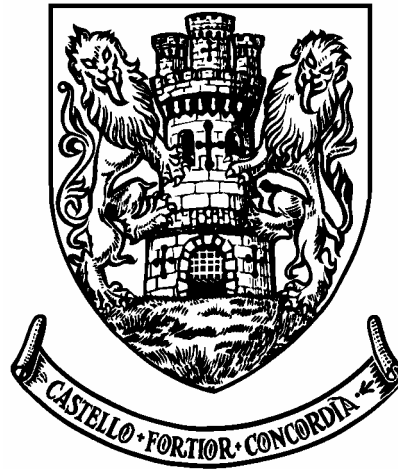


NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL



COUNCIL

Thursday, 29 September 2005

YOU ARE SUMMONED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL, WHICH WILL BE HELD AT THE GUILDHALL NORTHAMPTON ON THURSDAY, THE TWENTY NINTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2005 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING WHEN THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS IS PROPOSED TO BE TRANSACTED:-

1. MINUTES.

To approve the minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Council held on 27th June and 21st July 2005.

2. APOLOGIES.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES/QUESTIONS.

5. COMMITTEE MINUTES.

To receive the Minutes of the Executive and Committees contained in the booklet herewith.

6. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURAL RULE 5.2.

7. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT TO BE PRESENTED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CHAIRS

8. CPA - VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT

(covering report herewith)

9. NORTHAMPTON'S HOUSING STRATEGY

(copy herewith)

10. RECENT NOTICES OF MOTION

To receive report on action taken following notices of motion

11. RECOVERY PLAN UPDAE

12. PROPORTIONALITY REPORT

(to follow)

13. POLITICAL STRUCTURES AND RECOVERY

(to follow)

14. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE MAYOR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

The Guildhall
Northampton
20th Sept 2005

M.McLean Chief Executive

**FULL COUNCIL**

29th September 2005

Item No.

Report of Mario Abela, Strategic Director (Governance)

Directorate: Governing Northampton

Author/Contact Officer:
Alison Betts, Technical Finance Manager, Ext 8718
Dale Robertson, Corporate Performance Manager, Ext 7110

**Corporate Performance Assessment:
Value for Money Self Assessment**

Purpose of the Report

The Council is required to submit by the end of September a Value for Money Self-Assessment as part of the next round of Corporate Performance Assessment. This report gives Members the opportunity to review the self-assessment before submission.

Recommendations

That Members endorse the Corporate Performance Assessment, Value for Money submission.

Summary

On 15 June 2005 the Audit Commission published a revised framework for CPA in single tier and county councils. "CPA – The Harder Test" provides details of the changes intended to make CPA a tougher test for councils, with a stronger focus on service users and value for money. Consultation started in July on the future overall assessment framework for district councils.

A new use of resources assessment will form part of the framework for single tier and county councils. Details of the assessment, which looks at how well councils manage their finances and deliver value for money, were published on 7 June 2005.

The use of resources assessment focuses on financial management but links to the

strategic management of the authority. It looks at how financial management is integrated with strategy and corporate management, supports council priorities and delivers value for money. It will be carried out annually, as part of each council's external audit. For single tier and county councils, the use of resources assessment will form part of the CPA framework.

All authorities, as part of this new process, are required to submit a Value for Money Self Assessment to their local appointed auditor. The self-assessment pro-forma is for council's to complete to show how well they manage and use their financial resources and achieve value for money. Single tier authorities and counties were required to return the completed pro-forma to their appointed auditor by 31 July 2005. District councils are required to return the completed pro-forma to their appointed auditor by 30 September 2005.

The Self-Assessment pro-forma has been completed in consultation with service managers to establish examples of current good practice. The self-assessment highlights areas of good practice throughout the Council and the need to ensure that this good practice is embedded across all areas. It is also important to show that lessons learnt and best practice are disseminated to all areas. The next key piece of work following the self-assessment will be to ensure that systems are in place to continue to improve value for money and that these are fully adopted.

VALUE FOR MONEY SELF ASSESSMENT
CHANGES FROM PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED DRAFT

| Section | Changes |
|--|---|
| Overall | Document required shortening to meet overall limit of 5,000 words. Evidence sources added. |
| 5.1 How the Council challenges value for money through services & corporately. | Remove first 2 paragraphs – elsewhere in document. Remove Medium Term Financial Strategy issues to appendix on future developments. Detail on Performance Monitoring Framework removed. |
| 5.1 Risk Management | Section shortened. |
| 5.1.2 External local contextual factors ... | Section shortened. |
| 5.1.2 Demand and supply levels | Information on Upton removed as superfluous. |
| 5.1.3 Quality and standards achieved | Remove detail on objectives and future developments. |
| 5.1.3 Results of service inspections | Section shortened to concentrate on key VFM issues. |
| 5.1.4 How costs are assessed | Info on central repository deleted. |
| 5.1.4 Extent to which higher spending... | Future budget strategy deleted – in future developments appendix. |
| 5.1.4 The extent of long term cost considerations.. | Sectioned shortened to avoid repetition |
| 5.2 How the Council manages costs,,, | Detail removed elsewhere in document |
| 5.2.2 Achievement of efficiency gains | Section shortened, concentrated on key examples. |
| 5.2.3 How value for money.. | Initial descriptive paragraph removed. |
| 5.2.3 Extent to which whole life costing.. | Detail of BVR on Works Procurement and Asset Management removed. |
| 5.2.3 Use of external funding.. | Section shortened to avoid repetition. |

Value for Money Self Assessment

July 2005

We have followed the format of the Audit Commission's example self assessment

| OVERVIEW | Reference to evidence source |
|--|---|
| <p>Our recently approved Corporate Plan and newly updated Recovery Plan clearly articulate the priorities and commitments of the Council for the next twelve months. This emerging clarity of focus will drive the allocation of resources to ensure the greatest impact is achieved for the people of Northampton within the resources available.</p> | <p>Corporate Plan 2005/2006 Recovery Plan July 2005</p> |
| <p>5.1 HOW WELL DOES THE COUNCIL CURRENTLY ACHIEVE GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY</p> | <p>Reference to evidence source</p> |
| <p>How the Council challenges value for money through services and corporately. At a corporate level, the Council has responded to new challenges and opportunities by an extensive re-configuration of its strategic management, including the establishment of the Improvement Board and revised Governance arrangements. This will explicitly monitor and direct the performance and achievement of the organisation. Improved and better targeted services, within the same resource envelope, will lead to better VFM for the people of Northampton.</p> <p>The Root and Branch Review of staffing structures has sought to challenge value for money and seek efficiencies as part of its core aims. Current proposals</p> | <p>Executive Report – New Governance Arrangements</p> |

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| <p>streamline management structures into a maximum of four levels of management throughout the organisation and will reduce the number of managers from 159 to 102. Appointments to new posts will be based on a assessment of core competencies which will aim to deliver a highly skilled and flexible workforce.</p> <p>Northampton Borough council is working with Northamptonshire County Council and other district councils within the county to support the County Council's Value For Money PSA.</p> <p>The relationship between local taxation, overall expenditure and costs; and the level and performance of services provided, taking account of local priorities.</p> <p>A major exercise was carried out s part of the 2005/2006 to align budgets to Members key priority areas. This exercise, referred to as the "Sedgebrook Hall Workshop", was facilitated by PricewaterhouseCoopers and lead to budget changes that refocused our existing budget to priority areas within Members desired council tax envelope. Whilst the 2004/2005 Budget carried out a limited re-alignment of budgets, we have recognised that we need to make more fundamental changes to the way we construct and manage our budgets.</p> <p>Our newly developed Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out how we will move forward to ensure budgets are firmly based and align with our priorities.</p> <p>A new performance management framework was introduced in May 2005. The framework articulates the links between the key strategies and plans within the authority, how they drive service and individual performance planning and incorporates the various levels/frequency of monitoring and review processes.</p> <p>For the first time, financial and performance monitoring processes have been aligned providing cascaded management information at all levels. The key principles of the monitoring process, within the new framework, is one of</p> | <p>Executive Report on Root and Branch Proposals</p> <p>LPSA</p> <p>2005/2006 Budget Report</p> <p>Performance Management Framework</p> <p>Performance Reports (levels</p> |
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| <p>engagement of staff at all levels, the development and embedding of a performance management culture and issues/exception management. As the monitoring process moves through the levels, the performance and financial information reported becomes more strategic in nature.</p> <p>Our recent Service Planning exercise explicitly sought opportunities for Gershon efficiencies to be identified looking both at cashable efficiencies and improved/better targeted outcomes. These are highlighted throughout this document.</p> <p>Risk Management</p> <p>An Audit Committee with specific responsibility for risk management is to be formed. Its first meeting is scheduled for October at which it will endorse our revised Risk Management Strategy.</p> <p>We operate risk registers at Corporate and Divisional and Project level. Registers are held on our corporate risk management software "RisGen" which allows for network access and reporting across all or selected registers.</p> <p>Risk management training has been delivered to officers and a limited number of Members. We operate a Risk Management Fund to provide financial support for risk management initiatives.</p> | <p>1-4) Executive Monitoring Report</p> <p>Service Plan Examples</p> <p>Risk Management Strategy</p> <p>Risk Register</p> <p>Training Schedule/Materials</p> |
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| <p>5.1.1 How well do the Council's overall and service costs compare with others?</p> <p>Current level of overall costs and costs for key services</p> <p>An initial review has been carried out as part of this Value for Money Self</p> | <p>Reference to Evidence Source</p> <p>VFM Self Assessment Report</p> |
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| <p>Assessment. This supports our Recovery Plan priority areas and confirms our assessment of those areas where we are currently not providing value for money.</p> <p>Planned spending in relation to others</p> <p>As part of the work associated with producing our Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Council is undertaking a bench-marking exercise using the Audit Commission’s VFM tool to identify high cost/low performance areas. This information will be used along with information on the Recovery Plan priorities to draw up a programme of detailed base budget reviews, some of which it is expected will be taken forward by our strengthened Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Level of overheads and how they are accounted for</p> <p>The Root and Branch Review is seeking to minimise overhead staffing costs and maximise the staffing resources focussed on front line service delivery. Benchmarking of costs, for example through membership of CIPFA benchmarking clubs, will help to ensure that our relative cost compared to others is taken into account in this exercise.</p> <p>Work is currently ongoing to ensure that the way we account for overheads properly balances the complexity of accounting against the added value from detailed allocation methods.</p> | <p>Recovery Plan – Developing the MTFS</p> <p>Root and Branch Terms of Reference</p> <p>FS/AS minutes</p> |
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| <p>5.1.2 How do external factors affect costs and how do adjusted costs compare?</p> <p>External local contextual factors that influence costs (such as deprivation, geography, demography).</p> | <p>Reference to evidence source</p> |
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| <p>The county structure plan predicts that there will be 60,000 additional households in the county between 1996 and 2016, potentially increasing Northampton’s population from its current figure of 196,500. This growth programme will be a major challenge for the medium to long term.</p> <p>These additional homes are part of the MKSM agenda that are expected to create 81,000 jobs in Northamptonshire and a further 45,500 in the period 2021-2031.</p> <p>According to the Indices of Deprivation 2004, Northampton ranks at 135 putting it within the more deprived 40% of Local Authorities nationwide. Northampton ranks lower than Corby on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, however, the most deprived area within the county is actually in central Northampton.</p> <p>Furthermore, 23 of Northampton's 'Super Output Areas' rank within the most deprived 20% in the country on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, compared to just 10 Super Output Areas in Corby, 6 in Wellingborough, 4 in Kettering and 1 in Daventry.</p> <p>Demand and supply levels</p> <p>The growth in population and employment driven by the growth in the Town has a particular impact on waste management costs. We are working with the County Council and are responding to this challenge in a number of ways including; waste minimisation campaigns; increased recycling; waste minimisation design in new homes and businesses. A major review is now underway involving ourselves, other Borough and Districts and the County Council</p> | |
| <p>5.1.3 To what extent are costs commensurate with service delivery, performance and the outcomes achieved?</p> | <p>Reference to evidence source</p> |

Quality and standards achieved, including targeted investment to improve poorer services and quality of life.

The Council's purpose is to

“work with, and for, the people of Northampton to build an increasingly prosperous, healthy, safe and attractive town of which we are all proud. We will strive to maximise and sustain opportunities for all.”

The strategic framework to deliver this overall outcome is set out in the Corporate Plan, which drives the Council's strategic goals and priorities. These goals and priorities can then be traced along the 'golden thread' and ultimately to individuals' responsibilities and objectives.

The Council priorities include quality of life outcomes in addition to improved service delivery. These priorities take into account and confirm the Council's role as a key partner in delivering the Local Strategic Partnership priorities for improving the quality of life for the people of Northampton.

The Council's newly developed Key Performance Indicator table, which is monitored through the monthly monitoring process, includes measures specifically intended to provide information to monitor local quality of life. Work is ongoing to expand and refine this list further, by including County indicators and additional indicators from the library of voluntary quality of life indicator, which are considered to be particularly relevant to Northampton.

At a recent Leadership Forum including all Managers across the council, the following achievements were identified and shared with all attendees. These will be taken forward into the next staff magazine. These improvements have largely been achieved by focussing existing resources and obtaining external funding.

Recycling

Corporate Plan

Notes of Forum

- Improved from 14% to 28%
- Work with community project groups – Salvation Army, Schools, Brownies, Scouts, Guides & Community Groups
- Waste Education Centre set up in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council
- Local newspaper printed on our recycled paper

Regeneration

- 100 ha of brown-field land remediation planned and underway including
 - 960 houses
 - Additional leisure and community facilities
 - New nature reserve

Danes Camp Inclusive Fitness

- £45 k Sport England Lottery funded
- Caters for needs of disabled and non-disabled
- Charter mark for Excellence in Customer Service

Housing & Money Advice Centre

- Silvina Simmonds awarded National “Debt Counsellor of the Year” award

Delapre Abbey

- Redundant building costing Council £150k pa due in part to vandalism
- Partnership with ‘Camelot’ to provide cost-effective

- accommodation for key workers
- Provision of affordable housing, 9 live in guardians
- Reduction in costs from £3,600 per month to £300 per month

Shared Ownership

- Launched 13th July 2005 by NBC
- Shared ownership working group set up between NBC and Housing Associations
- Recognised by ODPM as an example of good practice and unique amongst local authorities

Results of service inspections

The Housing Services Inspection Report, January 2005 confirms in it's executive summary that Northampton Borough Council has;

'Some initiatives in place to deliver value for money and procurement decisions aimed at demonstrating this particularly in the repairs and maintenance service.'

Individual examples of value for money highlighted in the recent report include:

- 'The Housing Service is now seeking to deliver better value for money. A partnering contract to provide UPVC windows is up and running This contract is worth £10 million over five years and is based on open book accounting. Monitoring arrangements are in place with regular visits from the council's accountancy division to ensure that the key performance indicators are being delivered in accordance with the agreement.'
- 'The delivery of the investment strategy for the housing stock to

Housing Inspection Report

achieve decent homes will be based on a long term partnering contract with flexibility to respond to different resource levels.’

- ‘In October the bonus system for operatives was removed which will allow a greater empowerment of the workforce. It will also allow previous working practices such as verifying variation orders through additional inspections to reduce and remove the need for distribution or ‘cherry picking’ of work to achieve bonus. Provided the council ensures appropriate productivity levels this should result in opportunities to deliver value for money and a better service for tenants.’
- ‘The extended use of PSL (private sector leased) arrangements to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households should result in savings on the Bed and Breakfast (B & B) costs. Comparisons of costs by the council show it costs £90 per night in B & B as opposed to £27 in PSL accommodation. The additional value is in the higher standard and more satisfactory form of temporary accommodation provided by PSL properties.’

Our recent Best Value Performance Plan highlights areas where we are performing well and gives examples of continuous improvement.

These include:

- Previously the Council was in the lower quartile for the percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks, and although the figures are as yet unaudited our data now shows us to be in the top quartile for this indicator.
- The indicator for minor planning applications was previously in the above average quartile and is now also in the top quartile.

BVPP

Planning is lower quartile in terms of cost per head and one of our corporate priority areas.

Other top quartile performance includes:

- National non-domestic rates collection, through partnership with Wellingborough BC
-
- The percentage of the total tonnage of household waste that is recycled through access to DEFRA funding and in partnership with the County Council
-
- The number of visits to and usages of museums within existing resources.
- A significant improvement in the council's performance now places us in the above average performing quartile for the indicator related to the % of non-decent homes through better targeting of the Major Repairs Allowance.

Range of discretionary services provided

The Council has a limited financial envelope therefore funding for discretionary services is limited. As part of the service planning process Directors show how spending contributes to Council priorities. It is essential that spending is focussed to delivering priorities. The council does not allow for inflation on non-pay budgets as part of its budget process, with additional resources being targeted at priority services, this automatically reduces real expenditure in non-discretionary non-priority areas.

| 5.1.4 To what extent do costs reflect policy decisions? | Reference to evidence source |
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| <p>How costs are assessed when decisions are made.</p> <p>Our annual budget process includes updating the forecast and intelligence on likely costs including inflation, income and financing over the next three years. This is informed by the formal annual review of reserves and provisions and the latest budget monitoring information for the current year.</p> <p>Service plans seek to identify potential areas where efficiencies might be made including identifying those areas which do not meet Council priorities and are a discretionary service.</p> <p>All material projects are required to be supported by a project Initiation Document [PID] – which explicitly includes the council priority to which the proposal will contribute; the relative risk for the proposal and the forecast impact on performance. A capital appraisal and prioritisation approach is well established.</p> <p>The extent to which higher spending is in line with stated priorities.</p> <p>As the medium term planning approach has developed, resources have been increasingly focussed on priorities, resulting in a shift of resources to priority areas. As a Council we consider our total resource, i.e. both capital and revenue in this way. Our spending plans for 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 are dominated by the efficiencies we are seeking to achieve from the Root and Branch Review. The 2005/2006 Budget allowed for new investment in our priority areas. The Capital Programme for this year was fully aligned to Corporate priorities</p> <p>The overall spending level is driven by the council's priority on local tax levels</p> <p>The extent of long term cost considerations with major investments or</p> | <p>Budget Preparation Memo</p> <p>Service Plan examples</p> <p>CCS Forms</p> <p>Capital Programme</p> <p>MTFS</p> |

partnerships.

The Corporate Capital Strategy is one of the Council's key corporate plans. It sets out the framework for how the Council will invest in and use capital assets in the future (capital assets include land and buildings, IT systems, furniture plant and equipment and vehicles). One of the outputs of the Corporate Capital Strategy is the Capital Programme setting out the investment in new or improved assets over the next three years.

The Corporate Capital Strategy was assessed as good (the highest possible rating) for the first two years it was submitted. This means that the Council is no longer required to submit its capital strategy to the government office (GO-EM). The Council is required, however, to keep its capital strategy under review and the capital strategy and its implementation will be assessed as part of the CPA reassessment.

The new freedoms to borrow and invest in assets the Council was given under the "prudential regime" mean that it is more important than ever that a long-term view is taken about the investment in assets. The Council also has greater powers to work with partners and explore new ways of using assets.

The Council has adopted the Prince 2 methodology for project management. Prince 2 is a government supported method for managing projects from initial proposal through to implementation and evaluation. The previous corporate capital strategy process was developed before the introduction of Prince 2. There was a need, therefore, to ensure that the corporate capital strategy process lines up with the Prince 2 method. Ideally common records would be used across the two processes.

As well as Prince 2 there was also the need to introduce a "Value Management Approach" to projects to identify the best way of meeting asset needs. This approach includes an option analysis taking into account time, cost, quality and

CCS
CCS Review – Report to Executive

Delapre Abbey Trust
Benefits Partnership with Bedford BC
Advisory partnership on housing with Wakefield BC
Prince 2 System and Documentation

CCS Review Report

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| <p>risk constraints. Value Management ensures a “fit for purpose” solution to capital investment that takes a whole life cost approach. The need to carry out a thorough option analysis is a requirement of the prudential regime.</p> | <p>Interpretation Centre Example Guildhall Study</p> |
| <p>5.2 How well does the Council manage and improve value for money?</p> | <p>Reference to evidence source</p> |
| <p>How the Council manages its costs, whilst maintaining the quality of services and responding to local needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our recent Service Planning exercise explicitly sought opportunities for Gershon efficiencies to be identified looking both at cashable efficiencies and improved/better targeted outcomes. • At a corporate level, the Council has responded to new challenges and opportunities by an extensive re-configuration of its strategic management, including the establishment of the Improvement Board and revised Governance arrangements. • A new performance management framework was introduced in May 2005. The framework articulates the links between the key strategies and plans within the authority. <p>See detail set out in section 5.1</p> <p>The Council has a Corporate Assets Board whose overall aim is to ensure that property assets and their management contribute fully to the Council’s strategic aims and corporate priorities. Our Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan have both been classified as good by the ODPM. We are seen as an example of good practice in asset management being one of only three authorities invited to participate in the development of new national AMP guidance in partnership with the ODPM. Our Capital Strategy is subject to continuous improvement and</p> | <p>Service Plans</p> <p>New Governance Arrangements</p> <p>Performance Management Framework & Reports</p> <p>CAB Terms of Reference Capital Strategy/AMP</p> |

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| <p>changes are currently being made in response to a review by Overview and Scrutiny.</p> <p>A draft Capital Programme Management Scheme has been produced to ensure that project managers understand their responsibilities and to date no requests for additional resources to fund overspends have been made in respect of the 2005/2006 capital programme. This is in contrast to previous years.</p> <p>Examples of how we have responded include:</p> <p>Moved rent-free week in response to rent arrears trend data and customer feedback and introduced a service level agreement between Housing rent arrears and Benefits section to improve standards and performance</p> <p>Introduction of facility to pay by Debit and credit card has assisted in improved collection rates</p> <p>03/04 £ 61,500 collected</p> <p>04/05 £173,000 collected</p> <p>05/06 £ 95,000 collected to date</p> <p>Environmental Health front office staff have been provided with technical support and additional training to enable them to deal with telephone enquiries, reducing the demand from technical staff to increase their capacity to deal with more complex cases. This has resulted in the service being able to deliver the same level of service with lower staffing costs and continue to meet the demands despite volumes increasing with the population, household and business premises expansion within the town.</p> | <p>Capital Monitoring Reports Draft Capital Programme Management Scheme</p> <p>Customer feedback Trend Data Rent Arrears Statistics</p> <p>Telephone enquiry statistics Customer service guidelines</p> |
| <p>5.2.1 How does the council monitor and review value for money?</p> | <p>Reference to evidence source</p> |

The council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees, particularly Financial Strategy and Performance Scrutiny, have played an important role in reviewing and challenging regarding value for money.

The Health & Environment Scrutiny committee conducted a comprehensive review of the household recycling collection with great public involvement. Recommendations addressed improvement to collections, public awareness, enforcement of managed recycling and all were accepted for implementation to increase recycling and streamline the process.

The same committee reviewed the ODPM Planning and Access for Disabled People Good Practice Guide and the council's response to its implementation. 20 recommendations were made for the improvement of current practice and the development of new policies and procedures for use internally and externally, encouraging external partnership and internal liaison for improved efficiency and outcomes in all aspects of planning, development control and access. All 20 were accepted for implementation to bring greater efficiency, effects and access.

This committee also challenged the proposals for improved use of land at a local allotment site, with great public involvement at every stage of the review. Recommendations were made for reduction of the site and development for allotment users, freeing part of the site for possible commercial development. All 15 recommendations were accepted for implementation. Subsequently, further collaboration with allotment holders (in an improved climate of trust) brought agreement for and amended plan freeing land for alternative use.

The Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Scrutiny committee challenged and reviewed the consultation process for a Skateboard Park. The public

Review of Household Recycling Collection – 2004
Update on current position

ODPM Planning and Access for disabled People 2004
Update on current position

Review of Harlestone Road Allotments Jan 2004
Update on current position

Blackthorn Skateboard Park – Consultation

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| <p>involvement in this review meant that Scrutiny findings resulted in quieting localised concern, allowing the park to go ahead without missing out on external funding for regeneration for the young of the area.</p> <p>The same committee recently reviewed the process for untaxed and abandoned vehicles. Their research, covering external partners, resulted in a key recommendation to access the available training for council officer to provide them the authority to remove such vehicles immediately, without the cumbersome process of reporting, then sending another officer to implement the process. This recommendation will result in staff efficiency savings and speedier action for a public priority.</p> <p>The council's new Overview and Scrutiny committee will expect to continue the ongoing work of the previous committees in challenging and reviewing Value for Money from Consultants, and Contractors.</p> <p>Our recent Service Planning exercise explicitly sought opportunities for Gershon efficiencies to be identified looking both at cashable efficiencies and improved/better targeted outcomes.</p> | <p>Final Report</p> <p>Abandoned and untaxed Vehicles Sept 2005</p> <p>ELVIS Partnership</p> <p>Governance Arrangements Report</p> |
| <p>5.2.2 How well has the Council improved value for money and achieved efficiency gains over the last three years?</p> | <p>Reference to evidence source</p> |
| <p>Council targets for value for money and efficiency gains;</p> <p>The Council's backward looking Annual Efficiency Statement shows value for money savings for 2004/05 show savings of £1,140,373 of which £828,835 were cashable. Savings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of private Sector Leasing rather than Bed and Breakfast Accommodation (£311,538); | <p>Annual Efficiency Statement</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with a single supplier to deliver planned and responsive repairs and construction works (£215,000 of which £215,000 cashable); • Assessment of low value transactions calculator and procurement savings on six projects tender processes (£399,377 of which £399,377 cashable); and • Budget process absorbing inflation and use of “Guardian” security for Delapre Abbey (£214,458 of which £214,458 cashable). <p>The Root and Branch Review of staffing structures has sought to challenge value for money and seek efficiencies as part of its core aims. Current proposals streamline management structures into a maximum of four levels of management throughout the organisation and will reduce the number of managers from 159 to 102. Appointments to new posts will be based on a assessment of core competencies which will aim to deliver a highly skilled and flexible workforce.</p> <p>The achievement of efficiency gains</p> <p>Revenues and Benefits is working to provide an efficient and improved service through partnership working (Bedford BC) and improved customer focus monitored through effective use of consultation and feedback. The service has taken steps to improve the quality of information received at customers first point of contact to avoid multiple handling of cases, reduction in the reliance on temporarily contracted staff and use of qualified full time employees and introduction of new system will streamline processes and reduce processing times will I improve the speed and quality of benefits processing.</p> <p>Additional resources enabling the monitoring of Registered Social Landlords will ensure that appropriate nomination and allocation of properties are made to tackle the increasing waiting list and homelessness problems. Increased resources will enable cross boundary work and reduced contract prices for</p> | <p>Root and Branch Report to Executive</p> <p>Partnership Agreement</p> <p>Monitoring information Surveys</p> |
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| <p>projects – e.g. needs surveys already undertaken B&ME and key worker have accessed funding from 7 local authorities, Supporting People Team, English Partnerships and 21 RSLs. Revised housing needs assessment survey to be commissioned on housing market area (South Northants, Daventry and Northampton) work will be undertaken in partnership with West Northants Development Corporation.</p> <p>Within the Housing Rent Management Service, several initiatives have assisted in the reduction of rent arrears over the last three years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Radio Campaign Advertisements on the back of buses, workforce vans Cinema Advertising - Whole year campaign Roadside poster campaign through JC Decaux <p>With effect from this Autumn, the National Housing Federation SOR will be used for housing maintenance, allowing direct comparisons with other Authorities and Housing Associations. This, coupled with the change from a bonus related pay structure to salaries, will enable the Council to target cost reductions, based on an SOR figure minus a percentage.</p> <p>Reorganisation of existing “Cleaner Greener Teams” into 3 Community Action Teams (CAT) has improved outputs in respect of graffiti removal and allowed for a reduction in target removal time from 14 days to 10 days.</p> <p>Implementation and expansion of EDM (Comino) and Web Site Developments to enable improved access to Planning Applications via web based technology will enable customers access to submit, view and comment on applications. Officer time should be saved, council profile improved, odpm targets achieved, improved customer satisfaction, electronic payments direct into council bank accounts.</p> | <p>Rent arrears statistics</p> <p>Campaign literature</p> <p>SOR data</p> <p>Executive Report</p> <p>Performance Statistics</p> <p>EDRM Documentation</p> <p>Performance Statistics</p> |
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| <p>Within the Environmental Health service, capital investments have been made with the deliberate intention of saving staff time and costs by the purchasing of remote noise monitoring equipment, which enables 24 hour monitoring where prior to it's procurement, an officer would have had to be on site to carry out this function. This element of the service has therefore become more flexible and effective and able to deliver increased outputs as it is not restricted by personnel resources.</p> <p>The development of the County Travellers Unit has resulted in the authority saving approx 20-25K per year with improved ongoing management.</p> <p>We sell air quality control data, which reduces the revenue costs of maintaining and replacing the equipment. The data informs where more expensive testing is required and by targeting our testing we are effectively using the resources available. We have been working with the County Council targeting air quality action zones.</p> <p>Environment health provide a free drain clearing service recognising that a free service to users is more effective and economical than leaving a blockage to become a potential health issue or having to issue an enforcement notice.</p> <p>The New Agresso HR/Payroll system currently under development will be an integrated package which means that it will only require data to be input once rather than two or even three times at present. This will also reduce the amount of paper that is generated between HR and payroll.</p> <p>Energy Management is promoting savings in energy bills for our property portfolio. This is through the use of energy efficient boilers and construction methods and staff awareness campaigns.</p> <p>A review of Advertising and Publicity Expenditure across the council has been undertaken and a number of publicity budgets have been centralised into the Corporate Publicity account managed by the PR & Marketing Manager. Cost</p> | <p>Equipment and use Performance Monitoring Statistics</p> <p>Budget Data</p> <p>Budget Data</p> <p>Take up statistics Evaluation</p> <p>Project Documentation</p> <p>Campaign literature</p> |
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savings have been achieved by making informed purchasing decisions such as buying one corporate advert in publications rather than numerous, less impacting ads purchased by individual services often at a greater cost. The second phase of this review, to look at other publicity and printing-related budgets, and to further tighten the procedure for purchasing, is on hold pending the realignment of budgets under the Root and Branch review.

