeting the needs of the community as a whole and that synergies of partnership working are maximised. Housing contributes to the 'bigger picture' at both a policy level and through the delivery of specific initiatives.

At a policy level, representation on the groups responsible for strategy development ensures that the right links are made and that opportunities for joint initiatives and partnership working are identified at an early stage. The Health and Social Care Improvement Plan and Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy are examples of broader strategies to which Housing can make a very real input. This is illustrated by the joint appointment of the Community Development Worker to support the health improvement work on the Cambridge Road Estate and the employment of an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer and an Estate Ranger to target problems of anti-social behaviour on council estates.

The Council believes that working in partnership with other statutory bodies and organisations is key to the successful delivery of its Housing Strategy and a range of partnerships and joint working already exist.

Joint assessments and protocols between Social Services and Housing ensure the Council's more vulnerable residents receive services which are responsive and meet both housing and social care needs.

Joint funding arrangements provide additional posts such as Community Development Worker (jointly funded by the Health Authority) and Resettlement Workers (jointly funded by Social Services), Applications Assistant (jointly funded by local registered social landlords).

Grant funding is made available to the voluntary sector to provide services which complement the work of the Council. For example, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness.

Cross-borough working provides innovative solutions to shared problems such as the Solon Wandsworth dispersed foyer project which is a partnership between four London Boroughs and has provided homes for young people.



In Chapter 11 we describe specific targets for the Housing Service.

In meeting its housing objectives, the Council carries out only a proportion of the work itself directly.

The Housing Association Forum co-ordinates links with Associations and the Housing Corporation over development and other issues of concern.

The Council is also assisted by a range of external consultants and private contractors.

### ■ **Measuring Performance**

The measurement and monitoring of performance is well developed within the Housing Service. For a number of years, targets have been set for each area of the housing service and monitored by way of monthly reports to the Housing Management Team and information reports to Committee. Best Value has developed the performance monitoring process by ensuring a greater level of external scrutiny and comparison and wider involvement in target setting.

A wide range of stakeholders are involved in target setting and performance monitoring.

- The Executive sets a policy programme with key performance indicators which are reviewed annually.
- The Community Overview Panel scrutinises decisions made by the Executive and develops a programme for wider scrutiny throughout the year. The Overview Panel includes resident representatives and representatives from the voluntary sector.
- The Best Value Performance Plan and new Comprehensive Performance Assessment provide residents with an opportunity to monitor the progress of the Council.
- The Chief Executive's Everyone Counts groups provides a corporate forum where the focus is on performance.

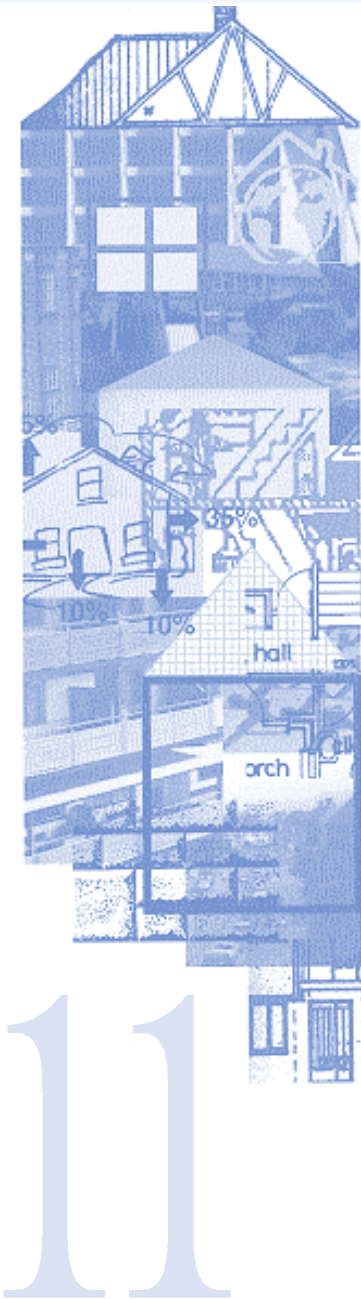
## How we will deliver



- Best Value Reviews involve elected members, residents and other stakeholders. The Improvement Plans emerging from the Reviews reflect the agreed priorities and aspirations of the Review Group.
- The Team Planning process within the Housing Service involves all staff in the development of a vision and five year targets for each service area.
- The Tenants Compact has provided an opportunity for involving residents in setting performance targets for resident involvement and developing arrangements for monitoring and reporting achievements. The Compact includes a plan of action for the next three years and extends the range of reporting opportunities.