Efficiencies in back office functions are now a mandatory requirement to free up resources for re-investing into the front office. A role of the Business Process Management team sitting alongside the Programme Management function is to provide the tools to help Services to deliver these efficiencies supported by investment in and proper integration of ICT systems.

The introduction of a 'one stop shop' reception area has enabled staff to provide a comprehensive service to customers with further improvements expected by the implementation of a generic training programme and job shadowing to increase flexible working. A partnership arrangement with the County Council has provided two members of staff from the County Council to work as integrated members of the 'one stop shop' team, enabling queries from both authorities to be dealt with at the same location.

Budget data
Review documentation

Root & Branch Report

'One stop Shop' Project
documentation

| <p>5.2.3 Do procurement and other spending decisions take account of full long-term costs?</p> | <p>Reference to evidence source</p> |
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| <p><u>How value for money is built into the council's procurement practice</u></p> <p>The council has undertaken a detailed spend analysis, a detailed supplier analysis, (see summary – appendix) and has an extensive contract database. From this combined information it can ensure that areas of spend are addressed and that existing contracts are reviewed in a timely fashion.</p> <p>For example a review of its fixed line telephone costs led to participation in an e-auction in collaboration with the County Council, which produced savings in excess of £40,000 per annum.</p> <p>The Council is a member of the Central Buying Consortium (CBC) and has procured many commodity goods and services through the consortia over a number of years. The Council also benefits from the exchange of good procurement practice and intelligence through the CBC. The Councils also uses OGC and other consortia contracts where these represent value for money.</p> <p>The Council has also led the establishment of the Northamptonshire Procurement Forum (NPF), which consists of all the Northamptonshire District Councils, the County Council and the Police. This purpose of the group is to learn from best practice and established arrangements with suppliers where there is a benefit (cost and / or service) from aggregating demand and working collectively. Some of the contracts, which have been established, also involve Housing associations.</p> <p>The Council is also working with the Regional Centre of Excellence where there is benefit to the Council.</p> | <p>Procurement Policies and Procedures</p> <p>Supplier Contracts</p> <p>Contract evaluation</p> <p>CBC documentation</p> <p>Forum documentation</p> |

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| <p><u>The extent to which whole life approach is taken to spending and procurement</u></p> <p>Whole Life costing is one of the principles contained within the Councils Procurement Policy.</p> <p>“In appointing contractors, the Council will appraise offers received on the basis of whole life costing and will seek an appropriate balance between cost and quality in any evaluation having regard to the most economically advantageous Tender.”</p> <p>The Corporate Procurement Unit has established template evaluation tools to assist Services in the evaluation of tenders. These tools incorporate a price / quality mix and can be adapted simply to reflect the specific requirements of the project at the time.</p> <p>An example of the whole life costing approach coupled with a price / quality mix is the contract established in 2003 for the Maintenance of Corporate Buildings. This contract based upon the principles of Constructing Excellence is a partnership with the contractor working alongside the Councils Asset management team updating data on the Councils asset management database. This contract resulted followed from the Best Value Review’s of Works Procurement and Asset management.</p> <p>Establishment of the contract and subsequent operation has delivered savings of £ 215,000.</p> <p><u>Identifiable savings achieved through procurement</u></p> <p>The Corporate Procurement Unit identified savings of £399,000 on purchases of commodity goods and services during 2004.</p> | <p>Procurement Policy</p> <p>Template Evaluation Tools</p> <p>Mears Contract Evaluation</p> <p>Budget data ODPM Low Value Transaction Calculator</p> |
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| <p>▪ The Council established Consortium Procurement which became operational in October 2003 and which now provides a procurement service to three other local District Councils .</p> <p>Collaborative joint working with the Northamptonshire Procurement Forum secured savings of £364,000 for the six other Districts across Northamptonshire.</p> <p>Transaction savings of £312,670 were calculated by use of the ODPM's Low Value Transaction Calculator</p> <p>Use of external funding to deliver council priorities</p> <p>In recent years the Northampton Borough Council has had successes in attracting funds for Street Football, Museums events (gas masks and gravy legs), DEFRA funding for recycling and Brownfield Regeneration at Sixfields and Ransome Road amongst others.</p> <p>The Council obtained £1.5M from DEFRA to fund the roll –out of wheelie bins to support the Councils objectives for recycling. The Council collaborated with other Northamptonshire District Councils and led a joint procurement process for the £1m worth of recycling containers required which resulted in substantial savings all the Districts involved. Recycling is a Corporate Plan and Recovery Plan priority.</p> <p>To date this year Museums have obtained £42,705 in external grant, not including money from the East Midlands Museum Hub. The East Midlands Museum Hub project funding for this year amounts to £72,000 giving a total for this financial year £114,705.</p> <p>Current substantial bids awaiting approval relate to New Changing Rooms, Far Cotton Resource Centre and Waterfront Developments to support the growth agenda.</p> <p>The Community Engagement team is supporting organisations through the</p> | <p>External funding database Capital Programme</p> <p>Community Engagement reports, fora documentation etc.</p> |
|---|---|

Community Enabling Fund that aid NBC in meeting their Corporate Plan targets and generating more participants & participation from partner agencies and voluntary sector in community engagement activity (i.e. Community Safety Partnership, LSP, Area Partnerships, Forums etc)

We have been awarded £3.4M (£1.3M revenue and £2.1M capital) over the next three years from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Our Neighbourhood Renewal activity will focus on providing sustainable changes in quality of life to people living in the most disadvantaged area in the Town. We are currently determining its scope to ensure this funding bring about long-term sustainable investment.

Allocation letter
Executive Report

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLANS WITHIN NEW MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

We are making changes to the way our base budget is built up for 2006/2007 to help to improve the management capability of the Council. We will restructure our base budget so that each of our managers will have a clear cash limit, equivalent to their controllable expenditure, to which they will be expected to manage their budgets. At the same time we will strengthen the budget management framework and give managers greater flexibility to manage within their overall budget. Control over establishment is likely to remain in at least the short term until the discipline of budget management is embedded in the culture. If our performance as a Council is to improve it is vital that our budgets support accountable and empowered management.

We recognise the need to align our budgets with our priorities and show real progress in this area. Whilst the Root and Branch review will have a considerable impact on this re-alignment we cannot wait until 2007/2008 to align non-staffing budgets against priorities. We will, therefore, use the implementation period of Root and Branch to draw up detailed documentation and guidance to allow us to undertake a major review of expenditure against priorities to feed into a mid-year budget review in 2006/2007. The objective of this review will be not only to align our budgets with our priorities but also to set explicit service standards that we expect managers to use their budgets to deliver. This will further develop and support our new Performance Management framework.

Managers have prepared Service Plans for each of our operational units. These concentrate very much on the short-term and immediate issues. These Service Plans will help to inform the roll-forward of the base budget, service accountants are currently reviewing them to pick up on immediate unavoidable issues. In order for us to develop our medium and longer term strategies it is necessary to introduce another tier into the planning framework between the Corporate and Recovery Plans and current Service Plans. Director level Strategic Recovery Plans will provide the necessary focus on outputs and priorities to drive the current service plans which will need to focus on implementation in order to feed team and individual plans.

The Directors Strategic Recovery Plans will comprise the following key elements

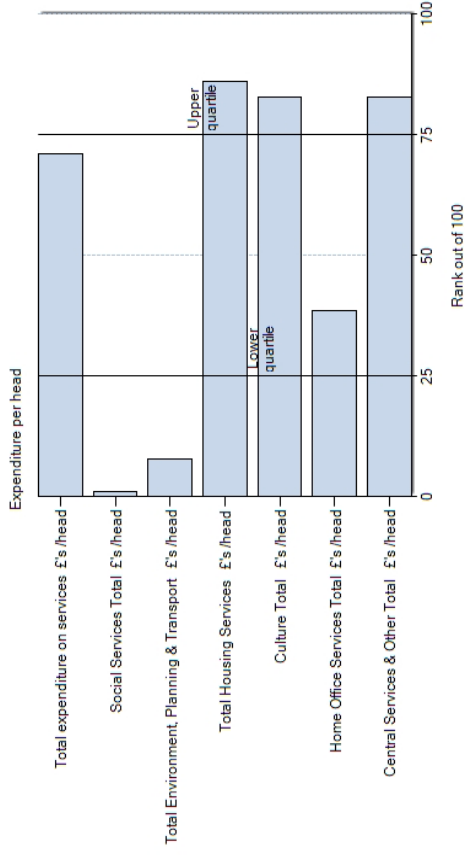
- Overall human resource envelopes and priorities for delivery of Phase 2 of Root and Branch.
- Medium and longer-term priorities and targets for individual service areas.
- Review of current outputs and alignment with priorities and proposals for re-aligning resources to corporate objectives, including measurable outputs.
- Proposals for improving value for money and delivering Gershon efficiencies.
- Endorsement from the relevant Portfolio Holders

Given that these plans will be key to driving forward and implementing our recovery, there will need to be high level corporate and democratic approval processes built into their agreement and finalisation before they can input into service and budget planning. The Directors' Strategic Recovery Plans will drive the development of budget proposals to feed into the Mid Year Budget Review and key to achieving re-alignment of our budgets to reflect priorities.

In order to inform the Directors' Strategic Recovery Plans, an exercise will be carried out to bring together Service Plan information, Performance Indicators and re-presented Budget information to identify the current contribution our service areas are making towards the Corporate and Recovery Plan priorities, including the outputs, outcomes and performance levels currently being achieved. This exercise will provide a comprehensive picture of the current relationship between inputs and outcomes and will allow informed decision making on reallocation of resources. This will be the first phase of moving to budgets that are built up based on expected output and performance levels and will help to ensure that our budgeting processes support our new performance management framework.

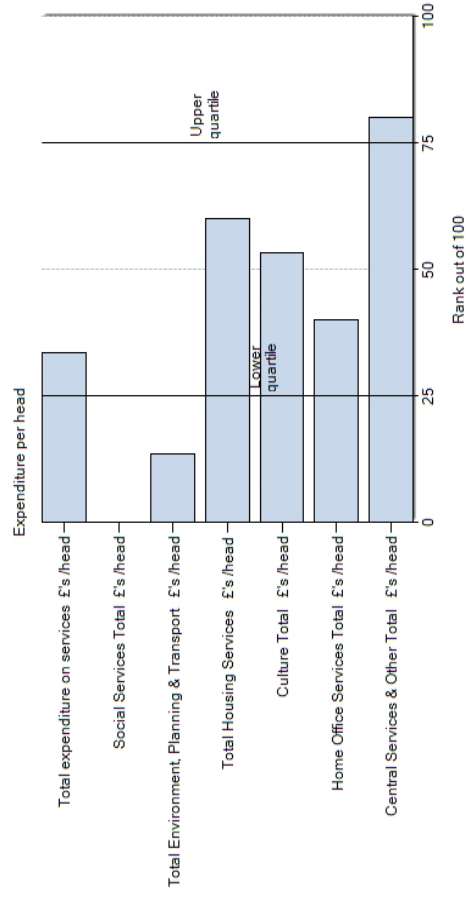
EXPENDITURE PER HEAD COMPARISONS

Comparison with Authority Group



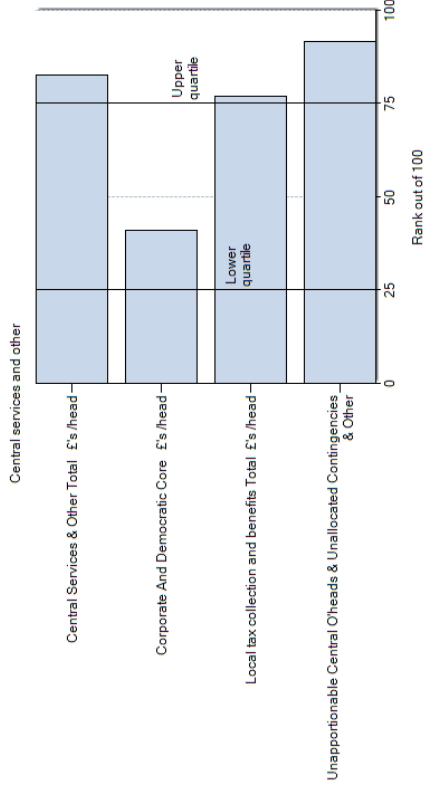
The comparison with the authority group shows upper quartile spend on Central Services, Housing Services and Culture. The comparison with the Audit Commission nearest neighbours confirms this expenditure pattern although shows expenditure closer to average for Housing and Culture. Further investigation has concentrated on these three areas.

Comparison with nearest Neighbours



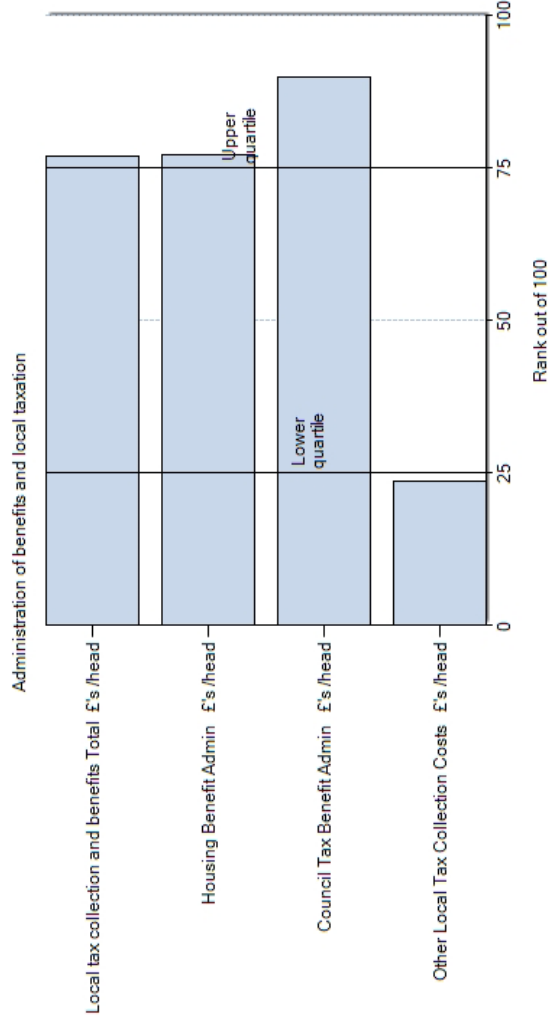
CENTRAL SERVICES & OTHER TOTAL

Comparison With Authority Group



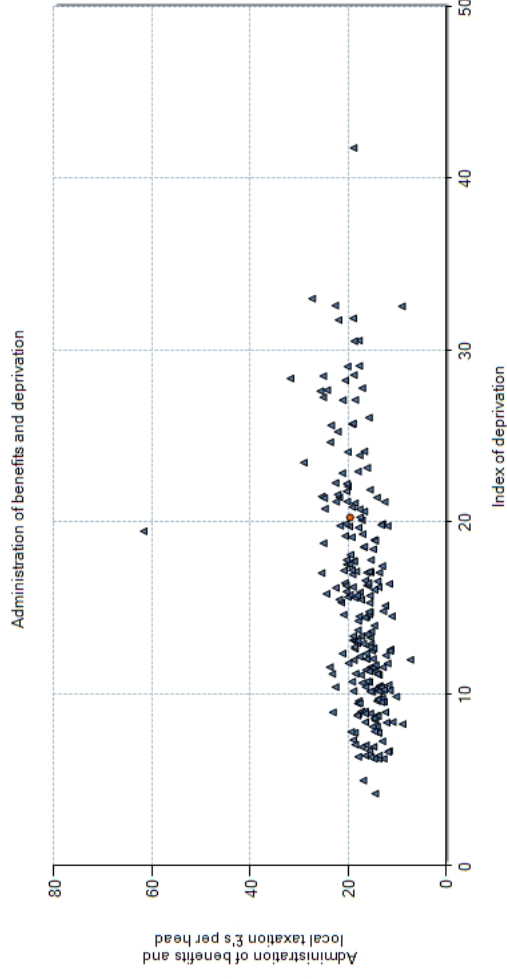
Local Tax Collection and Benefits

The Council is aware of its poor performance on benefits and is currently exploring joint working arrangements with Bedford Borough council to improve performance and rationalise business processes. This is a key area of our recovery plan and achieving performance in this area will be key to our improvement. The other local tax collection costs per head reflect our successful partnership arrangements with Weltonborough for NDR collection.

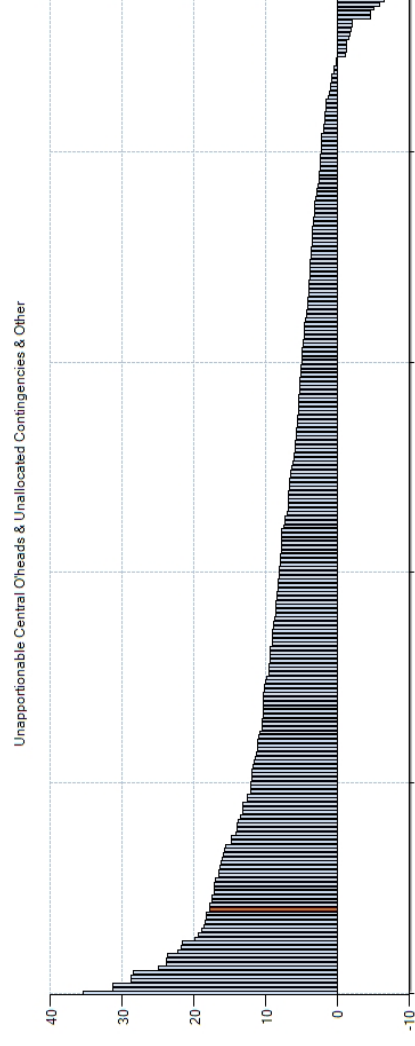


Improving quality of information received at customers first point of contact to avoid multiple handling of cases, reduction in the reliance on temporarily contracted staff and use of qualified full time NBC employees and introduction of new system will streamline processes and reduced processing times will improve the speed and quality of benefits processing. This will also reduce costs over the longer term.

When looking at costs of benefits administration mapped against deprivation our performance on cost per head is much more in line with other authorities performance suggesting that whilst we are still aiming for improvement our current value for money is better than the headline figure suggests.

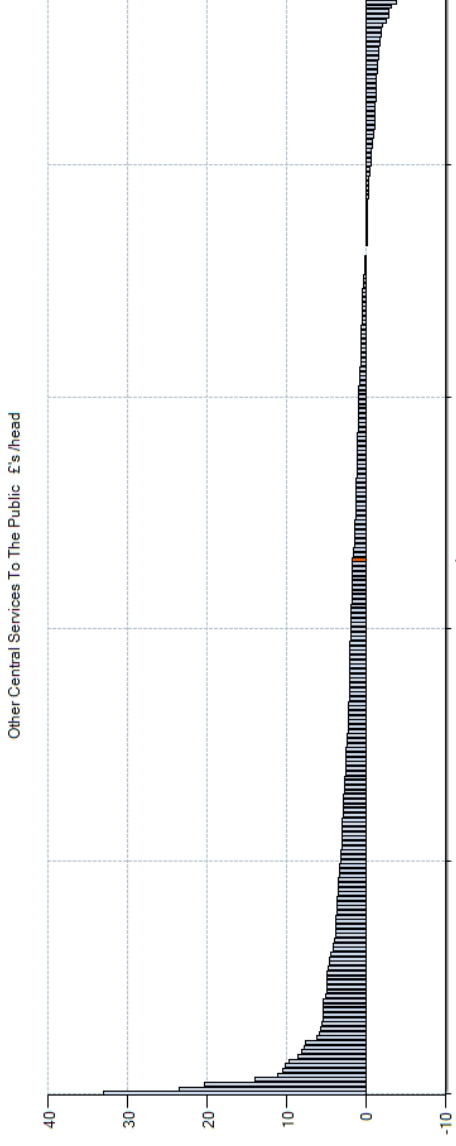


Unapportionable Central Overheads and Unallocated Contingencies



Unapportionable Central Overheads and Unallocated Contingencies are high when measured on a cost per head and cost as a % of expenditure basis. Reasons for this are thought to be.....

Other Central Services



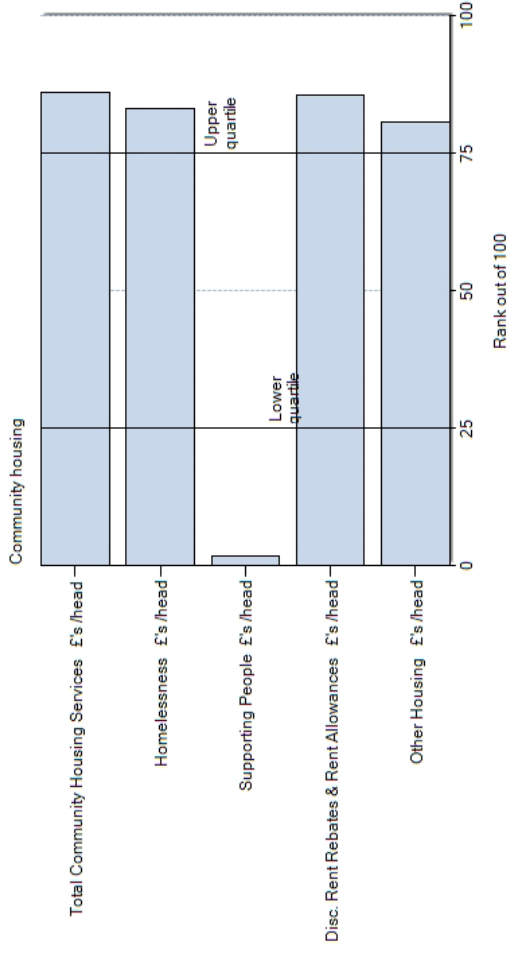
Other central services when compared to other authorities do not appear to be significantly out of line with other district councils.
Comment...

HOUSING SERVICES

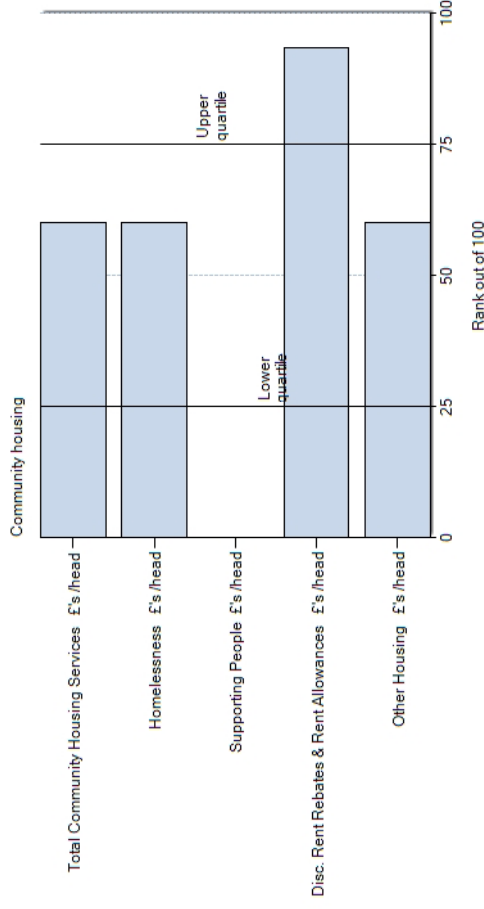
We have one of the largest remaining housing stocks in the Country. Northampton is also at the heart of the Governments agenda for housing growth providing a significant proportion of the new housing proposed under the Milton Keynes South Midlands expansion. The demands on our housing service are great and Housing forms another key part of our Recovery Plan to ensure we are well placed to meet the future challenges that will be placed upon us.

Community Housing

The graph below compares community housing costs to district councils. This clearly shows our expenditure on all services within the upper quartile.



When compared to our nearest neighbours the situation is improved but Rent Rebates and Allowances are still upper quartile

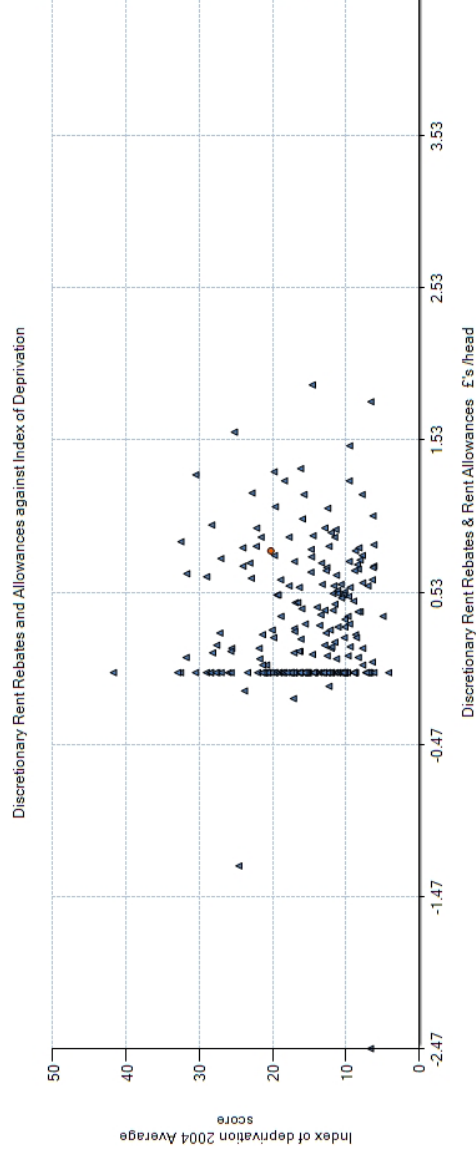


Homelessness is working to reduce acceptances against the three main causes of homelessness – parent/friends no longer willing to accommodate – end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies – Relationship Breakdowns (inc domestic Violence), target of 10% reduction year on year. To work to reduce the usage of temporary accommodation in line with ODPM targets, a 50% reduction by 2010.

Additional resources enabling the monitoring of RSLs will ensure that appropriate nomination and allocation of properties are made to tackle the increasing waiting list and homelessness problems. Increased resources will enable cross boundary work and reduced

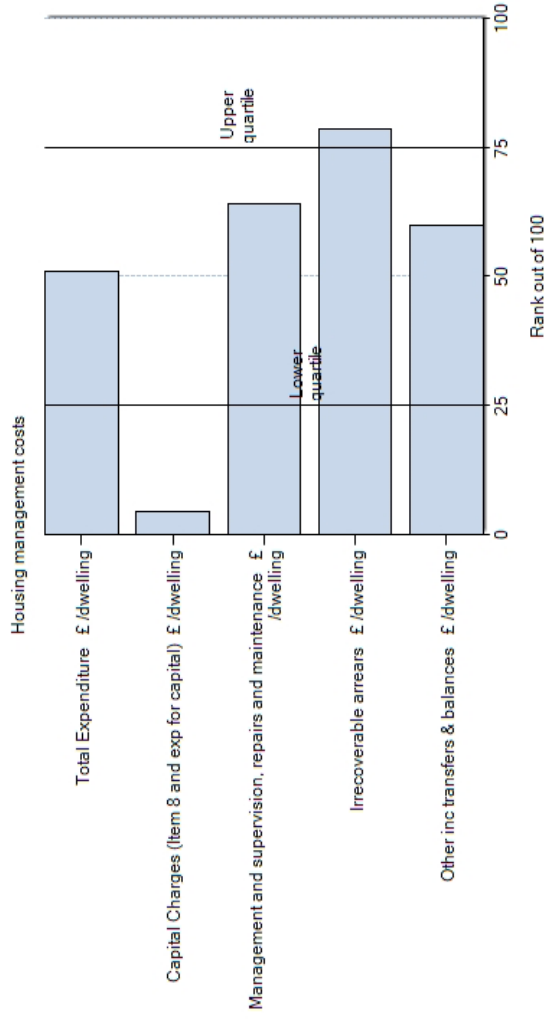
contract prices for projects – e.g. needs surveys already undertaken B&ME and key worker have accessed funding from 7 local authorities, Supporting People Team, English Partnerships and 21 RSLs.

Discretionary ...



Housing Management

Housing Management shows upper quartile costs for irrecoverable arrears and relatively high costs for housing management and supervision and repairs and maintenance.



Housing Management will deliver improvements by reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour, introducing better information on tenancies and improved tenant engagement, reducing evictions/homelessness due to anti-social behaviour and achieving a BVPI 66a (rent collection rate) year end performance target of 97%.

Housing arrears are currently being targeted which should reduce the level of write-offs. Further awareness campaigns via media and local transport systems are being undertaken which combined with management actions and a reduction in outstanding housing benefit claims are targeted to improve the rent collection rate from 96.2% to 97% by March 2006 and reduce current arrears by 7% by March 2006.

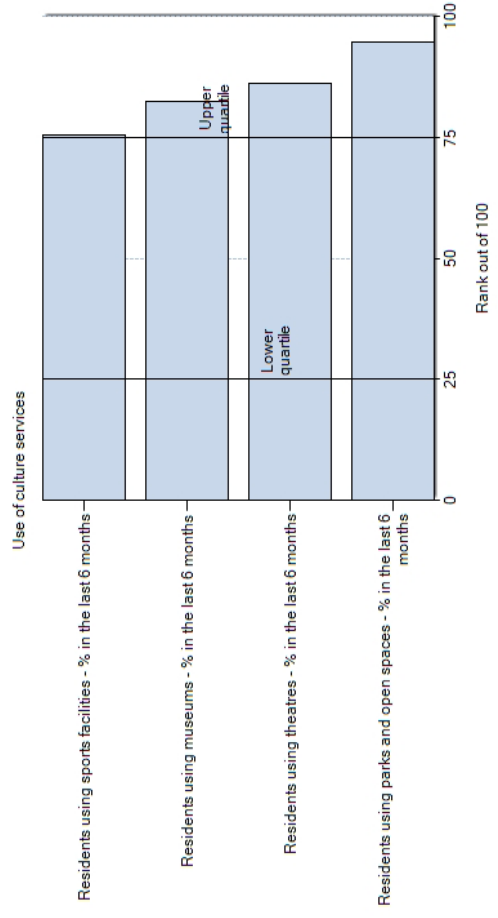
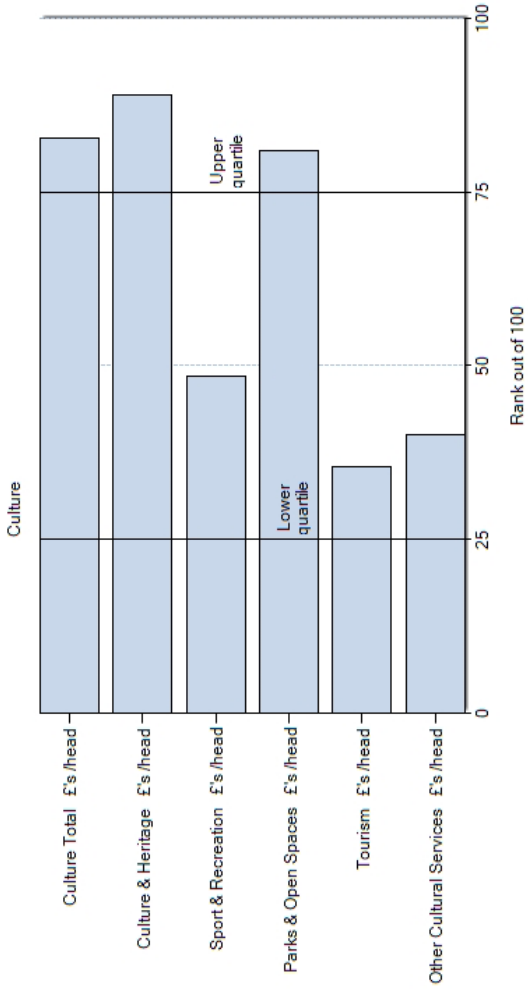
Working with Wakefield MBC on the development and implementation of a five-year Investment Plan for the achievement of the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 and beyond.

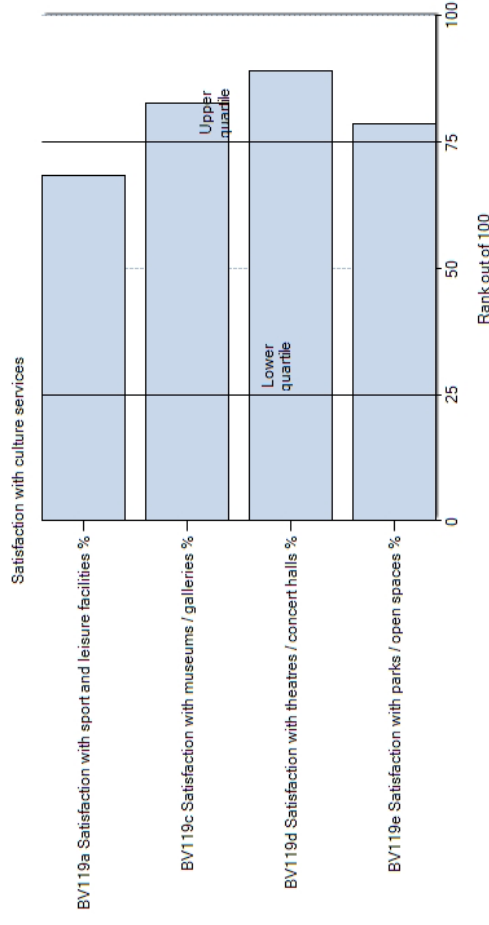
With effect from this Autumn, the National Housing Federation SOR will be used for housing maintenance, allowing direct comparisons with other Authorities and Housing Associations. This, coupled with the change from a bonus related pay structure to salaries, will enable the Council to target cost reductions, based on an SOR figure minus a percentage.

By centralising the management of planned and cyclical housing maintenance works, it is anticipated that programme overheads can be reduced resulting in a higher percentage of the available capital funds being invested in the properties.

CULTURE

Cultural Services clearly show upper quartile costs for Culture & Heritage and Parks and Open Spaces. Performance in these areas is also upper quartile both in terms of use and satisfaction.





Whilst high performance and high cost may indicate that value for money is being provided within the individual services, if these services are not a high corporate priority then they are having a negative impact on the achievement of overall value for money within the Council.

The Council is currently looking at the option of creating a trust for its Museums Service with the aim of maintaining attendance levels and satisfaction whilst reducing costs per head.

FUTURE BEST BUDGET REVIEWS

Based on the Audit Commission VFM data early targets for base budget reviews would be:

- Parks and Open spaces, to consider the impact on current high performance levels and the achievement of our corporate objectives if expenditure were reduced whilst recognising the potential impact on demand and cost/head of the growth agenda.
- Discretionary Rent Rebates and Rent Allowances, to consider whether Northampton's policies are out of line with other authorities and whether expenditure is contributing to the achievement of our objectives.

The following areas are currently being reviewed and Value For Money will form an important consideration in changing practices:

- Revenues and Benefits, to ensure joint working with Bedford BC delivers value for money improvements.
- Housing, to ensure that changes being put in place as a result of the recovery plan, changed structures arising from root and branch and improved efficiencies do improve value for money. The Council is currently working with Wakefield Borough Council to help identify and implement best practice from an excellent council.



Enabling and Delivering Housing Choice

Housing Strategy 2005-10

Consultation draft

Updated 30.08.2005, 18:00

Housing Strategy

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Introduction

This document is the housing strategy for Northampton and covers the period 2005-2010. It has been produced during a period of significant change and the realisation of new opportunities for the town. These changes and opportunities have created enormous potential for housing to better meet the needs of current and future residents of Northampton.

In particular, the following issues will all impact on the future of housing in Northampton:

- The growth agenda and the need to produce more housing within Northampton and the South Midlands Study area.
- The requirement to raise the condition of homes to (at least) the decent homes standard and the outcome of the housing options appraisal process
- The recognition of the role of housing in providing sustainable communities and comprehensive regeneration programmes
- The rights of the customer to live independently and with appropriate support and high quality services

The housing strategy for Northampton places the role of housing within the context of the overall development of Northampton. It specifies current and likely future supply of and demand for housing, and the opportunities that exist to address this housing need.

The document also outlines the role of Northampton Borough Council's partners in developing and monitoring housing strategy – with a real emphasis on the strategy as a source document, existing to co-ordinate the future of housing.

If you have any queries about the housing strategy or would like to comment on the draft, then please contact the following:

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Draft Northampton's Housing Strategy 2005-10

Executive Summary

This is the executive summary of “Enabling and Delivering Housing Choice” – A strategy for housing in Northampton

- The housing strategy, “Enabling and Delivering Housing Choice”, sets out our plan for building lasting communities across the borough. It outlines our priorities for housing over the next five years.
- The housing strategy is influenced by the national and regional agendas (which are outlined in the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan) and the East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy. It also supports and is reinforced by local strategies, including Supporting People, neighbourhood renewal and planning.
- A sense of belonging for all communities is an important part of housing. We want to help all residents and communities to work together in tackling local problems.
- The Local Strategic Partnership has produced the Northampton Community Strategy 2002-12 and the role of housing within this framework is coordinated through the Health, Housing and Social Well-Being sub-group.
- NBC’s ‘strategic housing role’ – which is to develop plans with partners for improved housing and housing services - has been separated from the housing management role in the context of local authority-owned housing stock.
- Our housing services help to tackle deprivation and poverty by working with partners on a range of issues including: fuel poverty, increasing people’s income, the effect of poor housing conditions on people’s health, and improving the environment.

Our strategic aims

- Understanding housing needs (and local housing markets)
- Meeting vulnerable people’s housing needs
- Delivering quality and choice in the housing market
- Investing in Northampton’s housing
- Promoting neighbourhood renewal

Understanding housing needs (and local housing markets)

- Northampton Borough Council is the largest district council in Northamptonshire with a population of about 194,500, living in 85,000 households. 8.5 per cent of the population is from minority ethnic communities.
- The Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub Region is designated as one of the major growth areas in the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan and

this forecasts significant growth of both jobs and dwellings in the county and surrounding areas. It suggests that the county could accommodate up to an additional 97,500 dwellings (30,000 in Northampton) and some 81,000 jobs between 2001 and 2021. This potential for growth makes it vitally important that investment in our public services

- This strategy is based on a growing understanding of housing need and demand, and on a greater appreciation of the effects of changing housing markets. This will continue through a Knowledge and Information Management Group
- A key worker policy will be produced to respond to the results of the recent key worker survey, which identified a clear need for key worker accommodation in the borough.

Meeting vulnerable people's housing needs

- We have developed strong and effective partnerships to support a wide range of initiatives to deal with the needs of the most vulnerable people and promote the health and wellbeing of everyone who lives in the borough.
- We have strategies in place or are developing them on homelessness, supported housing, supporting people, housing and services for the elderly, and other groups
- We will deliver new effective solutions to prevent and deal with homelessness through strong partnerships that are committed to helping homeless people to help themselves.
- We have developed strategic policies and priorities for meeting vulnerable people's housing, health and care needs in partnership with other housing providers.

Delivering quality and choice in the housing market

- We aim to improve the quality and choice of housing by redeveloping neighbourhoods, and to look at the housing market across the borough.
- We are finding solutions by working with other organisations instead of being in competition with them. As a result, we have developed a number of partnerships – particularly with registered social landlords.
- We will increase the choice of affordable housing by investing more money in affordable housing across home ownership and all types of tenancies.
- We will continue to plan for new housing and redevelopment using the information available to us to improve our understanding of housing markets and our knowledge of need and demand in terms of quantity, areas and types of housing.

- We are taking action to review sheltered housing and link this with partners' strategies in providing accommodation for elderly people.
- We are improving our working arrangements with private developers and will continue to deliver mixed public and private housing developments.
- We will introduce Choice-Based Lettings for the allocation of Council-owned properties.

Investing in Northampton's housing

- NBC has decided to retain the ownership and management of its Council housing stock. However, further work will be conducted with full involvement of tenant representatives into how improvements above that of the Decent Homes Standard can be achieved in future and into options that encourage and provide greater tenant involvement in the management of the Council's housing stock.
- We have policies in place to help private landlords maintain and manage their properties, with enforcement action when necessary.
- NBC places customer wishes at the centre of everything we do. This is reflected in its participatory mechanisms and its moves towards neighbourhood planning. It aims to continuously improve service planning and delivery by helping local communities to help themselves, and involving them in decision-making on a range of issues that affect them

Promoting neighbourhood renewal

- Communities and neighbourhoods can only continue to be good places to live if people want to live in them and will carry on wanting to live in them.
- There are four priorities for our housing services in promoting neighbourhood renewal:
 1. Supporting our initiatives for redevelopment
 2. Reducing crime and the fear of crime
 3. Improving the quality of the local environment
 4. Tackling social exclusion (the barriers, such as poverty, that prevent some people from taking part in society)
- Our housing services are working in partnership to achieve these priorities. For example, through work on the CASPAR regeneration projects.
- These priorities support our aim of delivering redevelopment as part of our everyday services (mainstreaming).

Resources and planning action

- This strategy sets out current and future housing investment based on national, regional and local investment priorities and planning. It identifies the resources available, how these are currently being used, and how they will be used over the next five years.
- An action plan sets out the strategic priorities and options that will best meet our aims. This action plan is essential to our service planning processes.

Chapter One

Strategic Context for Northampton

Northampton Borough Council is the largest district council in Northamptonshire with a population of about 194,500, living in 85,000 households. 8.5 per cent of the population is from minority ethnic communities. The town is part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands area identified for economic and population growth as part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) Sustainable Communities Plan. There are now major opportunities for growth and development within Northampton and the surrounding area with 30,000 new units of housing planned between 2001 and 2021. The newly formed West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) will deliver economic, social and housing growth in West Northamptonshire including Northampton. The council has a strong and influential role to play. We have the fastest growing population in the East Midlands with a 5.9% growth since 1991. The opportunities for growth will have a major impact on all our activities. Our joint work with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the county council, and the WNDC will ensure that we deliver this change agenda and the community strategy in consultation with the community.

The council's overall budget for the year 2004/05 is £27 million and the council is seeking to meet a budget gap of three million pounds over the medium term. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is about £50 million with a working balance of £3.1 million.

The Council's vision, as developed in the recently approved Corporate Plan is:

"We will work with, and for, the people of Northampton to build an increasingly prosperous, safe and attractive town of which we are all proud. We will strive to maximise and sustain opportunities for all".

(Source: NBC Corporate Plan, 2005)

The Corporate Plan is NBC's response to addressing the Northampton Community Strategy and both the Corporate Plan and the accompanying key performance indicators were assembled through the involvement of Members, and workshops facilitated externally by the consultants, IDEa.

Within its Corporate Plan the council has identified eight priorities for action which are structured around our three key themes of:

- Citizen Focused Service
- Leadership
- How the council will change.

The eight priorities for action are:

- Working with partners to reduce crime and disorder across Northampton

- Improve the cleanliness of the street scene in Northampton and reduce environmental crime
- Continue to improve housing benefit and revenue services
- Reduce deprivation in Northampton working with our partners
- Ensure the availability of decent and affordable homes for all
- Invest in Neighbourhood Wardens
- Improve the overall political and managerial leadership and efficiency of Northampton Borough Council
- Create and sustain an attractive economic environment for inward investment and regeneration

The council is ranked 168 out of 354 local authorities in the Indices of Deprivation. No wards are in the worst ten per cent for deprivation but 33 per cent of Northampton's wards are in the 25 per cent of most deprived wards in England - we are committed to tackling this. Unemployment is lower than the national average with lower than average take up of benefits by working age people.

The Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub Region is designated as one of the major growth areas in the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan and this forecasts significant growth of both jobs and dwellings in the county and surrounding areas. It suggests that the county could accommodate up to an additional 97,500 dwellings (30,000 in Northampton) and some 81,000 jobs between 2001 and 2021. This potential for growth makes it vitally important that investment in our public services and infrastructure, such as roads and transport, houses and community facilities, as well as the integration of new people and communities into the county. Investment in the present infrastructure is a prerequisite for well-managed growth.

Northampton currently faces many challenges in relation to housing particularly being situated in one of the four major growth areas of the county. There is rising demand for housing in the area. We are experiencing increasing house prices and subsequent affordability problems. We have over 7,000 people on our housing register awaiting allocation of social rented housing whilst our stock is dwindling due to the right to buy. We are achieving successes in the delivery of new affordable housing in partnership with housing associations, developers and the Housing Corporation; and we increasingly recognise diversity and the need to be innovative in finding alternative solutions to satisfy current and future residents housing needs. This Housing Strategy for Northampton sets our framework for addressing what we and our partners see as our seven long-term benefits which are articulated in NBC's Recovery Plan. These are:

- *Increased supply and delivery of affordable homes*
- *Sustainable development in Northampton*
- *Provide a decent home for all*
- *The delivery of the growth agenda in Northampton*
- *Improved homeless prevention and the key causes of homelessness tackled effectively*
- *Adequate provision of housing and support for all sectors of the community*
- *Improving the Housing Management service*

(Source: NBC Recovery Plan)

The long-term benefits identified above were formulated by NBC as part of its CPA improvement programme, with the support of GOEM's Relationship Manager.

Strategic Context for Housing in Northampton

The vision of Northampton in 2012 is:

“In 2012, Northampton will be a safe, clean and healthy town with an excellent environment, facilities and services. Its communities will be confident, educated, skilled and united. The town will be proud, prosperous and progressive, a place where history and innovation co-exist. All will enjoy a high quality of life and decent home within a diverse and inclusive community”

(Source: Northampton Community Strategy, 2002)

A review of the Community Strategy will take place in 2005 and will incorporate the role of the WNDC, neighbourhood renewal and local agreements. The LSP Steering Group has deferred the review of the community strategy within the current financial year to support the realignment into local area agreements.

The housing strategy has been produced to support this vision and that of the Corporate Plan to recognise the full and positive role that housing will make in transforming the future of Northampton.

Northampton's Housing Strategy 2005-10 describes how we are working to make a lasting difference by ensuring the provision of viable, good quality housing for existing communities and new neighbourhoods. The aim is for sustainable housing in places where people want to live, which is of a decent quality and standard and which meets people's needs and aspirations. A vibrant, healthy housing market across all housing tenures (owner occupied or rented) is critical to economic prosperity and social stability in an attractive and thriving town.

1.1 The national context

In February 2003, the government published Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future, known as the Communities Plan. It addresses a broad range of areas creating and maintaining sustainable communities and it is within this there is the identification of Northamptonshire being part of one of the major growth areas in the country.

It set out the long-term action plan for delivering sustainable communities by:

- the regeneration of deprived estates
- increasing housing supply in growth areas
- providing more affordable housing for low income households and key workers
- addressing low demand and abandonment
- bringing council homes up to a decent standard
- introducing a regional approach to housing policy

“Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work now and in the future. They meet diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

Sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development. They:

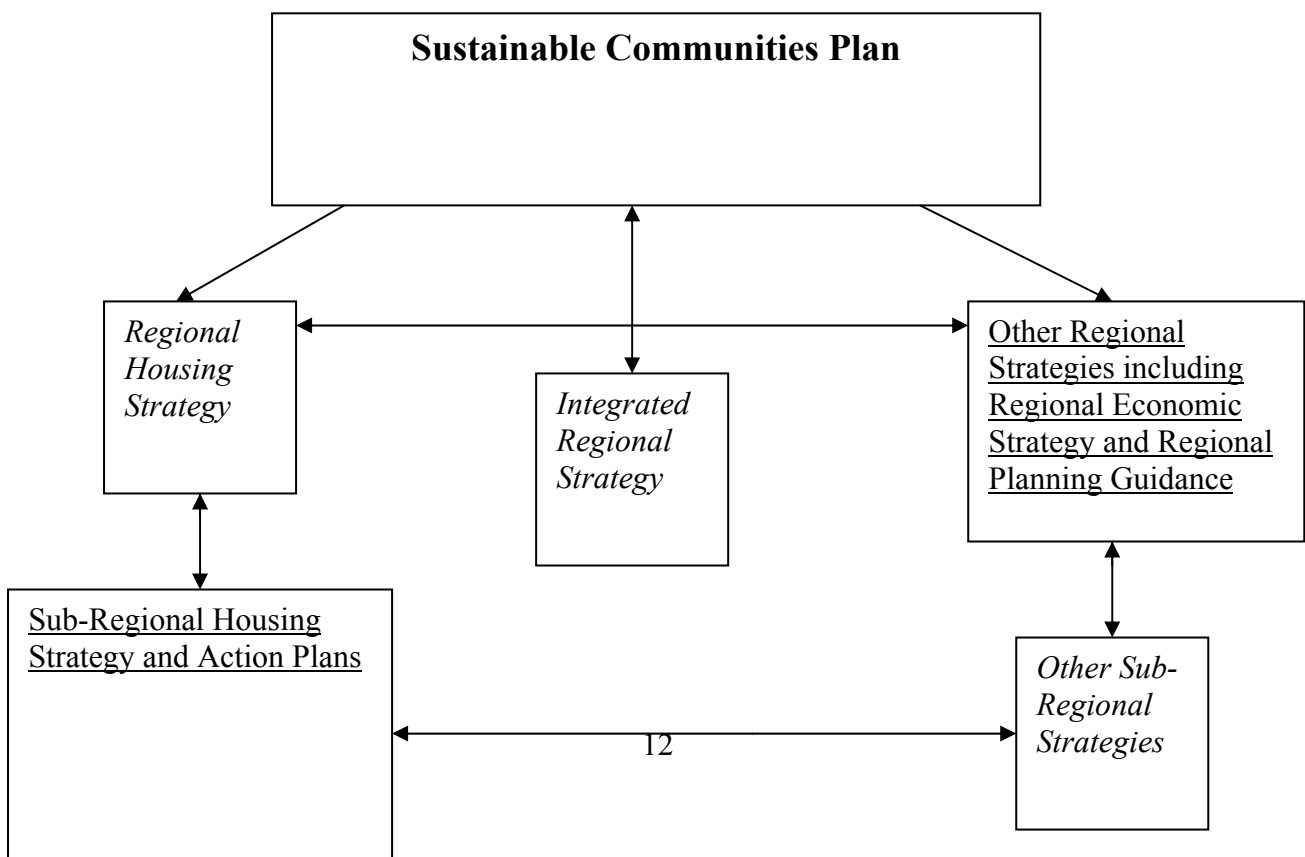
- Balance and integrate the social and economic and environmental components of their community
- Meet existing needs of existing and future generations
- Respect the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally also to make their communities sustainable”

(Source: Sustainable Communities – ODPM, 2003)

In response to the Communities Plan, the first Regional Housing Strategies have been produced (2004) and this is as part of the Integrated Regional Strategy sitting alongside the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy that has been developed from Regional Planning Guidance. The Regional Strategy aims to deliver the priorities set out in the ODPM SCP in a way that is appropriate to the East Midlands. It has been informed by stakeholders in the region.

In addition, the Government’s strategy for tackling and reducing homelessness is stated in the Community Plan and explained in more detail in the “Sustainable Communities: settled homes, changing lives” document (ODPM, March 2005). This strategy aims to halve the number of households living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010.

Relationships for delivering the Sustainable Communities Plan



The Sustainable Communities Plan consists of several key elements and these are listed as Appendix x to the Housing Strategy.

The East Midlands Housing Board has been established to build on the existing Regional Housing Statement and has produced the East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy, which sets priorities for the allocation of the new single capital pot for housing resources which was introduced in 2004.

These Housing Boards were established following the publication of the SCP in recognition that many aspects of housing need to be planned on a regional or sub-regional basis as housing markets cross local housing boundaries and the need to deliver sustainable communities and make the best use of scarce resources.

NBC places immense importance on influencing and assisting national and regional developments. It has been working with the East Midlands Housing Board and with local housing providers in preparing the Regional Housing Strategy. Northampton is playing a leading role in developing better collaboration at both regional (East Midlands) and sub-regional (Southern sub-region) level.

1.2 The Regional Context

The Regional Housing Strategy supports the Integrated Regional Strategy's vision for the East Midlands:

“The East Midlands will be recognised as a region with a high quality of life and sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it addresses social inequalities and manages its resources”.

The objective for Housing is “to ensure that the existing and future housing stock is appropriate to meet the housing needs of all parts of the community.”