This section outlines some of the headline targets which have been set to ensure the priorities identified in this strategy are met. A more extensive range of targets are detailed in the Housing Services Team Plan, the Best Value Performance Plan and the Residents' Compact.

	Target 2002/03	Target 2005/06
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide Housing Advice to private sector residents living in unsuitable housing.</li> </ul>	1,300 households	1,300 households
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevent homelessness in respect of priority need households.</li> </ul>	125	125
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet targets for percentage of lettings to homeless households.</li> </ul>	55%	55%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet target for Tenant Finder Scheme.</li> </ul>	30	30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop one new Council hostel per annum.</li> </ul>	15 bed spaces	15 bed spaces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimise use of bed and breakfast</li> </ul>	Nil	Nil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the number and proportion of Council properties which are empty</li> </ul>	Below 2%	Below 2%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let the following schemes developed using Council sites made available at nil cost to provide new Housing Association homes:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>56 Gibbon Road</li> <li>19 Fassett Road</li> <li>13 Lowther Road</li> <li>2 Portland Road</li> <li>152-154 Leatherhead Road</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	4 units 5 units 1 unit 1 unit 4 units	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make available further Council owned sites at nil cost, such as Richmond Park Road</li> </ul>	4 units	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise under-occupation transfers</li> </ul>	40	40
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise take-up of Housing Association nominations</li> </ul>	85%	85%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create voids using home ownership options:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tenants Assisted Purchase Scheme</li> <li>Homebuy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	15 4	15 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek to develop new affordable homes via the Social Housing Grant programme</li> </ul>	85	



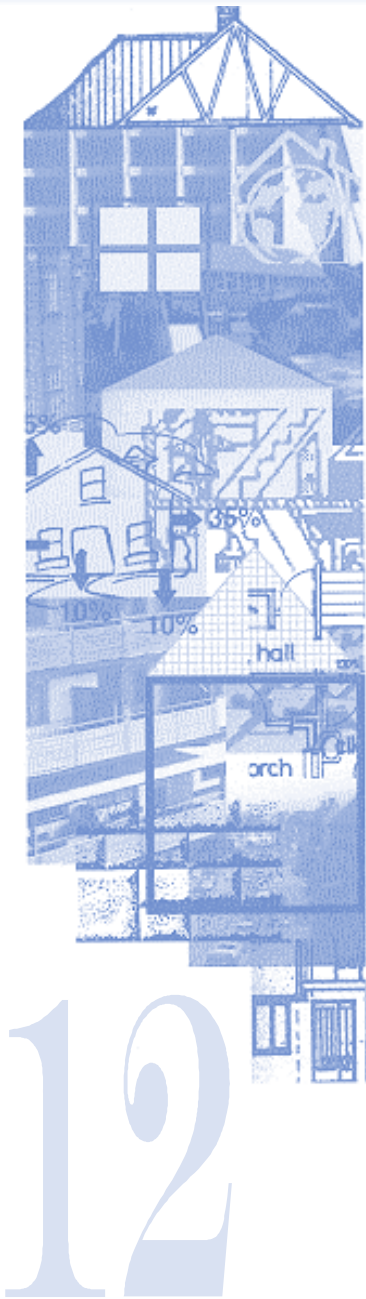
## Our Targets



	Target 2002/03	Target 2004/05
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet target for percentage of unfit private sector properties made fit as a direct result of Council Action.</li> </ul>	4%	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To respond to all complaints about unsatisfactory housing conditions within the private sector and take all necessary enforcement plan.</li> </ul>	300 cases per annum	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To continue the registration of HMOs under the Council's Registration Scheme,</li> </ul>	To respond to applications within 5 weeks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure HMOs meet required standards relating to repair, management, provision of amenities, fire precautions and means of escape in case of fire.</li> </ul>	In accordance with Committee policy document	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To maintain progress on improving the energy efficiency of residential dwellings and tackling fuel poverty.</li> </ul>	HECA Progress report	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To deal with all enquiries for house renovation grants.</li> </ul>	400 enquiries per annum	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure full delivery of the programme for house renovation grants.</li> </ul>	100%	100%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process all applications for house renovation grants within the statutory period.</li> </ul>	Within 6 months with an objective of 3 months average	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue programme of consultation with residents over the options for increasing investment in the housing stock</li> </ul>	May-October 2002	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make best use of resources by                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining rent collection performance within the top 25% of Outer London boroughs</li> <li>Reducing the length of time properties remain empty</li> <li>Ensuring capital programme is fully spent</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	99.8%	102%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve services by:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing resident satisfaction with the Caretaking Service</li> <li>Increasing the percentage of repairs completed within Government time limits.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	75%	90%
	85%	87%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress schemes for special needs client groups.</li> </ul>	At least 10% of programme	

This Housing Strategy Statement describes the most pressing housing needs in the Borough and sets out a plan of action for meeting these needs.