The East Midlands Housing Strategy was agreed in (July 2004) with its 16 priorities.

| |
|--|
| <i>Priority for the East Midlands</i> |
| <i>1. Deliver Balance</i> |
| <i>➤ Increasing the quantity and improving delivery of appropriate high quality housing for all communities</i> |
| <i>➤ Securing quality and choice for housing development</i> |

| |
|--|
| ➤ <i>Recognising and responding to areas affected by low demand</i> |
| ➤ <i>Providing options for unpopular unsuitable sheltered housing stock</i> |
| ➤ <i>Renewing and revitalising the private sector</i> |
| ➤ <i>Decent homes in the Social Sector</i> |
| ➤ <i>Ensuring sustainable growth for the Milton Keynes South Midlands areas is delivered</i> |
| ➤ <i>Ensuring that the skills in the construction sector can be harnessed to increase output in the region</i> |
| 2. Deliver Inclusion |
| ➤ <i>Tackling the causes of homelessness</i> |
| ➤ <i>Assisting people to maintain their independence for as long as they wish</i> |
| ➤ <i>Promoting healthy, safe and eco-efficient homes</i> |
| ➤ <i>Ensuring that in rural areas and market towns there is both an appropriate quality of housing to meet a range of housing needs and access to related services for vulnerable people of all ages</i> |
| ➤ <i>Ensuring that all sub-regions understand and address the needs and aspiration of diverse sectors of their communities</i> |
| 3. Deliver Co-ordination |
| ➤ <i>Developing the role of the sub-regions</i> |
| ➤ <i>Developing and integrating a common information data base</i> |
| ➤ <i>Supporting economic growth in partnership</i> |

Northampton is key to the success of the delivery of these priorities and our priority areas or long-term benefits for action therefore reflect the regions priorities and these are:

Priorities for Northampton

- *Increased supply and delivery of affordable homes*
- *Sustainable development in Northampton*
- *Provide a decent home for all*
- *The delivery of the growth agenda in Northampton*

- *Improved homeless prevention and the key causes of homelessness tackled effectively*
- *Adequate provision of housing and support for all sectors of the community*
- *Improving the Housing Management service*

In addition, NCC and NBC have adopted a Spatial Strategy for the region and the sub-region (Regional Spatial Strategy 8)

The Core Spatial Strategy (Local Plan) for Northampton is currently being produced (target for completion November, 2005) and will be a document that covers the wider housing market area of West Northamptonshire. The NBC restructure positions the housing strategy and enabling function within a Planning Policy and Conservation service area and it is felt this aligning of functions will help NBC to provide a more robust response and high quality service in the context of the growth area and the newly created WNDC.

1.3 WNDC

The West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) for has been established to drive forward regeneration, improved infrastructure, investment and sustainable growth. Development control powers for strategic sites and schemes will be an important element in the WNDC's drive to maximise public and private investment in infrastructure and accelerate the regeneration of brownfield and town centre sites.

The main challenges for the WNDC include creating an enhanced urban environment and improved public infrastructure through regeneration and high quality design focusing on a series of town centre and urban fringe sites. Successful regeneration of these centres will enhance the development of sustainable and viable local communities able to accommodate proposed levels of growth. It will also recognise the key sub-regional links between Northampton, South Northamptonshire and Daventry.

The WNDC has begun work on its regeneration framework (business plan) and this will be the overarching strategic document within which the UDC will deliver for the sustainable development of the three towns in West Northamptonshire.

The WNDC's objective is to secure the regeneration of its area and this will be achieved in particular through:

- Bringing land and buildings into effective use
- Encouraging the development of existing and new industry and commerce
- Creating an attractive environment
- Ensuring that housing and social facilities are available to encourage people to live and work in the area.

1.4 The Sub-Regional Context

At a sub-regional level Northampton has worked with stakeholders (including GOEM and the Housing Corporation) to develop a comprehensive sub regional action plan that will target resources to enable the intervention in the housing market. It covers all tenures and majors on affordability.

Over recent years it has become increasingly important to take into account the national and regional housing agenda. The Regional Housing Strategy is part of the integrated regional strategy, aligned with the regional economic strategy and the regional spatial strategy that is developed from Regional Planning Guidance. The aim

is to deliver national housing priorities set out in the ODPM Sustainable Communities Plan on a local basis. This Housing Strategy is Northampton's response to these plans also taking into account on a local level the Northamptonshire Community Strategy, the Northampton Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Plan.

The aim of this Housing Strategy is to present progress that has been made since our last document and to present a strategic framework that demonstrates the local housing markets and addresses how we are delivering on the national and local priorities.

The vision for the sub region is to have more housing choice for people by providing homes that people can afford and are able to stay in. We aim to achieve this by broadening the provision of new homes in number and type within the planning framework and making the best use of what is already available. We will achieve this by the effective deployment of resources at our disposal (finance, land, policies and personnel) and improving our co-ordination and planning for the future.

Within the East Midlands region there are five sub-regions, Northampton features prominently in the Southern Sub region which consists of Northampton, South Northamptonshire, Daventry District, Corby, Wellingborough, Kettering, East Northamptonshire, and Market Harborough. Whilst the partnership of stakeholders in this sub-region is still developing, we have produced an action plan based on the 16 regional priorities.

The sub-regional role is increasing in importance and influence and must play an active part in the determining areas for investment through the Regional Investment Plan.

Important projects have been undertaken through the County Chief Housing Officers Group and Strategy Officers Group. Examples include:

- Countywide Black and Minority Housing Needs Survey – funded by the local authorities and 21 Registered Social Landlord partners
- Countywide Key-Worker Survey – funded by English Partnerships, Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council
- Northamptonshire Housing Training Group – Countywide procurement of housing related training for local authorities, registered social landlords and other related agencies.
- Exploration of a countywide homelessness strategy
- Development of countywide Section 106 legal agreements for affordable housing to present a more comprehensive and strategic approach.

The Milton Keynes/South Midlands growth area includes the sub-region of West Northamptonshire.

1.5 The local and corporate context

Setting the Strategy in Context

The Strategy demonstrates how the council will progress to delivering its long-term aims in relation to housing and how well these aims integrate with other key aims and objectives. Our last Strategy was submitted in July 2002 and since that time we have made significant progress, evidenced by the recent Audit Commission Housing Inspection, which awarded the council's housing service a "**one star**" rating. The outcome also included a second judgement of "uncertain prospects for improvement", with this reflecting the changing management arrangements that were developing at the time. The action plans reflect the findings of the Audit Commission in order that we can improve still further and achieve our aim of a "**two star**" service.

In particular we have been successful in:

- **Affordable housing provision** – we have promoted mixed communities through shared ownership, rented and home ownership. The revised Supplementary Planning Guidance is set at 35%.
- **Private Landlords' Forum** - we have established an active Landlords' Forum which meets three times per year attracting 45-50 attendees. A Landlords' Day is also arranged with exhibition stands and two evening workshops.
- **Disabled Persons' Housing Group** - as part of its approach to reflect diversity the council has established a Disabled Persons' Housing Group consisting of officers and customers. This considers various aspects of the housing service including physical access issues, joint assessments of need with other services and planning applications for new housing developments commenting on issues such as space standards. Since 1998, the group has ensured that NBC Mobility Standards (10%) are incorporated into all new housing schemes above a minimum number. Also, following the revised arrangements of affordable housing on new housing developments⁰⁰, the group has required RSL developments to achieve 100% mobility. The group actively promotes the use of Lifetime Homes (NBC Mobility Standards meet this standard) on all schemes to enable people to stay in their home for longer.
- **Housing Money and Advice Centre** – the Housing Money and Advice Centre (HMAC) provides a wide range of housing advice and debt counselling to customers of all tenures. In 2004/05 the HMAC provided support and advice to 14,644 customers, helped prevent homelessness to 208 people, and helped to support debt totalling £5,522,364. The service is accredited through the Community Legal Service (CLS).
- **Resident Involvement** – Tenant and resident involvement has developed to see many parts of the housing service embracing direct tenant involvement including tenant representation on nearly forty NBC groups and forums. To help access for tenant representatives, NBC has introduced telephone link equipment, which allows a tenant who cannot attend a meeting to take part over the telephone.
- **Floating Support for Vulnerable People** - As part of its floating support arrangements, the council has dedicated ten places to provide floating support for older people in sheltered schemes with alcohol dependency problems.

However, there are a number of areas that require service improvement and these are reflected in the housing strategy action plan and the best value housing improvement plan. In particular, NBC needs to address customer satisfaction which has been

placed in lower quartile performance, the capital programme in the context of greater influencing of the corporate capital programme (such as looking at RTB receipts and the backlog of DFGs) and an improvement in its approach to dealing with homelessness in the context of greater emphasis on prevention.

Following the Audit Commission's CPA inspection in 2003, NBC has undertaken a restructure of its senior management team, and is now in the latter stages of its root and branch review. NBC is working through a Recovery Plan and five headline projects have been created through NBC's Recovery Plan that will secure the Recovery Plan's priority commitment to Improving Housing Services. These projects are:

- Implementation of Private Sector Renewal Strategy
- Achievement of Decent Homes Standard in Council stock
- Meeting accommodation/support needs of vulnerable people
- Improving the Housing Management Service
- Delivery of Housing Strategy and Growth Agenda

1.6 Community cohesion

A cohesive community has a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities, in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances are valued and have similar life opportunities. A cohesive community is one in which strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Northampton's housing services have been successful in engaging the community in shaping service delivery. We seek to find solutions to local problems by developing the capacity of residents who work together to shape acceptable outcomes for all – for example, on the CASPAR regeneration projects.

1.7 Partnership working

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) continues to drive forward the Community Strategy and whilst the housing strategy cross-cuts all sub-groups, housing is coordinated through the housing, health and well-being sub-group.

To ensure that the Borough and the RSLs engage fully in meeting the identified housing needs of the Borough, there are three RSL groups in existence that concentrate on development, housing management and shared ownership issues – these will be explored further in Chapter 4 covering quality and choice in the housing market.

In the last few years the following regional and sub-regional housing groups have included the full participation of NBC:

- East Midlands Home Energy Conservation Act Forum
- Northamptonshire Home Energy Efficiency Partnership – Monthly meeting of Northamptonshire Councils, utility companies, manufacturers to secure greater

energy efficiencies in the home and to raise joint funding for energy efficiency projects.

- East Midlands Empty Property Forum
- Chief Housing Officers Group
- County Strategy Officers Group
- Southern Sub-regional Development Group
- East Midlands Tenant Participation Forum – Bi-monthly meeting of tenant representatives and tenant participation workers from across the region to promote good practice in tenant participation and housing services and to develop specific initiatives such as shared training programmes and BME involvement.

1.8 How residents and stakeholders have informed the strategy

The contents of this strategy have been driven by stakeholders and customers. The aims and objectives have had customer influence and involvement.

The main mechanisms of consultation are:

- Northampton Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations
- Housing Strategy Tenant Focus Group
- RSL Housing Management Group/Development Group
- Northamptonshire Supporting People Team
- NBC Members
- Local Strategic Partnership (and its sub-groups)
- Private Landlords and Developers

NBC held at stakeholder event in June 2005, and the main outcomes from this are listed in appendix E to this report.

1.9 Monitoring our progress

The Housing Strategy and Capital programme are kept under review throughout the year. Officers and Members ensure that all proposals complement the council's corporate capital strategy and the priorities of the corporate plan.

In terms of investment, 6-weekly Corporate Capital Strategy meetings are held with key officers across the council to review progress on projects and monitor spend. The councils' senior management team review the overall capital spend bi-monthly and a subsequent report is received by Cabinet for approval and to report major variations.

To make sure that we continue to progress on our housing strategy overall we will monitor performance against the action plans. This monitoring will take place via:

- Government Monitoring Board (CPA)
- Senior Management Team/IMPs
- Housing Strategy Group (re-launched to include officers across the council), which will feed into Corporate Capital Strategy group
- The Housing Association Liaison Group (development and management)
- Tenants Forums
- Developers Forums

- LSP and Neighbourhood Renewal (being developed through LSP theme groups)
- Executive/ Overview and Scrutiny

This careful monitoring and reporting will provide early indication of variations and enable action to be taken to correct if necessary.

Monitoring Our Performance

NBC has implemented a new Performance Management Framework (PMF) and this will ensure that the Council restructure is able to deliver the requirements of the Corporate Plan. The PMF is attached as Appendix F. The PMF includes the requirement for service plans to be produced, which in turn feed into the housing strategy action plan.

Include performance indicators – 2004/05 Dale Robertson. NBC's existing Organisational Development and Improvement (ODI) division is being restructured through NBC's Root and Branch review to secure a split between strategic planning and operational performance.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the main driver for service improvement, and this is articulated in the Corporate Plan and its understanding will roll out through NBC as the restructure moves further forward. Customer satisfaction is tested in a number of ways such as MORI surveys, tenant satisfaction surveys and service questionnaires. The NBC Root and Branch Review has made proposals for neighbourhood services, so that services can be more customer focussed and accessible. The opportunities for housing services to link into other services – such as Street Scene – are increased through the restructure proposals, and its envisaged that this will lead to increased customer satisfaction.

1.10 The development of the housing strategy 2005-10

A Housing Strategy Improvement and Development Group will meet quarterly and receive reports on progress from all relevant officers and the housing partnerships. It will deal with relevant issues and determine the future direction of the strategy. The group will be chaired by a Corporate Manager, and action plans will feed into individual service plans through NBC's Performance Management Framework.

The Housing Strategy Group is now established to develop and further the strategy in partnership. The consultation for developing the strategy and action plan in future years will be developed further through the Housing Strategy Improvement and Development Group.

Chapter 2

Understanding housing needs and local housing markets

This chapter will be considered in detail with GOEM as part of GOEM support.

Objectives

- Continuing partnership development of robust systems to analyse housing need
- Developing a housing strategy for BME communities

2.1 The context

There are a number of key issues which inform our understanding of local housing markets and needs. In particular, a lack of affordable housing is a problem across Northampton and throughout the sub-region.

The challenges presented by Northampton's housing market are the product of major changes in the national and local housing systems and of wider economic and social trends as well as demographic changes.

Sub-regional

The Northampton sub-regional market encompasses much of western Northamptonshire, as reflected in the significant household and travel to work movements taking place between Daventry, South Northamptonshire and Northampton districts. The dominance of Northampton as a centre of employment is reflected in its travel to work area, which extends across much of the Daventry and South Northamptonshire districts.

Connectivity with Corby and Kettering, however, is markedly weaker, with little significant evidence of household movements between Corby and Kettering and the districts of the Northampton sub-region, measured either in terms of total households or percentage of all households. Wellingborough marks the key point of overlap between the Northampton and Corby-Kettering sub-region.

The WNDC will oversee new growth in West Northamptonshire and it will support the regeneration of the area within its boundary and its activities will seek to deliver sustainable communities. The core area of the WNDC is situated in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester. This boundary therefore means that the WNDC will operate in the areas of Northampton, South Northamptonshire and Daventry – the three districts which comprise the Northampton sub-region.

The travel to work and household migration patterns indicate that Coventry and Rugby exert relatively little influence on the Northampton sub-regional housing market. However, strong commuting flows into Milton Keynes from Northampton

and South Northants generate an overlap with the Milton Keynes sub-region to the south.

House Prices

The table below shows average 2005 house prices in Northampton compared to the figures of four years previously.

| Northampton change | 2001 | 2005 | Increase | % |
|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| Detached | £160,306 | £214,259 | £53,953 | +33.7% |
| Semi-Detached | £87,527 | £139,706 | £52,179 | +59.6% |
| Terraced | £73,811 | £124,091 | £50,280 | +68.1% |
| Flat/Maisonette | £65,940 | £113,574 | £47,634 | +72.2% |

In the private sector, there are nearly 70,000 dwellings with 5,400 of these being private rented. The significant proportion of older housing and the associated costs in maintaining this stock present major challenges in terms of investment. Over 23,000 dwellings were built before 1944 and it is necessary to ensure that these homes – particularly those occupied by vulnerable households) meet the decent homes standard.

There does not appear to be a problem of low demand areas in the private rented sector in Northampton. The smaller terraced houses in the older parts of the town remain popular with first time buyers although house prices have meant that the private rented sector continues to play a vital role in providing accommodation to those who cannot afford to buy.

The 2002 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey suggest that there were nearly 4,300 private sector dwellings requiring adaptations for occupants with disabilities at a cost of £53 million – this results in an implied grant demand (for disabled facilities grants) of almost £46 million.

The stock condition survey suggested that there were approximately 9,000 households in the private sector in fuel poverty in 2002. Although much work has been done to target low-income households with energy efficiency grants/measures etc since the study, the recent fuel price increases are potentially increasing the numbers falling into fuel poverty.

2.2 Northampton’s housing markets: the detailed picture

The Basic Need Assessment Model produces an estimate of the annual requirement for additional affordable housing. This is determined by adding the newly arising need to the backlog of existing need and subtracting the supply of affordable units. Using this ‘model’ it has been estimated that there is a requirement to provide an additional 736 affordable dwellings per annum if all housing needs are to be met (to 2007). Over the period to 2007 this represented an additional 3,680 dwellings.

It has been concluded that in light of the large requirement shown, the Council will need to maximise the availability of affordable housing from all available resources – including new-build, acquisitions and conversions. This therefore provides the justification for a 35% affordable housing requirement on all eligible sites. Northampton requires affordable housing to make sure it can actually meet the needs identified in the Housing Needs Survey 2002.

The Private Sector House Condition survey (2002) estimates that approximately 3,550 dwellings in this sector are unfit, representing 5.1% of the private housing stock. However, nearly 15% of the oldest (pre-1919) housing stock is unfit and two areas of the town show higher incidences of unfitness when compared to the average (5.1%).

The level of investment needed to make all unfit properties meet the minimum fitness requirements is estimated at £13 million. However, to get these properties into reasonable repair as well as fit for occupation would cost £28.4 million.

The research looked at the implied grant demand on the council from owner-occupiers in unfit housing using a basic formula on the income of the owners in those dwellings. From a cost of approximately £22.3 million, the research suggested an implied grant demand of £15.3 million. This is important to the council in considering future renewal strategy and the possible use of appropriate equity release schemes to utilize capital locked up in dwellings needing repairs etc.

The research estimated that there were 5,500 private rented dwellings in Northampton with a higher average incidence of unfitness of 12% (compared to 5.1%). Although this shows a need for a continual enforcement role from the council, the rented sector is also recognised as providing a vital role in providing accommodation. Consequently the council continue to develop its forum with landlords and are introducing a Student property accreditation scheme in partnership with the college and landlords. This should help improve the condition of rented accommodation through the positive messages associated with being accredited.

2.3 Understanding the local housing market

A range of factors have influenced the housing market over the past few decades making access to housing progressively more difficult for some groups. These factors include:

- Increasing pressure for owner occupation
- Changes in household structures
- A slow down in house building
- A sharp rise in house prices relative to incomes
- A diminishing pool of social housing

There is no one housing market in Northamptonshire. It is characterised by the three major tenure categories of owner occupation, shared ownership and social renting, with owner occupation easily the dominant tenure.

2.4 People in Northampton

Northampton is home to 194,458 people, an increase of 7.7% between 1991 and 2001.

People living alone now account for almost 29.80% of households in Northampton.

In recent years Northampton has seen emerging communities settling in the borough as a consequence of the National Asylum Seekers and Refugees policies.

2.5 Affordability

2.6 Housing need and demand in the social rented sector

2.7 Housing need and demand in the private rented sector

There are no low demand areas in the private sector stock. Also, there are no areas that have substantially lower house prices or a significantly higher proportion of vacant dwellings. Nonetheless, this data will be reviewed in the 2007 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey. *Do you need info about the rented sector from HMAC? (YES- Marianne, please provide)*

There is an estimated student population of about 5,000 and an estimated 150 Asylum seekers supported by Social Services.

Of 60,000 owner/occupiers, 41,000 have mortgages.

The 2002 Private Sector House Condition survey presented information on the number of private properties requiring adaptations. It suggested that out of 7,100 private sector dwellings containing someone with special needs, there were nearly 4,300 of these households requiring adaptations for occupants with disabilities at a cost of approximately £57 million.

2.8 The housing needs of black minority ethnic communities

In 2002, 94.3% of Northampton households were White, with 2.0% Asian and 2.3% Black. The survey results show that Asian households were disproportionately living in private rented accommodation and Black households were more likely than the borough as a whole to be living in the social rented sector.

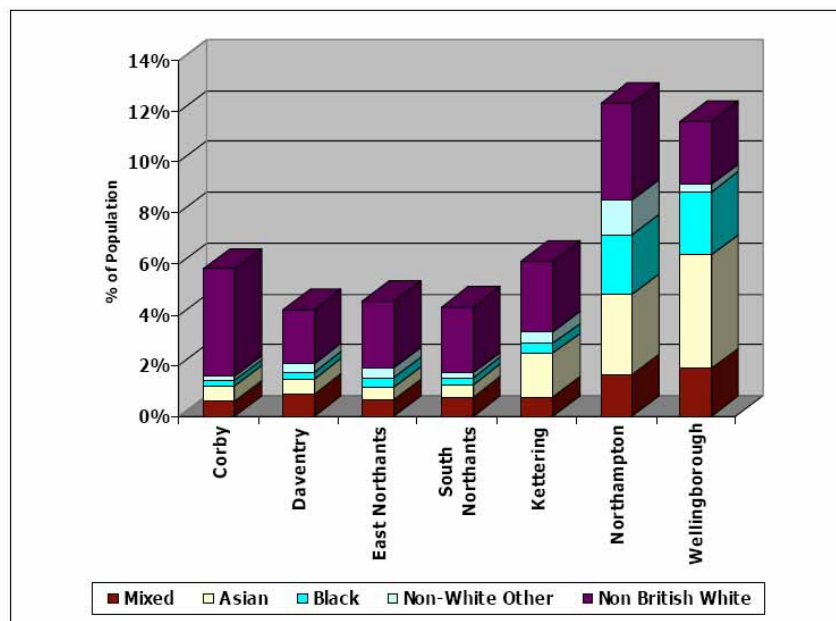
The survey also highlighted shortages of housing for all ethnic groups, most notably there appeared to be high needs relative to supply in the Asian category. Also, the survey showed that Asian households have a significantly larger average household size than other households, which may influence any building of affordable housing for this specific group.

Northampton is increasingly a diverse and multi-cultural town with 8.5% of the population from ethnic minority groups. In delivering the Community Strategy, Corporate plan and all other strategies, services work with a range of partners and communities to tackle issues of inequality and ensure equal access to services.

The Council has an Equal Opportunities Policy (1996) which forms the basis for its expectations and behaviours in respect of fair and equal access to services, employment and recruitment. A new Diversity and Equality Policy has recently been drawn up in full consultation with stakeholders and once implemented this will make the required links between policy and service issues as required by the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Black and Minority Ethnic Population

The ethnic minority population of Northamptonshire compared with the East Midlands and England and Wales is shown in Figure 3. As previously noted, the BME population (including White Non-British and Non-White residents) accounts for 8.0% of the total – compared with 8.7% for the East Midlands and 12.5% for England and Wales as a whole. The Non White population in Northamptonshire (4.9%) compares to 6.4% in the East Midlands as a whole, and 8.7% in England and Wales.



Partnership with the community is a key priority for Northampton Borough Council and a number of Community Forums (Race, Equality, Pensioners, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People’s, Disabled People’s, Youth and Women’s) enable anyone outside of the Council to raise issues with the authority and for officers to use for consultation on policy etc.

There is a general awareness of diversity issues. Training has been delivered on Equalities Awareness and Disability and is a key competency within the newly introduced Managing for Results programme.

The Councils Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy was developed by the BME Housing Group consisting of representatives from a range of local community organisations, Northampton Borough Council and Northants County Council. Action Plans for delivering the Strategy focus on the 5 key themes of information, access to housing services, good practice and cultural diversity, housing needs and racial harassment. In recognition of the increasing black and minority ethnic population of Northampton a major piece of work has been commissioned in the form of a Countywide Black and Minority Ethnic housing needs survey, which has been funded by the 7 local authorities in the county, 21 registered social landlords and the County Supporting People team. The survey has been undertaken with the following as a focus:

Summary of Key Points of the Survey

- The project was undertaken on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council in partnership with the county's constituent local authorities to better understand the housing and support needs of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Northamptonshire;
- Key issues for the studies included profiling the existing black and minority ethnic population, identifying the range of their housing aspirations, considering the wider issues that impact upon their housing choices and quality of life and providing an analysis of the need for specific support and housing services;
- Whilst many studies involve surveys of the BME population, there are serious doubts about the quality of information that could be obtained – therefore the study based the analysis on existing secondary data sources combined with a comprehensive qualitative research programme;
- The main element of the qualitative research involved forty one-to-one meetings between senior researchers and members of BME communities across the county. In recognising that the BME population is not homogeneous, the meetings were designed to reach a wide cross-section of the population in order to ensure that the views covered the many diverse perspectives; and
- Further qualitative input came from relevant community groups and other stakeholders both through initial contacts used to establish the one-to-one meetings and also through a detailed workshop where key conclusions from the analysis were discussed.

Priorities for action

- Implement results of study
- Mainstream services for minority groups

2.9 Specialist Housing Need and Supported Housing Needs

Much work has been done to identify specialist housing needs and supported housing needs. Details of this are given in Chapter 3 along with details of our aims and priorities in this area.

2.10 Key Workers

The current Key Worker Living policy excludes Northamptonshire though bounds the county on its southern and eastern flank and so misses out on all the financial and other benefits available to key workers living in the designated Key Worker Living area.

This is further exacerbated by the fact that much of southern Northamptonshire is included within the housing expansion proposed for the Milton Keynes/South Midlands region, yet there is no clear indication in the most recent statement (October 2004) as to either the amount and distribution of affordable housing or the geographical extension of any key worker strategy to incorporate the whole of the area. This makes little sense in terms of the overall strategy or the details of applying an affordable housing strategy.

There is a clear need for accommodation to meet the needs of key workers as evidenced by the Northamptonshire Key Worker Housing Needs survey (May, 2005). This report highlighted that the lack of a “one housing market” throughout the county has necessitated in district-level responses being required to address such need.

2.11 Action taken so far

The chapters that follow detail the action we have taken so far to address the issues outlined and the needs identified in this chapter.

2.12 Future priorities and information needs

We recognise the importance of up-to-date housing market information, which can be analysed to provide knowledge about people and about property and housing markets. The data used to assess supply, demand and need across all tenures is part of the data used within a local predictive model. Understanding the current and future customer profile and housing needs has been a challenge over recent years. In anticipation of the completion of the stock options appraisal process and the corporate restructure a Knowledge and Information Management Group has been established to produce a Knowledge and Information Strategy, and to analyse existing information, identify and fill gaps and review processes in order to better understand market dynamics.

It is vital that we continue to improve our understanding of emerging and future markets in the borough if we are to ensure future housing provision and service delivery meets the needs of existing and future customers. The Knowledge and Information Management Group will finalise work on a predictive housing model which will be used to assess more accurately the state of local housing markets. It indicates present and anticipates future housing requirements, and where and how best to invest resources. A new private sector stock condition survey will be commissioned in 2007 using updated housing standards for the private sector (the health and safety rating and decent homes). We are making use of the GIS systems available to map the data and aid our data analysis.

Much work has also been done to address gaps in our knowledge of existing and future customers.

Specifically our research priorities for the coming year will be to:

- Continue work on our housing market analysis of the private sector
- Continue and refine our supply and demand analysis of the social rented sector
- Improve our knowledge of the private rented sector
- Improve our knowledge of BME housing supply, demand and need
- Improve our knowledge of supported housing needs
- Improve our knowledge of affordable housing need

2.13 Priorities for action

- Jointly commission a Housing Needs Study with Daventry DC and South Northants DC (2005/06) to report by May 2006
- Continue partnership development of robust housing needs analysis systems to analyse housing need.
- Develop a key worker living strategy for Northampton
- Collaborate with MKSM study
- Develop a Housing Strategy for Black Minority Ethnic Communities
- Mainstream services for minority groups

Applicable long-term benefits:

Increased supply and delivery of affordable homes

Adequate provision of housing and support for all sectors of the community

Chapter 3

Meeting vulnerable people's housing needs

Objectives

- Working in partnership to prevent homelessness in Northampton
- Working in partnership to ensure vulnerable groups have access to suitable accommodation and housing related support
- Reducing the reliance on temporary accommodation in favour of more secure accommodation

3.1 The context

NBC and its partners are seeking to provide accommodation for those in severe housing need, and for those who are seen as vulnerable. We are working to meet these housing needs by developing a shared strategic approach and joint services with a range of partners. The strategy recognises that many vulnerable people would like to stay in their own homes with support services that promote well-being and independent living.

The agencies and partnerships including their accompanying strategies and contact details are presented as **Appendix X** to this document. The appraisal of options for delivery and the choice between competing options is always made in partnership, informed by need, the strategic fit and value for money.

The primary arenas for establishing our strategic priorities for meeting vulnerable people's needs, and for appraising delivery options are:

- Supporting People Commissioning Body
- Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group
- Supported Housing Needs Team

SP is the main funding stream for all supported housing schemes and the Council has worked with the SP Team to formulate the county-wide five year SP strategy and works within the Quality Assessment Framework to review services.

Supporting People Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Development Group is responsible for developing the Borough's Supporting People Strategy which links homelessness strategy, the housing strategy and other related strategic bodies. It is underpinned by extensive participation from agencies and service users in the borough and is accompanied by a comprehensive programme of service reviews that will be complete by March 2006.

A new way of commissioning, funding and reviewing supported housing is set out in the government's 'Supporting People, Policy into Practice' paper. Northamptonshire has agreed its Supporting People Strategy, which provides a baseline understanding of both supply and demand for supported housing and the development of the

commissioning strategy. The new strategy has been developed in consultation with the multi-agency Core Strategy Development Group and Supporting People Commissioning Body.

We are also developing a provider Supported Housing Strategy setting out the priorities for meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people. These documents will influence and inform our future planning and capital investment decisions.

In addition, access issues to accommodation are vitally important as identified by the Northampton Access Group and the Disabled Housing Group with emphasis on design and flexibility for occupants.

Partnership working with RSLs and private developers

The former joint commissioning arrangements in Northampton have been replaced by partnership working with traditional RSLs, private developers and other RSLs who are able to contribute to the development programme in Northampton. A review of partners is scheduled for August 2006 and this review will include a focus on cost effective, delivery mechanisms and potential for sustainable communities.

Disabled Housing Group

The Disabled Housing Group promotes the need for a range of housing and housing-related services for people with disabilities and considers the implications of new developments for disabled access. The Audit Commission has recognised the group as good practice.

A range of legislation and guidance such as Agenda 21, the Lifetime Homes standards and the Aalborg commitments regarding sustainability and lifestyle choices informs the work of the group.

Health, Housing and Well-Being Group

Northampton's Health, Housing and Well Being Group is part of Northampton's Local Strategic Partnership framework and has overall responsibility for a managed network of health and social care services. Improving our housing stock is a main aim to help tackle inequalities in health and promote well-being.

This group provides particular benefit in linking housing to the health and social care agendas through contribution to the SP agenda, recognition of the links between housing and health in the home (e.g. energy efficiency), and is currently considering devolved local services that are co-terminus (with reference to NBC's restructure).

This chapter deals individually with the range of different groups of vulnerable people, setting out our policies and priorities for each.

3.2 Working in partnership to prevent homelessness in Northampton (context/action taken so far/ priorities for action)

Context

The Homelessness Strategy 2003-08 articulates the key issues surrounding homelessness in Northampton. Through this document we will:

- Strengthen and deliver effective homeless prevention services in partnership with Health, Education, Social Care and Health, and the voluntary sector.
- Improve the quality of assessments and advice ensuring mechanisms for information gathering and monitoring are developed.
- Reduce levels of rough sleeping
- Reduce the use of B&Bs as temporary accommodation for homeless households with children and specifically ensure that no homeless families are occupying B&B accommodation except on an emergency basis and then for no longer than six weeks
- Ensure there is good quality temporary accommodation available for all those that may need it
- Increase the availability of support to homeless families, single homeless applicants, and all those who may be at risk of homelessness
- Achieve greater co-ordination of service delivery and improve and develop multi-agency working to provide a seamless service for vulnerable and homeless people.
- Ensure homeless people are consulted and included in the planning and improvement of services for homeless people in Northampton.

In Northampton we know that:

- In 2003, all housing authorities were required to produce a homelessness strategy. Following a comprehensive review of homelessness we produced the “Homelessness Strategy 2003-08”. Northampton is developing options to prevent homelessness, as outlined in the homelessness strategy. However, NBC is not reducing acceptances.
- Homelessness is a particular issue in Northampton and has a significant impact upon the demand for social housing. In 2004/05:
 - 1045 homeless applications were made;
 - 696 (66%) were considered to be homeless;
 - 474 (45%) were assessed as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

There have been no significant changes in the trends of applications and acceptances in the last three years.

- Of the 474 homeless applications accepted for re-housing, the main causes of the homelessness were:
 - Parents/friends no longer willing to accommodate 203 (43%)
 - End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy 100 (21%)
 - Relationship breakdown (including domestic violence) 32 (7%)
 - Others 139 (29%)
- The high level of homelessness has created pressure on the temporary accommodation that is available in the town, creating difficulties in meeting the national bed and breakfast target.
- The last count of rough sleepers, undertaken in January 2005, found seven individuals sleeping rough although the target for Northampton was four.
- NBC provides a variety of accommodation to meet the needs of those for whom we have a duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act during enquiries, pending rehousing and as a temporary measure

Action taken so far

- A variety of accommodation is used to offer suitable housing to prevent potential homelessness and to meet the needs of homeless households.
- Support services meet short and medium term resettlement needs, and enable successful longer-term arrangements
- Community Legal Services (CLS) Quality Mark at specialist level for both housing and money advice
- Provision of tenancy sustainment by using floating support as early as possible to support income management avoiding the need to go to court and possible eviction.
- Case referral agreements have been made and are operational with CAN, YMCA, NAASH, the NCC Leaving Care Team and Mayday Housing Association

To take forward the homelessness strategy we have:

- Set up the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (and separate working groups for single, young and homelessness families)
- Produced a Bed and Breakfast Action Plan
- Introduced private sector leasing
- Produced plans to convert a SPA block into temporary accommodation
- Produced an access to housing report
- Provided a rent deposit guarantee scheme

The Housing Advice Service:

- Offers high quality advice and guidance to tenants, potential tenants and private landlords
- Provides homeless - and other housing - customers with access to information, advice, advocacy and representation

- Provides a court advice service for those at risk of eviction due to rent arrears – the CLS quality mark at specialist level was awarded to the service
- Gives support to private landlords and assists, with partners, improving the quality of management and standard of accommodation in the private rented sector. The support is delivered through the Private Landlords' Forum
- Offers money and income maximisation skills

Priorities for action

- Continuing to implement the homelessness strategy action plan and review it annually

3.3 Working in partnership to ensure vulnerable groups have access to suitable accommodation and related support (context/action taken/priorities for action)

Partnerships play an important role in achieving many of Housing's key objectives. Partnership working has been strengthened through Supporting People to benefit a wide range of vulnerable groups. Housing is represented on the County Core Strategy Group, with the Chief Executive and Town Clerk, Mairi McClean chairing the Commissioning Body and the Housing Portfolio Holder is a member of the Supporting People Members Forum.

The Supporting People programme in Northamptonshire was inspected in 2003/2004 and was assessed as providing a fair one-star service that has promising prospects for improvement.

The benefits of Supporting People include attracting funding for a scheme for teenage parents, joint working on a bid for health pilot funding to provide supported housing for sex workers (nest project) a group who previously had not been catered for, and the development of a Countywide Older Persons Strategy which will ensure that the planning and commissioning of services across housing, social care and health services work together and continue to meet the needs and aspirations of older people in terms of options, information, and support, and support independence.

Priorities for the development of accommodation and support for vulnerable clients are currently being examined by the Supported Housing Group and will be fed into the Core Strategy Group for inclusion in the County Supporting People Strategy.

NBC has also developed partnerships with the voluntary sector and other statutory partners that have led to direct outcomes/outputs - for example, ODPM funding to CAN for rent deposit scheme and the rough sleepers' initiative; work with the YMCA and NCC regarding young people; the work of HMAc on the probation protocol; the CHIP (Crisis Housing Intervention and Prevention) scheme for homeless families who face barriers to accessing housing (e.g. intentionally homeless households).

Option Appraisal for addressing priorities

While Supporting People service reviews will rationalise the distribution of revenue support, we believe that it is imperative to plan the capital needs of proposed supported housing schemes jointly. We are therefore developing further clear protocols and processes for partnership working towards the effective prioritisation, bidding and commissioning of schemes. This will involve a Strategic Supported Housing Group of senior representatives of the lead strategic players in appraising potential schemes and agreeing supported housing development priorities.

Action taken so far

- We have successfully implemented the Supporting People process and are supporting a programme of service reviews.

Priorities for action

- Undertake the programme of service reviews – all services are to be reviewed by March 2006.
- Deliver a service user involvement programme in conjunction with the supporting people team to inform commissioning strategy.
- NBC will develop and promote a Supported Housing Strategy which will identify need, provide the strategic framework for addressing gaps and priorities for provision and enable the delivery of timely, good quality schemes that meet the needs of service users. It will be a 'live' document, continuously updated and reviewed.
- Research into access to move-on facilities
- Development of the allocation policy to promote greater joined-up working

3.4 Older people

Context

Just over a fifth of households contain only older persons, a further 4.7% contain both older and non-older persons. Although many older person households are in the private sector, a high proportion are found in the social rented sector. An estimated 27.2% of older person only households contain someone with a special need.

The survey also suggests that there appears to be no particular shortage of affordable housing for older people. Older person only households are disproportionately constituted of only one person, which has implications for caring patterns. Additionally, a significant number of older person households have problems in maintaining their homes – these are mainly owner-occupiers. It is therefore suggested that there may be considerable scope for care and repair or staying put schemes in the borough as opposed to providing additional affordable housing specifically for this group of households – see Chapter 5 regarding investment needs for older people.

The integration of Health and Social Care and supported housing services, alongside the implementation of the National Service Framework for Older People, involves looking at the way services are delivered for the client from hospital to independent living. The way services are planned and delivered needs to be adjusted to reflect

changing needs. The needs of the older client groups are becoming more complex and more people want to be supported within their own homes. The lower demand for traditional sheltered housing provides evidence of this.

There is a shortage of properties that can be adapted to meet the needs of older people who have major mobility problems.

Action taken so far

A great deal has been achieved in Northampton in the development of effective housing provision and services for older people.

A Sheltered Housing Review is underway (to be complete by June 2005) to modernise the service so that sheltered housing will meet the needs of older people now and in the future with the emphasis on quality accommodation and support and value for money.

The best value inspection of supported housing said: “[NBC] provides a good level of care to older and vulnerable people through its warden and ‘call care’ services. There are effective partnerships with other agencies in providing services and meeting client needs... [NBC] recognises that the needs of the service are changing and is about to carry out a review of sheltered housing.”

The sheltered housing service achieved level C in the 2004 Supporting People review of the service which concluded that it was a good service provided at a relatively low cost. NBC is now implementing recommendations from the review including introducing care plans in a three-stage process and reviewing the information and literature for the customer. The care plans are rolling-out and the literature has been amended.

Priorities for action

- Developing a multi-agency Supported Housing Strategy for future housing provision and housing services for all people requiring supported housing including older people.
- Assisting in the implementation of the Northamptonshire Older Persons Strategy
- Developing further the care and repair scheme
- (SP) Develop a Very Sheltered Housing scheme in Northampton
- (SP) Developing care services through continued progress on the Northampton ExtraCare village
- (SP) Reducing the number of sheltered housing units in Northampton; and continuing to meet the needs of current sheltered housing residents in planning the future development of the service
- (SP) Developing more community alarm services, including the development of SP funded community alarms
- (SP) Increasing the number of floating support services within Northampton and implement the recommendations of the review

- Work with the SP Team who – through the SP Five-Year Strategy – are considering funding additional specific older people’s services in Northampton as part of the Council’s review of sheltered provision.

3.5 People with physical disability

Context

The demand for property adaptations to facilitate independent living has significantly increased in recent years and there is currently an eighteen-month waiting list for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to undertake property adaptations. The Council has made over £500,000 available annually for DFGs and demand continues to outstrip available resources.

Some 13.7% of the Borough’s households (11,125) contain special needs members. ‘Physically disabled’ is the main category of special needs. Further information shows that over half of all special needs households currently live in owner-occupied accommodation. However, Council and Housing Association accommodation is more likely to contain special needs households than other tenure groups. An estimated 42.6% of special needs households are pensioner households. The pensioner groups are far more likely to contain special needs members than other household groups.

The survey showed that special needs households typically had much lower income levels than non-special needs households, although the gap was slightly bridged with the inclusion of benefits. Special needs households also showed lower levels of savings than non-special needs households. In terms of unsuitable housing the survey estimated that special needs households were more than four times as likely than non-special needs households to be living in unsuitable housing, and are likely to be living in unsuitable housing as a result of mobility or health problems.

Using the Basic Needs Assessment model for special needs households it is suggested that there is a shortage of affordable housing for households with special needs. Additionally, survey information about special need households suggests that there is also likely to be a need for schemes such as care and repair and staying put. Finally, the survey suggests there are a significant number of aids and adaptations required by special need households. This will have implications for disabled facilities grant.

Actions taken so far

- Closer liaison with Social Services and better collation of information

Priorities for action

- Meeting the demand for short term and long term supported accommodation
- Maximising disabled facilities grants and continuing our adaptations service to provide advice, help and guidance and physical improvements, and adaptations to the homes of disabled people living in Northampton.

- Ensuring all new build by registered social landlords or private developers conform to Part M of building regulations in relation to providing wheel chair access and ground floor toilet facilities.
- Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements
- (SP) Along with social care, part fund a new transitional support housing scheme in Northampton
- Reviewing the NBC register of adapted properties in the context of allocations

3.6 Asylum seekers and refugees

Context

The number of private sector dwellings used to support asylum seekers fell from 375 in 2002 to approximately 40 in May 2005. Asylum Seekers are accommodated and supported by a range of providers in the private sector (approximately 50 dwellings) and through the County's Asylum Support Team.

NBC is developing links with the Maple Access Partnership to enhance service provision to asylum seekers and refugees.

Action Taken so far

- A programme of joint inspections has been agreed between NBC and the county council to ensure that the worst properties were identified or works undertaken.
- Project to ensure that asylum seekers becoming refugees do not face homelessness due to their change in status
- NBC has worked with Stonham Housing Association to provide ten floating support places for asylum seekers and refugees

Priorities for action

- Enforcement officers will investigate complaints of poor conditions
- Working with the County Council in the identification of suitable properties for asylum seekers
- (SP) Develop floating support services to refugees through the generic low-level floating support services that the SP programme is seeking to make available across the county

3.7 Victims of domestic violence

Context

The total number of domestic violence incidents reported in the Borough between April 2004 and April 2005 was 4,108 of which 38% were repeat offences. Using the Home Office estimate that only 12% of actual domestic violence offences are reported

to the police, it can be estimated that the actual number of domestic violence offences in Northampton may be approximately 40,000 annually. The Home Office has estimated that domestic violence accounts for 25% of violent crime, and the total cost to Northampton was £700 per incident which equates to £2,875,600.

Compared to other parts of the country, Northamptonshire has relatively high levels of provision for women fleeing domestic violence. The refuges and floating support remain well used, and there is continuing need to ensure sufficient refuge provision that serves both Northamptonshire and cross authority needs for women (and children) fleeing domestic violence.

All current domestic violence services are for women and their children, but it is estimated that in around 305 of cases, the victims are male. While the victims are less likely to require supported housing, and where they do so are supported in homelessness or other services, there may be a need for a specific domestic service for men.

Action taken so far

A pilot project is being developed to provide safe rooms for the victims of domestic violence and joint funding is being considered for the project.

Priorities for action

- (SP) Reshape existing refuge services to ensure that women with substance misuse and/or mental health needs are able to access provision in partnership with other agencies
- (SP response) Investigate the feasibility of Northampton accommodating the needs of men who are victims

3.8 Young people/ Teenage parents

Context

Young people in Northampton face particular problems accessing housing. These include limited availability of property for this group, reducing vacancies in the private rented sector, lack of references available to young people and perceived risks to landlords, housing benefit restrictions for under 25s, location and accessibility issues for young people, and the implications of this in terms of support. (List what we have in place)

Actions Taken so far

- Established a Young Homeless Working Group and a Single Homelessness Working Group to develop sections of the Homelessness Strategy

Priorities for action

- To develop a Single and Young Persons' Housing Strategy to provide a comprehensive approach to re-housing 16-25 year olds in the borough
- Supporting all teenage parents to obtain a supported tenancy until they have turned 18 years of age to meet the national government target and maximising the life opportunities accessible to teenage parents
- (SP) Working with SP to apply to Northampton the objective of investing in medium-cost, medium support accommodation, with increased amounts of smaller units
- (SP) Ensure high quality supported housing in Northampton for teenage parents

3.9 People with mental health problems

Context

(Rates of mental health problems in Northampton). Those most vulnerable to mental ill health are highly likely to suffer multiple disadvantage, such as homelessness, drug, alcohol or other substance abuse, or domestic violence and abuse, and thereby experience social exclusion.

Actions taken so far

- NBC has established referral protocol with two mental health rehabilitation units and will extend this to all mental health supported housing.
- NBC has developed a system of personal re-housing plans to use with applicants who have complex needs

Priorities for action

- (SP) Work with SP Team to develop their objectives within Northampton – particularly around the reduction of medium level accommodation based services in Northampton and the availability of low level floating support
- Developing risk assessment and management for mental health supported housing

3.10 People with learning difficulties

The Context

Northamptonshire SP commissioned an accommodation needs survey jointly with social care services. The survey indicated that there are service users currently living with carers/parents or in residential care might wish to move to supported accommodation in the future.

The range of supported accommodation needed will include low level floating support services; adult placements; shared ownership; sheltered-housing style accommodation; groups of flats within a small distance from each other; shared housing; and extra care or intensive support accommodation.

Actions Taken so far

- Contribution by NBC to the accommodation need survey

Priorities for action

- Produce a housing strategy for people with learning disabilities within the Northampton Supported Housing Strategy
- Enable specific schemes to address the needs of people with learning difficulties and secure, where necessary, bids for capital funding

3.11 Offenders and people at risk of offending

The Context

There are large numbers of ex-offenders in services for a range of primary client groups (e.g. substance misuse, homeless, young people and mental health). However, there remains difficulty in finding appropriate accommodation for ex-offenders, especially those who leave custody after serving a short sentence. In some cases, this appears to be due to limited information about services being available to potential referrers.

There is a need for floating support, intensive and highly skilled, for risky offenders. Such people currently live across the county and receive coordinated services from a variety of agencies. However, stable accommodation is often a major problem, and intensive floating support, while unable to mitigate all risks, is an important contributing service to multi-agency working. Developing such a service would contribute to public protection.

Action Taken so far

- Probation protocol has been agreed between NPS and HMAc to assist ex-offenders to access accommodation and prevent homelessness.
- NBC is a partner in developing a prison protocol to address ex-offenders' housing needs that is being developed in the region
- NBC represent and give housing advice and assistance to MAPPA level 3 and is currently contributing to a county approach to MAPPA through CHOG (Chief Housing Officers' Group)

Priorities for action

- (SP) Work through the development of a countywide floating support service to risky offenders within a tenancy compliance mode
- NBC will review its position and policies in conjunction with the MAPPA development work

3.12 Rough Sleepers

(For particular discussion with GOEM)

Context

Due to high levels of rough sleepers, a separate group has continued to monitor the situation in term of preventative work and reducing the number of rough sleepers.

Action Taken so far

Priorities for action

3.13 Single People

Context

Single people have a range of issues that need support such as partic ex-offenders, chaotic drug and alcohol users and people with mental health needs. Insufficient numbers of direct access accommodation with the ability to cope with these issues has been highlighted through the homeless strategy working groups. The needs of single people will be integral to other service user considerations.

3.14 Travellers

Context

Northampton experiences 140-150 illegal encampments per year, and this relatively high figure can be partly attributable to good health provision for travellers, the amount of green and open space available throughout the county, Northampton's central location and the fact that Northampton has been a traditional stopping place for travellers. It should be highlighted that this figure does not constitute the number of different groups – as the same groups camp in different places – and includes an element of transient travellers.

NBC had proposed three legitimate sites for travellers - however, following consultation no sites were agreed upon. However, a number of initiatives did follow from this project.

NBC believes that 10 additional plots may be needed in the borough, which would support the 35 plots already provided at Ecton Lane – one of the largest traveller sites in the country. However, this site is old and in need of refurbishment, with five of the plots currently unoccupied.

NBC further believes that in enabling accommodation services that respond to the needs of all groups it is essential that the needs of travellers are treated with respect and realistic solutions are offered.

Actions Taken so far

- A Countywide Travel Unit (CTU) has been established which is a consortium partnership of six local authorities in Northamptonshire, Northants Police and the Chamber of Commerce, and which is funded by all partners. The CTU includes a project manager, two travel liaison officers, a police representative and a health visitor.
- A Joint Executive Board has been created for political Portfolio Holders across the county to direct the work of the CTU.
- The CTU has dealt successfully with unauthorised encampments
- Consultants (Matters of Fact) have been appointed to find and establish authorised sites to diminish the number of unauthorised sites occupied.

Priorities for action

- Consultants (Matters of Fact) will report with options in October 2005, and the need to analyse and review these findings is a priority for action.
- Develop the ongoing work to secure ODPM funding via the Gypsy-Site Traveller Grant for the Ecton Lane existing travellers' site.
- Initiation of long-term lease arrangements for the management of the Ecton Lane site (and potential other sites), in order to provide a better service and to improve chances of securing external funding.

3.15 Wider diversity issues

The Racial Harassment Policy was developed in conjunction with the BME Housing Group. Housing is a member of the Multi-Agency Group Against Racial Attack & Harassment (M.A.G.R.A.H) at both an operational and strategic level and employees have attended the inter-agency training on racist incidents. This group seeks to reduce the incidence of racist attack, support victims and encourage reporting of incidents through effective multi-agency responses.

With regards to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Council has established an Access Group. This group has provided information for

managers on provision of accessible information and alternative formats. A programme of improvements to ensure that our premises are accessible for those with physical impairment is well advanced.

The Disabled Persons Housing Group is a user representative sub group of the Disabled People's Forum. This Group jointly developed the Council's Mobility Standard, considers all planning applications for all new housing developments to ensure the incorporation of wheelchair and mobility standards, lobbies on disability related issues e.g. Lifetimes homes, and is used as a reference group for policy development.

The Housing Services collate a range of information relating to diversity (ethnicity, age, vulnerability etc) which is used to deliver and develop appropriate service provision, for example the recent review of the Councils housing register has provided a range of management information on clients needs which will be used to develop new accommodation, target services more effectively and develop support planning agreements with partners for individual cases.

Information can be made available in a variety of language and formats and all services have access to translation, interpretation and signing facilities through the Community Access and Language Service and Language Line. Services are delivered in a variety of methods e.g. office appointments, telephone, home visit, drop in etc. and services are working in partnership with other agencies to improve access for the traditionally hard to reach groups.

Actions taken so far

- A county-wide BME survey will be complete in June 2005

Priorities for action

- Consider the outcome of the county-wide BME survey for the provision of supported housing – and additional BME need – in Northampton.

| |
|--|
| <p>Applicable long-term benefit(s)</p> |
| <p>Improved homeless prevention and the key causes of homelessness tackled effectively</p> |
| <p>Adequate provision of housing and support for all sectors of the community</p> |

Chapter 4

Delivering quality and choice in the housing market

Further discussion to be held with GOEM

Objectives

- Reducing the number of empty properties and maximising the number of empty properties brought back into use across all tenures
- Widening the choice of affordable housing
- Maximising inward investment to develop affordable housing across tenures
- Developing a quality assurance system for Northampton's housing service

4.1 The context

Any attempt to widen the choice and quality of affordable housing in the borough must happen within the wider context of regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, and must address the housing market as a whole.

The targeting of renewal resources to areas of high unfitness rates is an important aspect of regenerating these areas. The work undertaken increases the life and quality of the housing in these areas.

Affordable housing in Northampton is defined as:

“Housing of an adequate standard which is cheaper than that which is generally available in the local housing market. This can comprise a combination of subsidised rented housing and subsidised low cost home ownership (LCHO), including shared ownership”.

NBC's Affordable Housing: Council Planning Policy Statement “Towards a Local Development Framework for Northampton” (December 2004) provides a framework for negotiations with developers for the provision of affordable housing.

The Housing Needs Survey (2002) recommended that 50% of new housing development provision was made available as affordable housing. However, this proposed increase (from 22%) was the subject of consultation with private developers and other partners and it was felt that a target of 35% was more achievable in the context of Northampton.

RSLs are registered with the Housing Corporation - this is the Government's key agent for procuring new affordable housing in England by way of providing Social Housing Grant (SHG) to RSLs. Northampton Borough Council works closely with the Housing Corporation in terms of assisting them to identify the borough's investment needs and supports bids from the RSLs to deliver the Borough's

affordable housing requirements. The Council and the Housing Corporation monitor performance and are in regular dialogue to ensure that the RSLs are meeting performance targets and deliver affordable housing within the allocation and discuss new opportunities to meet local demand.

The development programme for 2004 -06 included 307 homes for rent and 249 homes for shared ownership, including funds to acquire properties for refurbishment as part of the Borough's Homelessness Strategy.

Ensuring that all new developments are sustainable is fundamental to delivering quality and choice in the housing market. Sustainable development involves building economically viable communities, maintaining and promoting community cohesion and delivering quality environmental design. The quality of design is crucial to the sustainability of our communities.

In the context of Northampton's housing market already outlined in chapter 2, the following points are critical for us to deliver quality and choice in the housing market. We need to:

- influence and be influenced by the regional housing strategy to maximise resources for housing development which meets local and sub-regional needs and regional priorities
- manage performance and resources effectively to achieve housing strategy objectives. To have a coherent and co-ordinated approach to housing development and housing improvement by NBC, registered social landlords (RSLs) and private developers
- Maximise the number of affordable homes negotiated with developers through the planning system
- increase low cost home ownership provided by private developers and RSLs in popular areas that have limited provision of this type, where local people with low incomes are prevented from becoming home owners
- reduce demand on greenfield sites by encouraging regeneration schemes on brownfield sites. We are seeking to achieve 60% of all new residential development being on brownfield sites.
- increase our use of land assembly and master planning techniques to increase mixed tenure developments and secure affordable housing; and encourage continued investment in the town centre through high quality mixed use developments for commercial, leisure and residential use, targeted at a wide age range for sustainability
- develop more comprehensive planning to stimulate market confidence
- integrate housing development into other policy initiatives including neighbourhood management and renewal, anti-social behaviour and environmental strategies
- continue bringing back into use empty properties in Northampton across all tenures (the number of long term empty properties in the borough fell from 730 in 2002 to 638 in 2004)

Providing customers with the appropriate support and services to live independently in their homes is an essential component of delivering quality and choice in the housing market. NBC continues to develop its Call Care service to its elderly and

vulnerable residents; and has increased the resources directed towards Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

In terms of delivery for affordable housing, NBC can highlight that:

It is striving to secure levels of affordable housing via Section 106 at 35% of all sites over 15 units or 0.05ha;

It is one of the highest regional performing authorities in building on brownfield rather than greenfield sites;

It is the best enabling authority in the region in the context of cost per unit and delivery.

Choice Based Lettings Scheme

The Government is committed to taking forward the choice-based lettings (CBL) agenda. The statutory Code of Guidance on the allocation of accommodation states that:

“...allocation policies for social housing should provide choice wherever possible, while continuing to meet housing needs... this is the best way to ensure sustainable tenancies and to build settled and stable communities...”

All local authorities should have a CBL system in place by the end of 2010.