The Council has taken on board guidance from the Government Office and has attempted to make this year's Strategy clear, concise and readily accessible to people in Kingston. In particular, the choices that the Council has to make in using its resources to meet the priorities for action have been made explicit. For the first time this year, a short summary of the strategy has been produced, to make the Council's housing priorities even clearer to local people.





## ■ Resident Consultation

The Council has well developed systems and structures for consulting with residents.

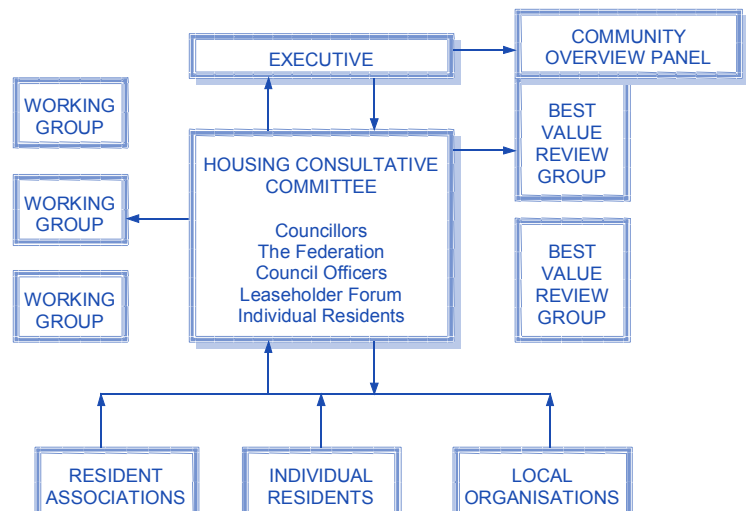
At a borough-wide level, the Council consults (through MORI) on an annual basis about budgetary objectives and about what should form the main priorities for the Council.

A Resident's Panel has been set up jointly with the Local Area Health Authority. The Panel consists of 1,100 local people who represent broadly the demographic profile of the Borough. During the last year the Kingston Panel was used to consult on the modernisation of local political structures, local environmental issues, crime, health issues, future transport planning on priorities for residents over the next ten years.

There are a range of formal consultative mechanisms within the Housing Service including two local management sub-committees on the Council's largest estates, and the Housing Options Steering Group. These feed in to the Housing Consultative Committee.

The local management sub-committees have been particularly successful at attracting a wide range of resident committee members, including those from ethnic minorities and young parents as well as the more traditional representatives from registered residents associations.

The following diagram illustrates the participation structures, which exist for housing residents:





Best Value has extended the opportunity for resident consultation and involvement. Residents are represented on all Best Value Review Groups and Audit Commission Inspectors have commented on the wide range of consultation which has been undertaken in each of the reviews. Recent consultation exercises have included:

### ■ **Income and Benefits Best Value Review**

This involved an array of inter-linked surveys using a variety of methods. Parts of the review consulted members of the Kingston Panel while other groups of users were consulted through focus groups and exit surveys.

### ■ **Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Best Value Review**

External consultants carried out a tenant's satisfaction survey of residents in temporary accommodation, a workshop and consultation day for stakeholders and a user survey of housing advice.

### ■ **Housing Repairs and Maintenance Best Value Review**

This review established a residents sub-group, facilitated by an external consultant, to establish the major service issues from their perspective postal and telephone surveys were undertaken and partnering and risk management workshops with contractors.

The Inspection Reports from each of the reviews have commented positively on the links made between issues raised by residents and service users and the Review Improvement Plans.

### ■ **Consultation on the Housing Strategy**

The Council would usually consult with residents on the draft Housing Strategy before submission to the Government Office in July.

This year, the Council is taking a different approach and will be hosting a major consultation event at the end of the summer. The main reasons for this approach are:



- (i) Housing Options.  
The Housing Options Consultation Project is at a critical stage with a major consultation programme underway to establish resident support for stock transfer. The results of the Housing Options Project are a crucial element of the Council's strategy for meeting the investment needs of the housing stock.
- (ii) Local Authorities are now being asked to produce:
- A Homelessness Strategy.
  - A Black and Ethnic Minority Communities Strategy.
  - Proposals for the introduction of choice based lettings.

The Council has produced outline frameworks for each of these and proposes to include consultation on each of these strategies within the consultation event.