NBC believes those who need help with their housing should have a choice about where they live. We want to support people looking for homes to choose the option that is best for them, giving information on opportunities for shared ownership, low cost ownership, and social rented housing. We want to end the situation in which social tenants have to accept the accommodation that is allocated to them on a “take it or leave it” basis.

The overall findings from the evaluation of the pilots are also encouraging and highlight amongst other things:

- increased understanding of allocations and lettings by applicants;
- greater relative perceptions of fairness of CBL compared to points systems by applicants;
- applicant support for the transparency of CBL; and
- importance of proactive advice and support service on choice-based lettings; CBL systems are operating successfully in a wide range of local housing markets. A fundamental message from the evaluation study is that these schemes work in high demand as well as low demand areas. Although balancing 'need' and 'choice' is a challenging issue in high demand urban and rural locations, this can be resolved.

Quality and choice in the private sector

Whilst CBL will improve quality and choice in local authority housing stock, NBC places equal importance in the private sector providing customers with first class

accommodation and related services. For example, customer satisfaction is tested following property adaptations and poor quality customer care and service standards will result in such contractors not being used by NBC.

The RSL Development Liaison Group

The group meets quarterly to discuss local issues relating to development such as neighbourhood renewal information, asset management proposals, eco agenda, demand for specialist housing opportunities, including wheelchair provision, regeneration opportunities, strategic development sites e.g. the Joint Brownfield Initiative on Ransome Road, Sixfields and Harvey Reeves Road and housing market information in context of priorities set 'regionally, sub-regionally and locally.

In future, the group may need to be extended to developers who may be in receipt of Housing Corporation investment as a result of the Government's initiative to allow developers to bid for Social Housing Grant for a national pot totalling £200 million. The result of the bid process should be known during the autumn of 2005. Successful developers will also have the opportunity to compete with RSLs in bidding for grant for the 2006-08 bid round. In both instances the allocation of resources is subject to the developer having in place satisfactory management of stock arrangements via registered RSLs or entities that can conform to Housing Corporation regulatory code of practice.

The RSL Management Liaison Group

The group meets quarterly and membership is extended to all RSLs who have stock in the Borough. The group tackles issues such as anti social behaviour, nominations and lettings issues, housing benefit, supporting people and vulnerable tenancy issues, homelessness strategy and debt counselling. The forum allows staff from the RSLs and NBC to identify areas of good practice and opportunities to work in partnership.

The RSL Shared Ownership Group

This is a newly formed group which was formed in November 2004 and has been very task orientated in response to the Council's requirement to identify the demand for shared ownership. The group has considered issues relating to affordability, market analysis and the known demand from the Council's database set up in September 2004 in response to unknown demand. Membership of the group includes local Estate Agents in the town who have a good working knowledge of shared ownership.

4.2 Action taken so far

- NBC produced an affordable housing policy statement (December 2004)
- Work with East Midlands Housing Association on the HomeBuy Scheme enabled 23 housing applicants to purchase a home in 2004/05
- Consultation on the Council's Affordable Housing Policy December 2004 increased the percentage of affordable housing from 22% to 35% from applications on sites providing 15 units or more or 0.5 ha

- A working group examined s106 agreements and developed a s106 protocol for Northampton
- NBC agreed protocol on the disposal of its HRA stock/miscellaneous properties to RSLs.
- A Nominations Workshop resulted in a NBC Nominations (to RSLs) Protocol and a Lettings Plan template
- Information Sharing Protocol has been agreed with Northants Police in conjunction with the NBC's Anti Social Behaviour Unit
- A Diversity Statement for the management of RSL properties in Northampton
- RSL Stock Profile in Northampton has been established
- Meetings with RSLs and NBC Housing Revenue colleagues have been established to resolve housing benefit issues
- A Shared Ownership Nominations Protocol between NBC and RSLs has been agreed
- A working group was set up in January 2005 to produce an agreed format for a Northampton Shared Ownership information folder to be launched in July 2005 including facts on the scheme, resales and future projects
- The public launch of shared ownership in Northampton was delivered in July 2005
- Research is underway regarding the potential models for implementing a choice-based lettings scheme.

The main types of affordable housing that meet the Northampton definition of affordable housing are:

- affordable rented accommodation
- shared ownership provided with or without grant
- sub-market or intermediate rented housing
- shared or fixed equity housing

4.3 Priority areas for action

Chapter 2 details Northampton's housing markets in terms of need, and supply and demand. It also evidences our need to restructure markets in terms of:

A The Council is concerned to maximise the supply of new affordable homes in the town, but also needs to strike the right balance between the availability and price of different types of housing. It recognises that the market price of housing is now excluding an increasing number of people from being able to afford a suitable home. It is committed to creating a balanced social and economic community, and will seek to influence this by enabling the provision of housing to meet the various accommodation needs throughout the community.

B Continuing with the HomeBuy Scheme throughout 2005/06 and developing the initiative through the proposed new HomeBuy options of:

- Social HomeBuy – buying a share of an existing social home at a discount, offering home ownership opportunities to social tenants who cannot afford or do not have the Right to Buy/Acquire
- New Build HomeBuy - buying a share of a new home built for key workers, social tenants, those on the housing register and other priority first time buyers
- Open Market HomeBuy – buying a share of a home on the open market, for key workers, social tenants, those on the housing register and other priority first time buyers

4.4 What are options for addressing these priorities (reducing number of empty properties and maximising the number of properties brought back into use across all tenures/ widening choice of affordable housing/ maximising inward investment to develop affordable housing across all tenures/ developing quality assurance for N’s housing system

- Analysing the success of the shared ownership initiative in terms of affordability, and monitoring the demand for the scheme. Also, increasing the profile of the shared ownership initiative in Northampton, through the specialist London-based Home Focus Shared Ownership magazine
- Looking at key worker accommodation needs and shared ownership requirements in Northampton, and with regard to specific sites that are close to the General Hospital and the town centre or identified as providing accommodation to be targeted at key workers.

Applicable long-term benefits:

Increased supply and delivery of affordable homes

Improving the housing management service

Chapter 5

Investing in Northampton's housing

Objectives

- Bring all council homes to (at least) the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- Secure improvements to private sector dwellings which are unfit or in poor repair
- Develop initiatives to improve housing management in the private rented sector
- Enable vulnerable homeowners to remain in their homes
- Promote environmental sustainability and improve home energy across all tenures

5.1 The context

Northampton's Community Strategy highlights the importance of housing to local people's wellbeing. The strategy aims to provide local people access to good quality housing and a range of choice and to be able to walk through clean streets and localities. Quality, affordable and damp free housing is recognised as essential to people's quality of life.

The need for NBC's housing stock to achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 is of particular importance during the lifetime of this housing strategy, and NBC has taken the decision at this stage that stock retention is the best option to achieve this standard. However, the resources available and the investment needed will be reviewed annually.

This chapter covers our investment priorities for both the public and private sector and how we are coordinating these priorities through neighbourhood planning and local regeneration initiatives.

Recent stock condition surveys of the private sector (2002) and the public sector (2004) provide evidence of housing conditions and investment.

Private sector housing stock

3,550 (5.1%) of private sector dwellings are unfit – this percentage total is lower than the national average due to high proportion of newer houses in Northampton

15% of pre-1919 houses are unfit

24.5% of vacant houses are unfit, and they characteristically damage and deteriorate quickly

Disrepair is the main reason for unfitness; and inadequate food preparation facilities are also significantly contributory to unfitness

Area Committee 1 (around the town centre) has 12.2% unfitness rate, mainly due to a high number of pre-1919 terraced houses. This area contains nearly 38% of all unfit housing.

The two household groups with the highest proportion of unfit occupancy are lone parents (9.3%) and single pensioners (8.2%). Both groups are likely to have low incomes.

Implied grant demand for urgent repairs in all private sector housing is £18 million, the grant budget is £1 million per year.

The number of non-decent homes in the private sector has yet to be determined and will form the basis of a planned stock condition survey in 2007. The previous survey (2002) examined household income and estimated that there were approximately 9,000 private households in fuel poverty. This followed an estimated figure of 15,000 households of all tenures in 1999.

The condition and cost of maintaining the older housing stock in the private sector - with more than 23,000 dwellings built before 1944 - also presents major challenges in addressing housing investment need, and there is growing demand from people with special needs for housing adaptations that will help them remain in their homes.

Also, the ODPM “ready reckoner” applied to Northampton suggests there are 10,829 vulnerable households in the private sector. Of these, approximately 4,112 are living in non-decent accommodation – this represents 38% of vulnerable households.

The government target is that by 2010, 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector must be living in decent homes – this leaves a need in Northampton to reduce the 38% non-decency to a figure of 30% (3,249 households or below). Over the lifetime of this strategy, a net minimum of 853 vulnerable households will be taken out of non-decency in the private sector. The Council currently targets grants at vulnerable households in line with the government’s decent homes targets.

NBC housing stock

NBC undertook a Stock Condition Survey (February 2004) of its housing stock. The conclusions from the survey are summarised below and listed as Appendix D to this document:

The stock is generally of good design and sound construction, and worthy of the investment necessary for effective on-going maintenance.

3,931 dwellings (30%) are considered to fail the 'Decent Homes' standard in terms of fitness, condition, amenity or thermal comfort. Whilst this figure is below the national average, it is estimated that a further 6,344 dwellings (48% of the stock) may fall below the decent home standard in the next decade.

A total expenditure of around £11.2 million is required to make the Council's housing stock 'fit' and 'decent'. The average cost for remedying non-decency is estimated at around £2,860 per property

In order to maintain the condition of the stock and prevent further dwellings from becoming non-decent within a ten-year period (as a result of the future deterioration of key elements) a further £31.9 million is required to 'keep decent'.

It is estimated that a total expenditure of £139 million is required over the next ten years to both meet the Decent Homes target and to maintain and improve the stock to basic standards of condition and amenity – an average expenditure per dwelling of £10,605.

The total expenditure over a future 30-year period is estimated to be £283 million – approximately £21,600 per dwelling.

52% of the Borough's stock is currently over 30 years old but, significantly, 95% of dwellings will reach this age over the next decade. Consequently, significant levels of investment are required in the stock over the next decade in order to prevent a growing number of life expired components and catch-up maintenance demands, and therefore rapidly escalating levels of non-decency.

The average energy efficiency SAP rating of 58 is higher than the national average in the UK – however, 37% of the stock falls short of the acceptable target of 55 and less than 18% of dwellings achieve the preferred target of a SAP rating of 70+.

5.2 Action taken so far

- The council has worked in partnership with the Warm Front grant providers to maximise grant take-up in Northampton – an average of 500 grants are provided each year
- The Council and British Gas have worked in partnership to promote 100% grants for insulation to all households in receipt of benefits through the Energy Efficiency Commitment scheme.
- The Council provides free home energy surveys to all residents to help them ascertain the most cost-effective improvements to their homes as well as establishing grant eligibility – 100 grants are made annually

- The Council’s renewal programme helps low income households exit fuel poverty where they may not be eligible under other schemes – an average of £100,000 is spent for the Council’s renewal programme on energy efficiency measures.
- NBC has implemented Part L of the Building Regulations in respect of energy efficiency improvements to A and B rated boilers within its housing stock
- To reduce CO2 emissions, energy companies are to pay grant to NBC to promote more efficient fuels and accessories
- Between April 2003 and March 2005, NBC provided new UPVC doors and double-glazed windows to 2050 Council homes through its new window and door partnership, with a further 1000 properties included in the 2005-06 programme.
- To respond to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), NBC has agreed to refurbish on lifts, and this process is underway at Melbourne house.
- NBC has invested to support housing and regeneration, and this is evident on the CASPAR projects – in particular, on the Spring Boroughs and Semilong CASPAR project where 141 units were transferred to LHA (Leicester Housing Association) generating £8 million of investment.

5.3 Investing in the public sector

Priority: Investing in the public sector

In 2000, the government made a commitment to bring all public sector homes up to a decent standard, establishing a 10-year target and interim target to:

“Ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency by 2010, by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by a third between 2001 and 2004, with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas.”

Priority: Bring all Council homes up to decent homes standard by 2010

What are the options for addressing this priority?

The Council has considered a range of options for meeting the government’s Decent Homes targets. These are: utilising the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), creating an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), undertaking a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of the housing stock, and stock retention by NBC. The potential benefits and risks associated with each option are listed as Appendix F to this document. This section outlines the conclusion reached by NBC.

PFI – Under this option, the housing stock would remain under Council ownership, but the management of the stock and the housing service would be delegated to a private consortium (not a private landlord) that would enter into a long-term contract

with the Council. The contract would include the provision of landlord services and a schedule of property improvements that the consortium would need to complete in accordance with the Council's requirements.

The ODPM is clear that PFI is not a whole stock option and is only suitable for smaller geographical areas or property portfolios that demonstrate particular investment needs. The majority of the Council's stock can be described as traditionally built. This scenario differs from some councils that may, for example, manage a high number of non-traditional "system built" properties which may require either extraordinary levels of future investment or which may require redevelopment at the estate level.

The characteristics of the local housing stock profile suggest that PFI is unlikely to be an appropriate vehicle for gaining additional investment resources

ALMO – This option would result in housing stock remaining under Council ownership, and hence Council tenants having no change to their tenancy agreement. The ALMO would function as a separate organisation, at 'arms-length' to the council, but would operate under a long-term management agreement. An annual fee would be paid to the ALMO in return for the delivery of a full housing management service, and the contractual relationship would be subject to a performance framework.

Any council currently deciding to pursue the ALMO option will need to apply for a place on round six of the ALMO programme. The timetable has not yet been announced, but it is expected that it will be launched towards the end of 2005. However, any additional funding, under this option, will only be available to Councils which meet the Audit Commission's two-star rating for the quality of the housing management service. The Council's service currently holds a one star rating, and therefore it seems unlikely that arms length management will offer significant benefits for either the future administration of the Council's housing stock or the associated service provision.

Retention – Under this option the Council would continue to own and manage the housing stock, although the Government would expect to see an organisational framework within the Council that clearly identifies the landlord function as distinct and separate from the strategic housing role.

For the last financial year (2004/05) total rent income from NBC's tenancies exceeded £36 million but the Council paid more than £8 million of this back to the Government under the terms of the housing subsidy arrangements. However, the Council would be able to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 without the need for additional investment – therefore, retention of the housing stock under Council ownership and control is an option that is available for further consideration.

LSVT – This option would involve the transfer of the freehold of the Council's housing stock to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). Council tenants would become tenants of the RSL, and there are three different models of transfer:

- A new 'stand-alone' RSL could be set up by the council specifically for the purpose of receiving the council's housing stock.

- A new RSL could be set up specifically for the purpose of receiving the council's housing stock, but which would then become part of the group structure of an existing RSL.
- A transfer could be made, directly to an RSL.

LSVT would allow for additional investment into the maintenance of the housing stock and would also create the potential for improved landlord services. This option would allow for the achievement of the Stock Condition Standard, as a minimum, and may also make the Northampton Standard attainable. Also, under LSVT the sustainability of the existing housing stock would be assured and the potential for the development of new homes would be created.

An objective assessment of the above options has been undertaken, with reference to the agreed model below:

| <u>Criteria</u> | <u>Comment</u> | <u>Weighting</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Housing Need and Improving Choice | Which option provides additional social housing? What effect would the options have on homelessness and other people in housing need? | 18% |
| Homes and Investment | What level of investment will each option make available? Which option(s) will meet the Decent Homes Standard, the Stock Condition Survey Standard and the Northampton Standard? | 17 % |
| Tenant Involvement and Accountability | How will tenant involvement operate under each option? | 16% |
| High Quality Housing Services | Which option is likely to lead to improvements in housing services? | 14% |
| Tenants' Rights and Responsibilities | What effect does each option have upon tenants' rights? | 13% |
| Employee Issues | What effect would each option have on employee rights and conditions? | 6% |
| Set-up Costs, Uncertainty and Risks | What are the set-up costs of each option? What are the risks associated with each option? | 6% |
| Rents and Service Charges | What effect will each option have upon rent and service charge levels? | 5% |
| Wider Council Issues | Which option best meets the requirements of the Corporate Plan? What is the effect of each option on the General Fund? What would be the impact on wider community issues? | 5% |

The above assessment produced the following calculations:

| OPTION | WEIGHTED SCORE |
|---------------|----------------|
| Retention (2) | 5.13 |
| PFI (4) | 2.97 |
| ALMO (3) | 5.27 |
| Transfer (1) | 8.25 |

It was the collective view of the political representatives of the Project Board and the HIAG that stock transfer is the option that would enable the issues within the assessment criteria to be most effectively addressed.

NBC sees the most cost-effective way to deliver the capital programme is through partnering arrangements in line with the Egan principles of improvement.

5.4 Investing in the private sector

Priority: Investing in the private sector

The size of the problems of private sector housing disrepair in the borough far exceeds the level of public sector resources available to tackle them. The capital allocation for 2004/05 of £1 million enabled the Private Sector Renewal Strategy to continue to deal with those customers in highest need. However, as in previous years, demand for support and intervention in emerging areas still outstrips the resources available. We have a strategy of targeting resources to areas of high unfitness. We are continuing to monitor the situation regarding private finance initiatives, in particular equity release schemes run by trust type organisations.

- The Private Sector House Condition survey (2002) estimates that approximately 3,550 dwellings in this sector are unfit, representing 5.1% of the private housing stock. However, nearly 15% of the oldest (pre-1919) housing stock is unfit and two areas of the town show higher incidences of unfitness when compared to the average (5.1%).
- The level of investment needed to make all unfit properties meet the minimum fitness requirements is estimated at £13 million. However, to get these properties into reasonable repair as well as fit for occupation would cost £28.4 million.
- The research looked at the implied grant demand on the council from owner-occupiers in unfit housing. From a cost of approximately £22.3 million, the research suggested an implied grant demand of £15.3 million. This is important in considering future renewal strategy and the possible use of equity release schemes to utilise capital locked up in dwellings needing repairs etc.
- The research estimated that there were 5,500 private rented dwellings in Northampton with a higher average incidence of unfitness of 12% (compared to 5.1%) which highlights the enforcement role of the council.

- The rented sector is crucial in providing accommodation. Consequently, the Council will continue to develop its forum with landlords, and will introduce a student property accreditation scheme in partnership with the college and landlords. This should help improve the condition of rented accommodation through the positive messages associated with being accredited.

To support the Community Strategy, the greatest proportion of resources available for private sector housing will be directed to the areas of the borough with the highest level of unfit housing with assistance targeted at groups suffering the greatest social and economic disadvantage.

Northampton's housing renewal policies have been largely about protection rather than recovery as Northampton has not had private sector areas where the market has collapsed. However, it does have areas where social cohesion will be severely undermined without regeneration and some level of investment now, and NBC recognises the need to be pro-active in identifying potential areas of low demand and wider issues. The next private sector condition survey will consider renewal in the context of neighbourhood renewal and the need to contribute further to community strategy priorities.

Investment in the private sector has for many years concentrated on focusing our limited resources on areas and individuals with the most urgent needs.

In 2003, following extensive consultation with residents and partners, the Council adopted a Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy which focuses on the following key priorities:

- Tackling the worst disrepair in the private sector, primarily through targeting the disrepair of older houses in priority areas
- Concentrating on targeted local intervention to prevent systems of market collapse – particularly through reducing the number of unfit homes
- Targeting the majority of resources towards priority areas
- Tackling specific problems in the private rented sector such as the condition of houses in multiple occupation and poor energy efficiency
- Increasing support to home owners' responsibilities to enable them to maintain their homes, through free home maintenance and home energy visits and advice
- Improving domestic energy efficiency – in particular by maximising external funding opportunities
- Reducing crime and fear of crime and providing support mechanisms to build sustainable communities.

What are the options for addressing this priority?

The key elements and actions of the renewal strategy were based primarily on the findings of the 2002 stock condition survey research. The strategy contains 21 approved policy actions that form the basis of the service provided by the council. Each policy action was subject to the consultation exercise with partners, members, and customers (through the People's Panel).

Priority: Secure improvements to private sector dwellings which are unfit or in poor repair

Actions to achieve this objective

- There are new mechanisms aimed at helping more people in those areas, such as the non-means tested 25% grant for new owners and landlords of unfit dwellings.
- Vacant properties have the highest incidence of unfitness so a 25% grant is also available for owners wishing to bring long term empty homes back into use, thus increasing the availability of good quality rented accommodation.

Priority: Develop initiatives to improve housing management in the private rented sector

The growth of the private rented sector, and the responsibilities which landlords have in maintaining and managing their homes satisfactorily presents a major challenge. Developing policies towards the private rented sector is a central part of the private sector renewal policy.

Actions to achieve this objective

- The strategy states a commitment to undertake a pro-active enforcement of the Council's HMO standards in Partnership Area 1, the area with the highest incidence of houses in multiple occupation. The programme of inspections will begin in known streets with high HMO concentrations and will tie in with preparations for mandatory licensing of HMOs.
- The continued development of the Landlords Forum and consultation with private landlords is a major aspect of improving relations with landlords.
- The council will be launching a Student Property accreditation scheme in association with University College Northampton, the Landlords' Association and Student Union in Early Summer 2005 and this will help improve the management of the 1,500 or so student properties in the town.
- The council will continue to respond to requests for action from private tenants and landlords as part of the enforcement team and Housing and Money advice centre service. Enforcement action is taken against landlords of dwellings failing to meet satisfactory standards, but working together with HMOAC can help ensure that where possible landlords undertake improvements on an agreed basis for the benefit of themselves and tenants.

Priority: Enable vulnerable homeowners to remain in their homes

The Council and its partners recognise the value of advice to tenants and homeowners on how to improve and maintain their homes with or without grant assistance.

Actions to achieve this objective

- To improve the advice and support we provide to vulnerable homeowners we will continue to provide and promote the Home Maintenance Advice service, offering free home surveys. These also include a home energy rating so that homeowners can see where cost effective improvements can be made. Where applicable advice on appropriate local and national grants is also given.
- Where a case of a seriously unfit dwelling occupied by a vulnerable person (for example older people, supported by Social Care and Health services) outside the priority area is brought to the attention of the Council, renovation grant assistance will be considered to help enable that person to remain in their homes without their health being affected.
- The council continue to provide assistance to those most in need for the repair of essential items under the home repair assistance (HRA) grant. This grant is also provided to eligible clients of Care and Repair under a joint working programme.
- The HRA grant can also be used for minor adaptations to assist a disabled person use their home better. However, where more major adaptations are required the council will award Disabled Facilities Grants to eligible individuals in need throughout the borough in partnership with the Occupational Therapy Service and the County Council. In cases where an application for a mandatory DFG would be approved but for the work not being “reasonable and practicable”, the Council will consider an “Adapted Alternative Home Grant”. The grant would be to a maximum of £25,000 and would be paid where the provision of suitable alternative accommodation represents a better benefit than adapting the existing property.
- Council officers are continuing to look at the potential of equity release schemes as an additional tool to assist people carry out essential repairs and improvements. Initial discussions have taken place with the Home Improvement Trust regarding the possibility of joining and using the House Proud Scheme. However, this scheme will be more cost effective if we work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and this will be progressed during 2005/06 through the countywide private sector housing group.
- Our partner organisations (Care and Repair, Age Concern) have been approached about the possibility of providing loans/equity release and we will continue to monitor schemes nationally through support networks.

Priority: Promoting environmental sustainability and improving home energy efficiency across all tenures

The Council and its partners are committed to tackling fuel poverty and delivering a 30% improvement in domestic energy efficiency under the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995. Recent years have shown good results following the increase in activity by this and other authorities, and increasing awareness by households. We work in close partnership through the Northants Home Energy Efficiency Partnership (NHEEP), which consists of the 7 local borough and district council's of Northants, and private sector representatives. These include Powergen, British Gas, Ideal Boilers, Plumb Centre, Warm Front, Leics/Northants EAC, and others associated with the various schemes. Several schemes have been very successful and received regional and national recognition. The insulation grant scheme "Chillout" (a British Gas) has achieved more than 10,000 completions since it was formed approximately 2 years ago. "Boiler Magic" has resulted in more than 2,000 high efficiency condensing boilers being installed working in partnership with manufacturers, wholesalers and local installers.

The Council is committed to influencing all housing providers to incorporate environmental implications with their business operations and investment plans.

Actions to achieve this objective

- A priority for the council has been the need to improve the energy efficiency of the private rented sector. The Hot Property scheme has been operating since 1997 in partnership with landlords, and external funding providers and has achieved good results. More than £673,000 has been spent on 1,170 improvements to private rented dwellings.
- The council have been active in trying to reduce fuel poverty in the borough. We work closely with Powergen Warmfront to promote this grant. A targeted mail out in the summer of 2004 was very successful. We also introduced a Heatstreets scheme during 2004/05 to one of the most deprived areas of the town in partnership with Powergen. A £10,000 input achieved more than £22,000 worth of improvements.
- The council are always looking to utilize external funding and since the introduction of HECA 1995, more than £1,170,000 has been obtained for various sources to help achieve HECA and fuel poverty aims.
- Influencing private landlords has been achieved through the landlords forum and in particular the Hot Property scheme.

Applicable long-term benefits:

Sustainable development in Northampton

Provide a decent home for all

Chapter 6

Promoting neighbourhood renewal

Further discussion with GOEM, particularly in choice of best examples , as chapter re-titled form previous heading of sustainable communities

Objectives

- Supporting the council's regeneration initiatives
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime
- Improving the quality of the local environment
- Involving people in the renewal process and enhancing opportunities
- Maximising the role of registered social landlords in developing communities

6.1 The context

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and stay. Sustainability can be adversely affected by a number of factors, such as high rates of crime or anti-social behaviour, poor environmental standards, poverty and social inclusion. The council and its partners are committed, under Northampton's Community Strategy (2002), to the regeneration of our communities. We are working to help achieve the government's aim of ensuring that, in 10-20 years time, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged because of where they live. Housing has a vital role to play in achieving this by ensuring that all people have the opportunity to live in decent homes within secure, vibrant neighbourhoods.

Northampton's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy now being produced by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), sets out ways in which the Council and its partners are working to narrow the gap between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the borough. NBC is seeking to influence the consultation on the current consultation round of Neighbourhood Renewal funds given the current exemption from recent funding.

The overriding aim of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is to ensure that the regeneration is 'mainstreamed', that it becomes part of the core activity of the council and its partners. Housing services have played a pivotal role in regeneration in Northampton through the Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Partnership (CASPAR) projects.

In particular, Northampton's housing services are helping to deliver the following aspects of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy:

- Reducing anti-social behaviour and domestic violence
- Integrating asylum seekers into the local community
- Supporting private sector landlords
- Providing money skills advice and related financial services

- Environmental improvements determined by the priorities of the community

In addition, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy targets a number of estates where we aim to reduce the numbers of people who feel the need to leave because of the housing conditions in that area. The LSP approach to neighbourhood renewal aims to join together residents, housing officers and partner agencies through our established Area Partnerships to set the agenda for tackling problems and improving services at the local level.

6.2 Actions taken so far

- CASPAR regeneration initiatives

In addition, we have sought to promote sustainable regeneration through initiatives such as:

- Housing Options Appraisal Process

6.3 Priority areas for action

Under the Community Strategy and the council's Best Value Performance Plan, there are four priorities in achieving sustainable regeneration:

- Increasing the number of older people in Northamptonshire helped to live at home
- Achieving the government's decent home for all by 2010, on all public sector housing stock
- Reducing to nil the number of wards in Northampton in the most 10% of wards in the country as indicated by the housing element of the deprivation indices
- Developing and publishing a homelessness strategy

6.4 What are the options for addressing these priorities (supporting the council's area regeneration initiatives/ reducing crime and the fear of crime/ improving the quality of the local environment/ involving people in the renewal process and promoting social inclusion)

The ways in which we will address these priorities are determined by the Community Strategy and Northampton's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. Both these documents are the result of extensive consultation with Northampton residents and the council's partner organisations. The housing service will be co-ordinating their activities with those of other Council departments and partner agencies to help deliver solutions that have already been identified.

Supporting the Council's area regeneration initiatives

While Northampton's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy sets out our approach to regeneration for the whole of the borough, area-initiatives allow us to pilot innovative strategies and techniques, or have a big impact where there are a number of areas of deprivation close to one another such as Area Committee 1.

Reducing crime and the fear of crime

The Council has a duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in Northampton. Overcoming the problems associated with crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) is therefore of primary importance to all of Northampton's housing providers.

Actions to achieve this objective:

CASPAR regeneration initiatives

Improving the local environment and the quality of Northampton's housing stock

The quality of the local environment is a crucial factor in making our neighbourhoods attractive, desirable places to live. The Council is committed to improving the quality of its housing stock and is working with partners to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home. We are also working to improve the appearance of Northampton's neighbourhoods.

Actions to achieve this objective:

- Providing good quality, affordable and resource-efficient homes

Involving people in the renewal process and enhancing opportunities

The council and its partners are intending to place residents at the heart of the neighbourhood renewal process so that communities can decide for themselves how their areas are developed. We are also working to enhance employment, learning, cultural and leisure opportunities for people in Northampton by co-ordinating our activities with those of other agencies and partnerships working in the borough.

The successful CASPAR initiatives have provided the Council with useful experience of developing community-led models in estate regeneration. These practices can be adapted to suit wider community involvement in Northampton.

Actions to achieve this objective:

Applicable long-term benefits:

Sustainable development in Northampton

The delivery of the growth agenda in Northampton

Improving the housing management service

Chapter 7

Resource Planning

Context

The Housing Strategy sets an ambitious vision for significant impacts on house conditions within the borough. It has to be based on sound financial planning and realistic assessment of resource availability. The following principles are adopted in our forward planning:

- Financial planning is based on realistic assumptions of future funding provided and secured by the council and our other partners
- The housing strategy supports and is informed by the council's [Asset Management Strategy or Capital Investment Strategy], the framework for the allocation of resources through the council's corporate business planning process
- Prioritisation of investment planning corresponds to priorities of key funding providers notably the government, the Housing Corporation, council departments and partners
- Decisions have been strongly influenced by service users, residents and other stakeholders
- An approved procedure to maximising inward investment for housing via the Housing Corporation and other sources
- Bringing council housing up to decent homes standards
- Targeting key priority areas in private and public sector housing areas experiencing the highest levels of deprivation
- Disabled facility adaptations for the elderly/other vulnerable people
- Other targeted regeneration areas including Caspar areas

Following the announcements of the Approved Development Programme (ADP) bid round for 2004-06, investment into the borough increased threefold to £24.8 million and was to be delivered by 12 RSLs or commonly referred to as housing associations. This increased the number of housing associations developing in the Borough and replaced the former Joint Commissioning arrangements with the seven RSL partners.

In 2004, Genesis Group (a London-based housing association) won the Challenge II bid which was a competition for English Partnership owned sites in Northampton. NBC's Planning Committee needs to make a decision on the deliverability of the sites as they are Greenfield and subject to the Council's decision on the phasing policy of not developing Greenfield Sites until 2007. A total of 428 affordable housing units could be provided on the sites.

7.1 Meeting the decent homes standard

A key priority is to ensure council housing meets the Decent Homes Standard. The Housing Options Appraisal indicated that the HRA Business Plan will enable all council houses to be brought up to this standard by 2010 – however, this does not

address the benchmark standard or Northampton Standard that will provide sustainable developments and, in the case of the Northampton Standard, a greater reflection of tenants' aspirations. The council's strategic housing and corporate objectives set the framework and performance targets in the HRA Business Plan. These will be determined annually and reviewed by the council throughout the year.

In addition, the housing strategy includes private sector renewal investment reflecting the responsibilities of NBC in delivering this service.

7.2 Inward investment

| Options for inward investment | Priorities for resources |
|--|--|
| Housing Corporation Approved Development Programme | Housing Corporation's investment priorities |
| East Midlands Regional Housing Strategy Single Capital Pot | Regional Housing Strategy Priorities |
| Provision of land for affordable housing development including releasing land for housing purposes and securing Section 106 agreements | Housing Corporation priorities Local priorities that would not receive |
| Maximise number of private sector empty properties brought back into use | Support priorities in Council's Empty Homes Strategy |
| Reduce council and RSL voids and re-let times | Choice-based letting |
| Borrowing by RSLs | New residential sites with on-site affordable provision secured through the planning system in areas the Housing Corporation would not support |
| Investment funding in local authority stock through use of MRA, HRA, capital receipts and the single capital pot. | Improving local authority stock and bringing empty properties back into use |

7.3 Investment in regeneration

Regeneration funding complements strategic housing objectives and housing programmes. In order to maximise resources for housing we support bids for capital funds which meet both government criteria and the priorities set out in the council's [Asset Management Strategy/Housing Strategy] and the Borough Housing Strategy. Major examples to be noted are the regeneration of English Partnerships strategic sites, an initiative that has attracted £ x million of funding and will generate x,000 new homes, and commercial and business premises. In addition the council works proactively to identify private sector empty properties and bring them back into use and is currently working to attract funding to regenerate one of the most deprived areas in the Borough – Spring Boroughs, having already bid for monies from the ODPM growth area funding for the feasibility study, to be jointly funded by EP, the Housing Corporation and the Council.

7.4 Gershon Review

As set out in the Spending Review 2004, each local authority is expected to achieve 2.5% per annum efficiency gains compared to their 2004/05 baseline, over the next three years. Local authorities will report gains made through an Annual Efficiency Statement, and this document will also include an outline of expected efficiency gains and the strategy for achieving them.

NBC has established a Monitoring Group – which includes representation by housing employees - to develop efficiency programmes and monitoring the delivery of identified efficiencies.

7.5 How we will fund the work of the Housing Strategy

The Council is able to use many sources of funding, two of the main sources being capital and revenue.

Capital, traditionally is from the Government in the form of grants and borrowing (supported and unsupported) and receipts from the sale of assets e.g. Council properties to existing tenants under the Right to Buy scheme. The main source of revenue is from rents paid by the tenants of our Council owned homes. The tables below clearly set out the current and future use of all of these funds to improve housing across all tenures and related services.

| Housing Revenue Account | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Actuals 2001/2002 | Actuals 2002/2003 | Actuals 2003/2004 | Actuals 2004/2005 | Budget 2005/2006 |
| Income | 49108 | 49973 | 47515 | 31562 | 32639 |
| Expenditure | 68115 | 75888 | 62498 | 49328 | 54286 |
| Net Expenditure | 19007 | 25915 | 14983 | 17766 | 21647 |
| Interest & Premia | -21959 | -27190 | -15710 | -19220 | -21573 |
| Net Operating Expenditure | -2952 | -1275 | -727 | -1454 | 74 |
| Appropriations | | | | | |
| - Contributions to capital | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1845 | 1712 |
| - HRA Appr'ns Depreciation & MRA | 1479 | 355 | 186 | -1005 | -1906 |
| - Item 8 set aside | 379 | 250 | 64 | 0 | 0 |
| Surplus (-)/Deficit for the Year | -1094 | -670 | -477 | -614 | -120 |
| HRA Reserve | -8 | 87 | -20 | -65 | -28 |
| Grand Total | -1102 | -583 | -497 | -679 | -148 |
| Working Balance B/Fwd | 794 | 1896 | 2479 | 2976 | 2017 |
| Working Balance C/Fwd | -1896 | -2479 | -2976 | -3655 | -2165 |

| Housing General Fund | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Actuals 2001/2002 | Actuals 2002/2003 | Actuals 2003/2004 | Actuals 2004/2005 | Budget 2005/2006 |
| | | | | 5 | |
| Income | -10628 | -12888 | -13258 | -37882 | -39180 |
| Expenditure | 16173 | 19031 | 19278 | 42277 | 43975 |
| Net Expenditure | 5545 | 6143 | 6020 | 4395 | 4795 |
| Housing Capital Programme | | | | | |
| | Actuals 2001/2002 | Actuals 2002/2003 | Actuals 2003/2004 | Actuals 2004/2005 | Budget 2005/2006 |
| | | | | 5 | |
| Expenditure | | | | | |
| Housing within the HRA | 7593 | 8237 | 8931 | 10596 | 8835 |
| Social Housing Grant | 217 | 572 | 408 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Support for RSLs | 577 | 0 | 0 | 199 | 489 |
| All other Housing | 1547 | 1671 | 1712 | 1490 | 2110 |
| Total Expenditure | 9934 | 10480 | 11051 | 12285 | 11434 |
| Financing | | | | | |
| Borrowing | 1196 | 998 | 1944 | 1842 | 1653 |
| Capital Grants | 957 | 185 | 613 | 336 | 708 |
| Usable Capital Receipts | 418 | 2059 | 1676 | 1352 | 238 |
| Contributions from revenue | | | | | |
| - MRA | 7002 | 7092 | 6818 | 7131 | 7198 |
| - Other HRA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1624 | 1637 |
| Adjustment cash to accruals | 361 | 146 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Financing | 9934 | 10480 | 11051 | 12285 | 11434 |

The above figures indicated that “a decent and affordable home for all” is a priority for this council. Having recently decided to retain ownership of the council housing stock, it is clear that we have the resources to meet the decent homes standard by 2010. However, the council has also agreed to review this position annually.

We provide a balanced capital programme in accordance with Government guidance and have developed, a comprehensive Corporate Capital Strategy which is one of the Council’s main policy documents detailing our approach to capital investment. Under this policy the Council is able to target investment towards the aims and objectives of the Community Strategy, focusing on priorities identified through extensive consultation with local residents. Priority is therefore given to capital investment in Housing and as such we continue to be committed a programme of private sector renewal, a programme which targets the most deprived areas of the town.

In addition and whilst Local Authorities no longer provide grants in the main to registered Social Landlords, via our Empty Property strategy we continue to bring

empty properties back into use. In certain cases CPO powers are employed and properties are then transferred onto Registered Social Landlords for refurbishment and letting to clients on the housing register.

7.6 Monitoring of the capital and revenue programmes

A new performance management system is in place to monitor and review performance against targets both at officer and member levels. Monitoring revenue expenditure and service delivery will be achieved via this corporate framework and the newly agreed Improvement Board. A suite of the performance indicators have also been included in the HRA Business Plan. Monitoring systems are in place for RSL activity, and these will be developed through our partnership arrangements.

Sources of Funding

As with all local authorities, we now secure funding for our work in meeting the housing objectives as set out in this strategy via a variety of sources, in addition to traditional means, this include:

- **Approved Housing Programme**

The Housing Corporation makes grants to Registered Social Landlords to enable them to build new homes and refurbish existing properties sometimes bringing empty properties back into use. Northampton having been identified as a growth area with increasing problems with affordability has a major programme of AHP funding of around £24million for 2004 –2006. This funding will enable the provision of 592 units of new housing.

- **Section 106 Contributions**

The increase in population has resulted in an increase on demand for all types of housing, thus has pricing many new and emerging households out of the owner-occupier market. As part of our enabling work we negotiate 35% affordable housing units on all housing developments over 15 units (previously 22% over 24 units), our policy is to develop affordable housing on site rather than seek financial contributions, however, in exceptional circumstances, we will negotiate a financial contribution for the development of affordable housing. This may be in the form of off-site provision, bringing back into use empty properties or specific project work.

- **Additional Sources of Funding**

Increasingly the council works in partnership with other stakeholders to provide services and in doing so attracts a range of additional funding, this includes:

- Supporting People funding
- Homelessness Directorate funding to tackle the increasing incidences of homelessness for a variety of reasons.
- Match- funding from fuel suppliers to improve the energy efficiency of dwellings

- Owners and landlords contributions for grant assisted works in the private sector.
- Funding from NCC, RSLs and English Partnerships to fund Countywide research projects into the housing needs of Key workers and Black and Minority Ethnic groups.
- Private finance secured by RSLs to develop new and existing affordable homes
- ODPM growth funding

Delivery of the Housing Strategy and the Growth agenda

- *Bid for Housing Corporation funding to development XXX new homes*
- *Use section 106 agreements to negotiate a minimum of XXX units*
- *Consider investing council capital resources to fund RSLs*
- *Bid for ODPM growth monies to fund needs studies, and feasibility studies into regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods*
- *Appoint additional employees to work in housing strategy and enabling to extend the work that we are unable to undertake with RSLs*
- *Housing Market Assessment/Housing Needs Studies*
- *Neighbourhood renewal strategy*

Implementation of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy

- *Continue to provide grants to fund the renovation of private homes under the Councils Private Sector Renewal Policy.*
- *Consider loans*
- *Link into neighbourhood renewal strategy*
- *Private Sector Stock Condition Survey*

Meeting the Accommodation and support needs of vulnerable people

- *Work with the Countywide Supporting People team, NCC and neighbouring councils to identify housing and support needs.*
- *Develop joint capital/revenue schemes and bid for funding via the Housing Corporation and the Supporting People team./*
- *Disabled adaptations*
- *Redevelopment of existing schemes*

Achievement of the Decent Homes standard in the council stock

- *Asset management plan*
- *Northampton Standard*

Improving the Housing Management Service

- *Options Appraisal*

APPENDIX A

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

| | Actuals 1999/00 £'000 | Actuals 2000/01 £'000 | Actuals 2001/02 £'000 | Actuals 2002/03 £'000 | Actuals 2003/04 £'000 | Actuals 2004/05 £'000 | Budget 2005/06 £'000 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| INCOME | | | | | | | |
| Dwelling rent | -32,403 | -34,939 | -36,665 | -37,399 | -36,050 | -36,138 | -36,125 |
| Non-Dwelling Rent | -1,068 | -1,092 | -1,119 | -1,161 | -1,156 | -1,129 | -1,181 |
| Charges for Services | -1,163 | -1,212 | -1,244 | -1,296 | -1,409 | -1,530 | -1,695 |
| Contribution to Expenditure | -99 | -110 | -309 | -325 | -900 | -763 | -685 |
| Rent Rebate Subsidy | 0 | 0 | -18,154 | -19,114 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| HRA Subsidy | -3,409 | -2,736 | 8,384 | 9,322 | -8,000 | 8,098 | 7,047 |
| Housing Benefit Transfer | -1 | -3 | -1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mortgage Interest | -26 | -27 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interest on Cash Balance | -99 | -48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL INCOME | -38,268 | -40,167 | -49,108 | -49,973 | -47,515 | -31,462 | -32,639 |
| EXPENDITURE | | | | | | | |
| Rents, Rates, Taxes | 0 | 0 | 27 | 70 | 165 | 183 | 130 |
| General Management | 3,446 | 4,513 | 4,590 | 4,149 | 4,337 | 4,789 | 5,114 |
| Communal Heating | 153 | 138 | 148 | 201 | 167 | 183 | 240 |
| Communal Lighting | 146 | 124 | 177 | 141 | 161 | 151 | 170 |
| Caretaking & Cleaning | 165 | 189 | 215 | 386 | 465 | 539 | 500 |
| Lifts | 68 | 43 | 25 | 65 | 57 | 54 | 58 |
| Maintnce Greens & Shrubs | 875 | 887 | 1,034 | 1,082 | 1,056 | 1,023 | 1,092 |
| Environmental Enhancement | 194 | 224 | 317 | 241 | 203 | 351 | 1,064 |
| Television & Wireless | 246 | 242 | 235 | 245 | 2 | 6 | 83 |
| Improvement Schemes | 1 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 57 | 13 | 36 |
| Single Persons Accomodation | 142 | 140 | 147 | 201 | 157 | 201 | 226 |
| Community Rooms | 50 | 62 | 90 | 76 | 63 | 56 | 75 |
| Supporting People | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,546 | 1,886 | 1,797 |
| Wardens | 1,208 | 1,042 | 1,102 | 1,115 | 27 | 29 | 33 |
| Call Care | 220 | 236 | 217 | 255 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Provision For The Homeless | 100 | 64 | 73 | 69 | 46 | 119 | 350 |
| HRA Repairs | 7,896 | 8,167 | 7,508 | 8,242 | 7,325 | 6,897 | 7,954 |
| Repairs Administration | 1,861 | 910 | 797 | 1,347 | 1,683 | 1,767 | 1,566 |
| Capital Charges | 2,532 | 2,394 | 28,719 | 34,437 | 22,275 | 26,938 | 30,277 |
| Capital Expend Chgd to Revenue | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Provision For Bad Debts | 599 | 992 | 564 | 720 | 777 | 332 | 431 |
| Misc Communal Services | 12 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 167 | 195 | 151 |
| Rent Rebates | 19,479 | 20,230 | 22,105 | 22,808 | 21,744 | 0 | 0 |
| Rent Rebate Subsidy Deductions | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,433 | 2,914 |
| HRA Improvement Fund | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 164 | 0 |
| HRA Unidentified Variations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Democratic Support | 44 | 84 | 14 | 21 | 18 | 19 | 23 |
| TOTAL EXPENITURE | 39,449 | 40,695 | 68,115 | 75,888 | 62,498 | 49,328 | 54,286 |
| Net Expenditure | 1,181 | 528 | 19,007 | 25,915 | 14,983 | 17,866 | 21,647 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| HRA Interest & Premia | 0 | 0 | -21,959 | -27,190 | -15,710 | -19,220 | -21,573 |
| Net Operating Expenditure | 1,181 | 528 | -2,952 | -1,275 | -727 | -1,354 | 74 |
| Appropriations | | | | | | | |
| Contribution to Capital | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,845 | 1,712 |
| HRA Appns Depn & MRA | | | 1,479 | 355 | 186 | -1,005 | -1,906 |
| Item 8 - Set Aside | | | 379 | 250 | 64 | | 0 |
| Surplus (-) / Deficit for Year | 1,181 | 528 | -1,094 | -670 | -477 | -514 | -120 |
| HRA Reserve | -37 | -107 | -8 | 87 | -20 | -65 | -28 |
| Grand Total | 1,144 | 421 | -1,102 | -583 | -497 | -579 | -148 |
| Working Balance B/Fwd | 2,359 | 1,215 | 794 | 1,896 | 2,479 | 2,976 | 2,017 |
| Working Balance C/F | 1,215 | 794 | 1,896 | 2,479 | 2,976 | 3,555 | 2,165 |

APPENDIX B

HOUSING GENERAL FUND

| | Actuals 1999/00 £'000 | Actuals 2000/01 £'000 | Actuals 2001/02 £'000 | Actuals 2002/03 £'000 | Actuals 2003/04 £'000 | Actuals 2004/05 £'000 | Budget 2005/06 £'000 |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Summary Net Expenditure/(Income) | | | | | | | |
| Homelessness {G} Community Ena | 0 | 183 | 173 | 40 | 36 | 48 | 37 |
| Homelessness Administration | 191 | 192 | 198 | 221 | 222 | 209 | 228 |
| Emergency Accommodation | 121 | 165 | 132 | 141 | 154 | 238 | 214 |
| H.B. Payments Emer Accom | 0 | 179 | 163 | 369 | 711 | 300 | 398 |
| Call Care - Non-HRA | 37 | 94 | 117 | 77 | 91 | 116 | 74 |
| Advances For Housing Purchase | -2 | 0 | -3 | -2 | -3 | 0 | -2 |
| Housing Advice {G} Community Ena | 0 | 37 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Housing & Money Advice | 465 | 346 | 381 | 431 | 385 | 477 | 434 |
| Rent Assistance Scheme | 0 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 10 |
| Probation Service Accom | -2 | 21 | -4 | -7 | -1 | 1 | 2 |
| Housing Benefit Admin | 1,275 | 1,156 | 1,324 | 1,259 | 1,075 | 1,376 | 1,320 |
| Discretionary Hsg Payments | 0 | 3 | -6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rent Allowances | 390 | 338 | 470 | 723 | 889 | -15 | -73 |
| Non-HRA Rent Rebates | 128 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 8 | -3 | -2 |
| Rent Rebates - Council Houses | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -402 | -163 |
| Joint Ventures | 29 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Housing Strategy | 169 | 207 | 259 | 175 | 201 | 213 | 244 |
| Travellers Site | 0 | 46 | 13 | -1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Home Renovation Grants | 406 | 337 | 1,903 | 1,958 | 1,584 | 1,394 | 1,805 |
| Misc Properties GIA/HAA | -28 | -29 | -5 | -6 | -16 | -10 | -15 |
| Work In Default | 9 | 0 | 4 | -4 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| Private Sector Imps & Repair | 162 | 82 | 88 | 81 | 77 | 82 | 82 |
| Private Sector Energy | 18 | -66 | 76 | 16 | 22 | 22 | 13 |
| Housing Associations | 46 | 39 | 225 | 632 | 546 | 307 | 158 |
| Housing Standards - Himos | 116 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Exclusion From New HRA | -618 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Democratic Support | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

SUMMARY INTO CIPFA SEA DIVISIONS

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| HOMELESSNESS | 312 | 719 | 666 | 771 | 1,123 | 795 | 877 |
| WELFARE | 37 | 94 | 117 | 77 | 91 | 116 | 74 |
| HOUSING ADVANCES | -2 | 0 | -3 | -2 | -3 | 0 | -2 |
| HOUSING ADVANCE | 463 | 411 | 408 | 457 | 415 | 511 | 470 |
| HOUSING BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION | 1,275 | 1,156 | 1,324 | 1,259 | 1,075 | 1,376 | 1,320 |
| HOUSING BENEFIT PAYMENTS | 518 | 348 | 470 | 729 | 897 | -420 | -238 |
| HOUSING STRATEGY | 198 | 209 | 259 | 176 | 201 | 213 | 244 |
| OTHER COUNCIL PROPERTY | 0 | 46 | 13 | -1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING | 683 | 324 | 2,066 | 2,045 | 1,674 | 1,496 | 1,892 |
| REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS | 46 | 39 | 225 | 632 | 546 | 307 | 158 |
| OTHER | -600 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| NET EXPENDITURE | 2,930 | 3,346 | 5,545 | 6,143 | 6,020 | 4,395 | 4,795 |

APPENDIX C

HOUSING GENERAL FUND

| | Actuals 1999/00 £'000 | Actuals 2000/01 £'000 | Actuals 2001/02 £'000 | Actuals 2002/03 £'000 | Actuals 2003/04 £'000 | Actuals 2004/05 £'000 | Budget 2005/06 £'000 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| INCOME | | | | | | | |
| Homelessness {G} Community Ena | 0 | -16 | -16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Homelessness Administration | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Emergency Accommodation | -240 | -331 | -364 | -650 | -1,209 | -1,235 | -1,169 |
| H.B. Payments Emer Accom | 0 | -117 | -163 | -266 | -400 | -822 | -771 |
| Call Care - Non-HRA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Advances For Housing Purchase | -3 | -1 | -3 | -2 | -3 | 0 | -2 |
| Housing Advice {G} Community Ena | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Housing & Money Advice | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rent Assistance Scheme | -2 | -5 | -6 | -5 | -1 | -1 | -14 |
| Probation Service Accom | -22 | -22 | -22 | -22 | -23 | -25 | -23 |
| Housing Benefit Admin | -116 | -256 | -282 | -278 | -623 | -459 | -538 |
| Discretionary Hsg Payments | 0 | 0 | -14 | -27 | -28 | -21 | -39 |
| Rent Allowances | -8,916 | -8,850 | -9,499 | -11,422 | -10,355 | -12,115 | -12,762 |
| Non-HRA Rent Rebates | -149 | -66 | -84 | -89 | -77 | -78 | -81 |
| Rent Rebates - Council Houses | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -22,923 | -23,601 |
| Joint Ventures | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Housing Strategy | -31 | -7 | -50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Travellers Site | 0 | -13 | 0 | -2 | 0 | 0 | -19 |
| Home Renovation Grants | 0 | 0 | 0 | -51 | -457 | -136 | -100 |
| Misc Properties GIA/HAA | -38 | -44 | -44 | -49 | -51 | -54 | -48 |
| Work In Default | -3 | -10 | -1 | -6 | -3 | 0 | -13 |
| Private Sector Imps & Repair | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Private Sector Energy | -44 | -190 | -45 | -19 | -21 | -13 | 0 |
| Housing Associations | 0 | 0 | -35 | 0 | -7 | 0 | 0 |
| Housing Standards - Himos | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Exclusion From New HRA | -618 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Democratic Support | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | -10,182 | -9,928 | -10,628 | -12,888 | -13,258 | -37,882 | -39,180 |

HOUSING GENERAL FUND Cont.**EXPENDITURE**

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Homelessness {G} Community Ena | 0 | 199 | 189 | 40 | 36 | 48 | 37 |
| Homelessness Administration | 191 | 192 | 198 | 221 | 222 | 209 | 228 |
| Emergency Accommodation | 361 | 496 | 496 | 791 | 1,363 | 1,473 | 1,383 |
| H.B. Payments Emer Accom | 0 | 296 | 326 | 635 | 1,111 | 1,122 | 1,169 |
| Call Care - Non-HRA | 37 | 94 | 117 | 77 | 91 | 116 | 74 |
| Advances For Housing Purchase | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Housing Advice {G} Community Ena | 0 | 37 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Housing & Money Advice | 465 | 346 | 381 | 431 | 385 | 477 | 434 |
| Rent Assistance Scheme | 2 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 8 | 10 | 24 |
| Probation Service Accom | 20 | 43 | 18 | 15 | 22 | 26 | 25 |
| Housing Benefit Admin | 1,391 | 1,412 | 1,606 | 1,537 | 1,698 | 1,835 | 1,858 |
| Discretionary Hsg Payments | 0 | 3 | 8 | 27 | 28 | 21 | 39 |
| Rent Allowances | 9,306 | 9,188 | 9,969 | 12,145 | 11,244 | 12,100 | 12,689 |
| Non-HRA Rent Rebates | 277 | 73 | 90 | 95 | 85 | 75 | 79 |
| Rent Rebates - Council Houses | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22,521 | 23,438 |
| Joint Ventures | 29 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Housing Strategy | 200 | 214 | 309 | 175 | 201 | 213 | 244 |
| Travellers Site | 0 | 59 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 19 |
| Home Renovation Grants | 406 | 337 | 1,903 | 2,009 | 2,041 | 1,530 | 1,905 |
| Misc Properties GIA/HAA | 10 | 15 | 39 | 43 | 35 | 44 | 33 |
| Work In Default | 12 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 20 |
| Private Sector Imps & Repair | 162 | 82 | 88 | 81 | 77 | 82 | 82 |
| Private Sector Energy | 62 | 124 | 121 | 35 | 43 | 35 | 13 |
| Housing Associations | 46 | 39 | 260 | 632 | 553 | 307 | 158 |
| Housing Standards - Himos | 116 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Exclusion From New HRA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Democratic Support | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 13,112 | 13,274 | 16,173 | 19,031 | 19,278 | 42,277 | 43,975 |
| Net Expenditure | 2,930 | 3,346 | 5,545 | 6,143 | 6,020 | 4,395 | 4,795 |

APPENDIX C

| <i>Sustainable Communities Plan</i> | <i>Detail</i> |
|--|---|
| <i>Addressing the housing shortage</i> | <p><i>Accelerating the provision of housing. This includes: ...accelerating growth in the four "growth areas" (Thames Gateway, London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, Ashford, and Milton Keynes-South Midlands); and ensuring that the construction industry has the right skills to deliver Affordable Housing. £5 billion has been allocated for the provision of affordable housing over the next three years. This includes £1 billion for housing "key workers" in the public sector, to aid recruitment and retention.</i></p> <p><i>Tackling Homelessness. Including ensuring ending the use of bed and breakfast hostels for homeless families by March 2004.</i></p> |
| <i>Addressing low demand and abandonment</i> | <i>Around one million homes in parts of the North and Midlands are suffering from low demand and abandonment. Nine pathfinder schemes have been established in the areas worst affected to put in place action programmes to turn this problem around.</i> |
| <i>Decent homes</i> | <i>The Plan sets out an action programme to ensure that all social housing is brought up to a decent standard by 2010, alongside targeted action to improve conditions for vulnerable people in private housing.</i> |
| <i>Liveability</i> | <i>The Plan sets out how the Government intends to intensify efforts to improve the local environment of all communities. This includes cleaner streets, improved parks and better public spaces</i> |
| <i>Protecting the countryside</i> | <i>The Plan outlines how land will be used more effectively. The majority of new housing will be on previously developed land, rather than on greenfield. The area of land designated as greenbelt land will be increased or maintained in each area. Developments not meeting density standards in the South East will be called in.</i> |

APPENDIX D

Summary of Stock Condition Survey of NBC housing stock

The housing stock

- Northampton Borough Council owns a rented housing stock of 13,104 dwellings with an additional 492 leasehold flats
- 18% of the Council's housing stock dates to before the war . including a small number of miscellaneous acquired dwellings built before 1919. 19% of the stock was built during the early post-war period (1945-64). The bulk of the Council's housing stock however (48%) was constructed during the late 1960s and 1970s
- Approximately 58% of the stock comprise houses and bungalows, normally situated in semi-detached pairs or short terraces. The majority of flats are situated within 690 low-rise blocks of 2 to 5 storeys.
- Traditional dwellings of brick construction under conventionally pitched tiled or slate roofs predominate, accounting for 71% of the stock. A further 22% of dwellings are timber framed. Materials employed for walls and roof coverings reflect, to a certain degree, the property age. Older dwellings are characterised by a larger proportion under slated or clay roofs while non-traditional construction forms, timber framed dwellings and flat roofs become more predominant in the late 1960s. Only 7% of dwellings are under flat roofs of asphalt or felt
- Approximately 70% of the stock benefit from low-maintenance PVCu casements. A significant proportion of dwellings have a mix of window materials - normally the legacy of past piecemeal replacements.
- The stock is generally of good design and of sound construction. It is certainly worthy of the investment necessary for effective on-going maintenance.

Energy Efficiency

- 95% of dwellings are provided with a *central heating system* - the majority with boiler and radiator wet systems.
- Less than 6% of dwellings have less than 150mm roof insulation, almost 60% have adequate wall insulation and 67% of the stock. The majority of dwellings are also adequately sealed against draughts and benefit from double glazing. In general terms a well insulated stock
- The average *SAP* energy efficiency rating of 58 is higher than the national average in the UK.
- However, 37% of the stock falls short of the *Acceptable* target of 55 and less than 18% of dwellings achieve the *Preferred* target of a SAP of 70+. The shortfall indicates that, despite significant investment over recent years, there remains scope for further improving the energy efficiency of the stock.

Repair Condition

- The survey findings identify an estimated total of only 157 properties (1.2% of the stock) that would fail the fitness standard, where strictly applied. This figure is *Document Ref: NB: 03.V1 31* significantly lower than the national average level of unfitness for Council owned dwellings of 4.7%.
- The most common reason for unfitness are inadequate facilities for the preparation and cooking of food.
- 3,931 dwellings (30%) are considered to fail the *Decent Homes* standard in terms of fitness, condition, amenity or thermal comfort. Significantly below the national average of 43%
- However, without the investment requirements identified by the survey it is estimated that, with an ageing stock, a further 6,344 dwellings (48% of the stock) may fall below the decent homed standard within the next decade

Costs to Make Dwellings Decent

- The survey findings indicate that a total expenditure of around £11.2 millions is required to make the Councils housing stock fit and decent. The average cost for remedying non-decency, is estimated at around £2,860.
- In order to maintain the condition of the stock and prevent further dwellings becoming non-decent within a 10-year period (as the result of the future deterioration of key elements) a further £31.9 millions is required to keep decent.

Total Maintenance Costs

- It is estimated that a total expenditure of £139 millions is required over the next ten years to both meet the Decent Homes target and to maintain and improve the stock to basic standards of condition and amenity - an average expenditure, per dwelling, of £10,605
- The total expenditure requirement over a future 30-year period is estimated to amount to £283 millions (approximately £21,600 per dwelling).
- The patterns of failure and expenditure requirements identified by the survey illustrate the impact of recent investment in the stocks maintenance. However, it also illustrates the growing volume of work required to an ageing stock. 52% of the Borough's stock is currently over 30 years old but, significantly, 95% dwellings will reach this age over the next decade. Consequently, significant levels of investment are required in the stock over the next decade in order to prevent a growing number of life expired components and catch-up maintenance demands, and therefore, rapidly escalating levels of non-decency

Future Maintenance

- Two underlying facts will have a strong influence on the levels, scope and nature of future maintenance demands: the material make-up and the age and type profile of the stock.
- It is increasingly imperative that future maintenance is based on rationalized programmes, formulated from sound knowledge of stock condition and priorities. In this way maximum benefit can be achieved from limited funds
- We believe that every possible effort should be made to allocate the resources needed to implement the maintenance and improvement measures identified by the survey in full

Glossary. Words and Phrases

Affordable Homes

Local authorities are required to define what is considered to be affordable in terms of the relationship between local income levels and house prices or rents for different types of households.

Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)

Behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Approved Development Programme (ADP)

The Approved Development Programme process provides arrangements for the approval by Government of an annual programme of expenditure for Housing Corporation funded Registered Social Landlord (see definition below) schemes in England.

Best Value

Scheme that aims to continuously improve local government performance through a programme of reviews and inspections. Councils must examine their services according to four guiding principles. They must challenge how, why and by whom a service is provided; compare its performance with that of other authorities; consult service users; and use competition to get the best service available. Housing best value inspections are undertaken by the Housing Inspectorate Team of the Audit Commission who inspect local government services, giving them two marks of between zero and three – first for their performance and second for their likelihood of improving.

Brownfield Sites

Land that has been built on before and is usually in an urban area. The land involved is usually contaminated. Under a government target, 60% of all new development should be on brownfield sites.

Choice Based Lettings

These schemes, allow people to apply for housing without a traditional waiting list, so people have equal chances of access to housing. (...and...)

Community Cohesion

A cohesive community is one where there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities: the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued: those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Councils' Capital Investment Strategy

Provides a framework for the allocation of the council's resources. The approach to investment strives to reflect central government and regional priorities, and reflects the work the Council is

doing with the partners in the borough to develop the Northampton Borough's Community Strategy "Aim 4 Northampton".

Decent Homes

The government has introduced a target to make all public sector homes decent by 2010. This means that homes meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing (the current minimum standard for housing is the Fitness Standard), it is in a reasonable state of repair, it has reasonably modern facilities and services, and provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

Decommission, Declassify, De-categorise

This is a change in the use made of specialist property, for example when sheltered housing is made available for more general letting.

Disabled Facility Grant

Awarded to individuals in need throughout the borough and to deliver home repairs assistance (?) in partnership with (?) to the elderly.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Sets minimum standards that demand that public buildings and private companies providing a public service make their service accessible to disabled people. Also contains legislation to prevent discrimination against job candidates based on their disability.

East Midlands Regional Housing Board

Set up to ensure delivery of the policies set out in the Communities Plan and specifically to prepare the Regional Housing Strategy as the basis for advice to Ministers on the priorities for strategic housing investment in the region .

Egan Principles (and Partnering)

Recommendations of Sir John Egan set out in an influential report in 1998, called Rethinking Construction Principles for public building. It called for an end to traditional bricks and mortar building in favour of modern techniques such as factory built homes. It also called for a new system of cooperative approach between clients and builders, to avoid costly legal rows that have dogged many public building projects. Partners may achieve this by entering into formal partnering arrangement.

Environmental Management System

Green 'audit' of what impact a business has on the environment, and a plan for improvement to minimise environmental impact.

Greenfield Sites

Land usually in the countryside around towns and cities that has not been previously built on.

Home Improvement and Advice Scheme

Approved help to older and disabled people stay in their homes by helping them repair and adapt their properties.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Homes in which two or more households share basic facilities. They are often associated with disrepair and health hazards for their occupants. Councils are keen to have the power to licence all HMOs in their areas. Licensing is currently only voluntary.

Housing Inspectorate

The regulator of council housing. Its inception was in April 2000, as a separate organisation within the audit commission as part of the government's best value regime designed to secure improvements in public services. The inspectorate rates a council's housing performance on a star system based on inspection visits.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

An account of expenditure and income that every local authority housing department must keep. The account is kept separate or ringfenced from other council activities.

Housing Need

A person's requirement for a service, which has been accepted by the organisation providing it.

Index of deprivation

An official measure by the government to target regeneration policies to the most deprived areas.

Key Worker

Usually refers to public sector staff, such as nurses, police officers and teachers, that are crucial to the economy and vital for better public services but are relatively poorly paid. Often used in relation to the lack of affordable housing for such people in areas of high house prices. Some argue that the definition of key workers should be broadened to include almost all poorly paid workers.

Landlord Accreditation Scheme

A voluntary scheme linked to regeneration grants for private landlords, in which the landlord signs up to agreed standards of property management and condition together with personal suitability as a landlord.

Landfill Tax

A charge on disposing waste in pits to encourage more recycling and more environmentally friendly waste disposal. Higher charges apply to the disposal of active waste.

Lifetime Homes

Housing design standard to ensure that a house is accessible and useable throughout a person's life – including if and when they become frail or use a wheelchair.

Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG)

Cash allocated by councils to housing associations to build new homes in their area. The funds are paid via the housing corporation, in the same way as other social housing grants.

Local Community Planning (LCP)

Local Community Planning as an approach to neighbourhood renewal, aims to join together residents, housing officers and partner agencies to form panels, which then set the agenda for tackling problems and improving services at the local level.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Initiative to ensure cooperation between public agencies, voluntary groups and businesses in the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods.

Low Demand

A term used in housing and regeneration to describe homes that people do not want to live in and that are therefore difficult to let or sell. Often seen as an early warning that an area could suffer from abandonment in the future. However, the problem is most acute in northern cities where economic decline means there is a surplus of housing.

National Service Framework (NSF)

Introduced in 1998, NSFs establish a set of minimum national standards of clinical quality and access to services in a series of major care areas and disease groups (including, so far, mental health, diabetes, older people and coronary heart disease). The aim is to drive up performance and decrease geographical variations in care standards.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

This government department is responsible for a number of areas including housing and regeneration.

Part 'M' of the Building Regulations

This section aimed at ensuring homes and other priorities are accessible to disabled people.

Planning Gain

Social/community benefit (play areas, parking, community facilities etc) negotiated with developers. The planning policy guidance note three on housing, PPG 3 issued in 2000, urges councils to negotiate with private developers to provide more affordable housing in developments that mix different income groups. It also calls for better designs and more housing on brownfield sites.

Primary Care Trust

Evolved from primary care groups, PCTs are free-standing statutory bodies that provide primary and community services and commission secondary (hospital) care on behalf of their local population. PCTs commission 75% of the NHS budget.

Priority Need

Term used for various categories of homeless people who must be housed by a council. Groups include families with children and, since 2002, people who are fleeing domestic violence as well as those leaving care or prison.

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Attempts to deal with racism in the public sector by forcing bodies such as councils, hospitals and schools to take steps to promote good race relations.

Regional Development Agency – RDA

The Government has set up development agencies in the eight English regions and London to promote economic growth and regeneration. The RDAs outside the capital were established in 1999 and have progressively gained more funding and freedom from ministers.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL)

The official name for housing associations, housing cooperatives and local housing companies that are registered with the housing corporation. The term, which is unpopular with many in the housing association sector, was introduced in the 1996 Housing Act when local housing companies were introduced. Social landlords need to register with the corporation to qualify for grants to build new homes.

Regulatory Reform Order 2002

This changed the old prescriptive powers relating to private sector grants and replaces them with a general power to provide assistance. Northampton has produced a Private Sector Renewal Strategy spelling out how to meet these new circumstances.

Sheltered Housing

Accommodation especially designed for older people supported by a range of communal services, such as 24-hour emergency assistance and a warden. See also: supported housing.

Single Regeneration Budget – SRB

Now discontinued as a national scheme, the SRB was created in 1994 to narrow the gap between deprived and wealthy areas by funding local regeneration initiatives. Local partnerships of community, voluntary and business groups received money for schemes that aimed to improve employment prospects, address social exclusion and crime, and support economic growth.

Social Exclusion

This term is used to describe people or areas that suffer from a combination of factors that include unemployment, high crime, low incomes and poor housing. The government's approach to regeneration is based on tackling the problems posed by social exclusion as a whole, rather than simply focusing on its individual elements.

Stakeholders

People who have an interest in an organisation, its activities and its achievements, including customers, partners, employees, shareholders, owners, government and regulators. Modern consultation is normally “stakeholder focused”.

Supported Housing

All-embracing term for accommodation for vulnerable people with care needs. Examples include sheltered housing for older people, homeless hostels, and accommodation for people with learning difficulties and mental health problems.

Supporting People

Regime for funding the running costs of housing for vulnerable people, such as rough sleepers, older people and those with special needs. The money will be paid direct by local authorities to housing associations and other supported housing agencies. It replaces the former system under which supported housing was funded by a combination of housing benefit and grant from the housing corporation.

Sustainable Development

An approach to world development that aims to allow economic growth, without damaging the environment or natural resources. The government has produced a strategy for ensuring sustainable development in the UK.

Tenure

Type of housing – owner-occupied (leasehold/freehold), socially rented, privately rented etc.

Unitary Development Plan – UDP; and Supplementary Planning Guidance – SPG

The Unitary Development Plan is a legal document containing all the planning policies and standards which will be used to make decisions on planning applications – whether for major commercial developments or for small schemes such as house extensions. The Plan also indicates where the Council wishes positively to encourage new development in particular areas within the Borough or on individual sites.

Supplementary Planning Guidance notes set out in more detail how the policies in the Unitary Development Plan will work. Although they do not form part of the Plan, they are important factors for the Council to take into account when assessing planning applications. SPGs also help people to know what sort of proposals are likely to get planning permission.

Unfitness

The housing unfitness standard is a set of basic requirements that homes should meet in order to be acceptable places to live. The standard is set down in law and is used by local authorities as the basis for action against unfit homes, to guide decisions on the declaration of renewal areas and for other purposes including assessing the condition of housing stock.

Housing Aim 1 – Understanding local housing needs and local housing markets

Objectives Continuing partnership development of robust systems to analyse housing need
Developing a housing strategy for BME communities

| <i>Task</i> | <i>Outcome</i> | How we will measure success | <i>Resources</i> | <i>Target Date</i> | <i>Lead Officer</i> |
|--|--|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| Jointly commission a Housing Needs Study with Daventry DC and South Northants DC | Better understanding of housing need at the West Northants sub-market level | Databank of housing need information that can be easily updated to respond to changing market. | Pooled resources from three authorities; commissioning of a research consultant | May 2006 | Housing Strategy & Enabling Manager |
| Develop a key worker living strategy for Northampton based on identified need | A better response and service for key workers | Annual total of key workers in housing need re-housed; and further measures to be determined | Campaigning to change government resources; Annual Development Programme (ADP) | Sept 2006 | Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager |
| Continue partnership development of robust housing needs analysis systems to analyse housing needs | Greater understanding of current and future housing need | Creation of local predictive model; easily updated that can take into account changing market | Knowledge and Information Management Group; GIS | July 2005 – set up group | Housing Strategy Officer |
| Collaborate with the Milton Keynes South Midlands study | Enhanced joint working and more holistic understanding of housing and related needs | Output in number of social housing units available | Planning and conservation unit that includes housing strategy and enabling | Up to 2010 | Corporate Manager (Strategic Development and Performance) |
| Develop a housing strategy for BME communities | Greater response to BME housing need in terms of access to accommodation and service provision | Compliance with the CRE's Code of Conduct for housing; contribution to NBC's Equality Standard requirements | NBC Forums, CRE, local groups | Dec 2006 | Housing Needs Manager |

Housing Aim 2 – Meeting vulnerable people’s housing needs

Objectives Working in partnership to prevent homelessness in Northampton
 Working in partnership to ensure vulnerable groups have access to suitable accommodation and housing-related support

| <i>Task</i> | <i>Outcome</i> | How we will measure success | <i>Resources</i> | <i>Target Date</i> | <i>Lead Officer</i> |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------|--|
| Continuing to implement the homelessness strategy | To provide a range of services and accommodation for homeless people, placing greater emphasis on prevention of homelessness | The applicable BVPIs | Homeless Team, Housing Money and Advice Centre, Partnership working. Housing Needs Assessment Team | Sept 2005 | Housing Money and Advice Manager |
| Develop the rough sleepers strategy | To reduce rough sleeping in the borough, and increase preventative measures available | Annual rough sleepers count; BVPI | Homeless Team, Housing Money and Advice Centre, Partnership working | July 2006 | Housing Money and Advice Manager |
| Contribution to the programme of Supporting People service reviews; and using the assessment framework to inform service improvements | Better quality of care and higher standards for service users | Outcomes of service reviews | Northampton Supported Housing Group; service team leaders | March 2006 | Corporate Manager (Residential Operations) |
| Deliver a service user involvement programme in conjunction with the SP Team to inform the SP Strategy | Transition from service user consultation to direct participation | Number of users directly participating in supported housing; number of service improvement initiatives undertaken; PIs | Supported housing employees; Northamptonshire SP Team | April 2006 | Corporate Manager (Residential Operations) |
| Work closely with the SP Team in the implementation of the Northamptonshire SP Five Year Strategy | Higher quality, more cost effective services based on the needs of service users, and potential service users | Monitoring of the Northamptonshire SP Five Year Strategy | Northampton Supported Housing Group | 2010 | Corporate Manager (Residential Operations) |
| Develop and promote a Supported Housing Strategy which will identify need, provide the strategic framework for addressing gaps | Coordinated NBC response to the Northamptonshire SP Five Year Strategy, and a detailed understanding of local supported housing priorities | Completion of the Supported Housing Strategy, and endorsement by the appropriate stakeholders | Northampton Supported Housing Group; Stakeholders; Northamptonshire SP Team | July 2006 | Head of Housing Strategy and Enabling |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--------------|------------------------------|
| and priorities for provision and enable the delivery of timely, good quality schemes that meet the needs of service users. | | | | | |
| Research into move-on facilities | Service user support that focuses on independent living, and avoids institutionalisation | Average length of time stayed in accommodation with support on site. | Housing Strategy and Enabling Team; Northamptonshire Supporting People Team | Sept 2006 | Housing Strategy Officer |
| Develop the allocation policy to promote greater joined-up working | Ensuring the availability of social housing is fully responsive to the needs of housing applicants | The experience of the customer in applying for social housing | Housing Needs Assessment Team, Housing Strategy and Enabling | March 2007 | Senior Housing Needs Officer |
| Receive the consultant's report on potential travellers' sites and analyse and review the findings | Identify new sites for travellers | Agreement of new sites on countywide basis | Countywide Travellers Unit | October 2005 | Environmental Health Manager |
| Develop the ongoing work to secure ODPM funding via the Gypsy-Site Traveller grant for the Ecton Lane existing travellers' site | Improving quality of service provision on existing travellers' site. | Securing grant, and completion of refurbishments | (Grant now secured) Refurbishment will start Sept 05. | August 2005 | Environmental Health Manager |
| Initiation of long-term lease arrangements for the management of the Ecton Lane site (and other potential sites). | Provide better service and to improve chances of securing external funding | Completion of the lease arrangements (follows refurbishments, as above) | Countywide Travellers' Unit; NBC | October 2005 | Environmental Health Manager |

Housing Aim 3 – Delivering quality and choice in the housing market

Objectives Reducing the number of empty properties and maximising the number of empty properties brought back into use across all tenures
Widening the choice of affordable housing
Maximising inward investment to develop affordable housing across all tenures
Developing a quality assurance system for Northampton's housing system

| <i>Task</i> | <i>Outcome</i> | How we will measure success | <i>Resources</i> | <i>Target Date</i> | <i>Lead Officer</i> |
|--|---|--|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>To deliver the best value housing inspection action plan</i> | <i>Improved housing service</i> | Customer satisfaction; future inspections and compliance with key lines of enquiry | <i>As identified in best value housing inspection plan</i> | <i>Sept 2006</i> | <i>Corporate Manager</i> |
| Introduction of a choice-based lettings system | Greater choice for customers and higher standards of lettings | Customer satisfaction surveys, void times | | March 2008 | Senior Housing Needs Officer |
| Continuing with the HomeBuy Scheme throughout 2005/06 and developing initiative through the proposed new HomeBuy options | More housing options for customers. | Launch of various HomeBuy options | Housing Strategy and Enabling; Housing Needs Assessment Team; RSLs | March 2007 | Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager |
| Enabling the provision of housing to meet the various accommodation needs throughout the community | Greater choice of affordable accommodation | Number of units delivered | NBC, Housing Corporation | March 2006 | Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager |
| Improving the monitoring of RSLs in the borough | Ensuring RSLs respond to the need identified; better services for applicants | Percentage of nominations that are accepted; quality checks | NBC, RSLs | March 2006 | Housing Strategy Officer |
| To reduce turn-around for all NBC void properties to 28 days | Better local environment; more properties available to assist housing applicants; increased revenue | Number of properties turned around in 28 days or less | Voids Team, Tenancy Management Team | March 2007 | Property Maintenance Manager |
| To implement the new shared ownership initiative | Greater choice of affordable accommodation | Number of housing applicants assisted through the initiative | Housing Needs Assessment Team; Housing Strategy and Enabling; RSLs | Sept 2005 | Senior Housing Needs Officer |

Housing Aim 4 – Investing in Northampton’s housing

Objectives Bringing all council homes to (at least) the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
 Securing improvements to private sector dwellings which are unfit or in poor repair
 Developing initiatives to improve housing management in the private rented sector
 Enabling vulnerable homeowners to remain in their own homes
 Promoting environmental sustainability and improve home energy across all tenures

| <i>Task</i> | <i>Outcome</i> | How we will measure success | <i>Resources</i> | <i>Target Date</i> | <i>Lead Officer</i> |
|--|--|---|--|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Develop the outcome of the stock options appraisal process | All NBC homes to meet the decent homes standard | Number of homes that have met the decent homes standard | MRA, Single Capital Pot, Gershon efficiency savings | 2010 | Business Development Manager |
| Develop a pro-active approach to ensure that HMO standards are met | Better health and safety standards In HMO properties | Production of a student HMO accreditation scheme; New inspection programme | Private sector housing, Private Sector Landlords' Forum | Jan 2006 | Private Sector Housing Team Leader |
| Continue to work with partners to decrease the waiting time for recipients of Disabled Facilities Grants (Stage 1) Continue to work with partners to decrease the waiting time for recipients of Disabled Facilities Grants (Stage 2) | Better quality of service and lifestyle for people with disabilities | Reduced number of clients on Occupational Therapists' waiting list; Reduce number of clients on NBC list (which will increase through OT process improvements); Improved channels of communication between NBC and its stakeholders | Private sector housing, Social Services (OTs); Additional resources required through 2006/07 capital programme | Mar 2006 | Private Sector Housing Team Leader |
| Investigate and potentially develop equity release schemes as a tool to assist people to undertake essential repairs and maintenance | More sustainable home ownership for vulnerable groups | Number of people able to sustain home ownership who would otherwise have | Countywide private sector housing group, Care and Repair, Age Concern, Private sector housing | April 2006 | Private Sector Housing Team Leader |
| To investigate private sector housing management initiatives, and to implement these in the borough | Positive role of private rented market in creating sustainable communities | Monitoring of resident satisfaction; new practices reflecting Housing Act 2005 | Private sector housing | May 2006 | Private Sector Housing Team Leader |
| Bring empty properties back into use | Reduction in the number of empty properties in the borough | BVPI | Private Sector Housing; Private Landlords' Forum | Mar 2006 | Environmental Health Manager |
| Introduce new HMO licensing system | New standards in HMO sector | Implementation and monitoring of scheme | Private Sector Housing; Private Landlords' Forum | Mar 2006 | Environmental Health Manager |

Housing Aim 5 – Promoting Neighbourhood Renewal

Objectives Supporting the Council's regeneration initiatives
 Reducing crime and the fear of crime
 Improving the quality of the local environment
 Involving people in the renewal process and enhancing opportunities
 Maximising the role of registered social landlords in developing communities

| <i>Task</i> | <i>Outcome</i> | How we will measure success | <i>Resources</i> | <i>Target Date</i> | <i>Lead Officer</i> |
|---|---|--|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Re-aligning local housing services to fit the NBC model of three geographical neighbourhoods for estate (residential operations) services | More local, responsive housing services with greater emphasis on partnership working and local initiatives | BVPI – Tenant satisfaction with the overall performance of the landlord | Provided through root and branch restructure | Mar 2006 | Corporate Manager |
| To give strengthened housing management support to the CASPAR 4 (Kings Heath) initiative and the CASPAR 5 (Thorplands) initiative | Reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour, and greater partnership working between NBC and other stakeholders | Waiting list demand for estates, relative tenancy turnover, reduction in crime figures | Tenancy management team, local CASPAR groups | Mar 06 And Mar 08 | Principal Tenancy Manager |
| To develop housing investment to reflect the linkage between housing services on the local environment | Local environmental improvements that reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities | Number of schemes delivered that secure the approval of local groups | Environmental Enhancement budget | Mar 06 | Operations Manager |
| Re-aligning tenant participation services with community development services | Consistency in tenant and resident involvement throughout all NBC services; greater tenant input into all services the impact upon housing services | BVPI – Satisfaction with opportunities to get involved with the management of housing services | Tenant Participation and Community Development officers | Mar 2006 | Corporate Manager |
| Production of a Tenant Participation Pledge (Compact) and a Tenant Participation Strategy | Greater availability of service standards, and new mechanisms for involving tenants | BVPI – as above; improved housing management performance | Community Development Team, residents' associations, tenant representatives | Mar 2006 | Community Development Manager |
| Developing the role of the RSL Management Liaison Group in tackling anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood renewal | Reduction in anti-social behaviour, and developing housing management across the concept of neighbourhood renewal | Number of local initiatives supported, and customer satisfaction | RSL Management Group, Neighbourhood Renewal unit | Mar 2007 | Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager |



Council

Date: 29 September 2005

Item No:

Author/Contact Officer:

Mairi McLean
Chief Executive
Ext. 8725

Title of the Report:

Progress on Previous Council Motions

Recommendation: That the Council receives this report.

1. Background

- 1.1 The appendix of this report sets out the appropriate motions that have been approved by Council at its meetings up to 21 July 2005 and the latest progress to date on them.

| Appendix – Progress on Previous Council Motions | | |
|--|---|---|
| Text of Council Resolution | Progress Reported | Latest Position |
| <p>7 June 2004 – Market Square Enhancement “That this council reaffirms the following from the motion passed by the Council on 23 June 2003:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consider the alternative options that retain the square as open space 2. To ensure that the brief for the architectural competition is as wide as possible. 3. To ensure a comprehensive level of public consultation is carried out culminating in a public vote on the final options <p>This Council regrets that the requirement of this policy has not been met.</p> <p>This Council recognises the urgent need to sustain the economic viability of the market and to regenerate the market square as a public space. To achieve this Council called for a public vote between two costed plans for the market square at least one of which retains the whole square as an open space.”</p> <p>Councillor Barron proposed and councillor Marriott seconded that the word “two” be deleted from the final sentence on the final paragraph of the motion. Councillor Church accepted this amendment.</p> <p>The amended motion was duly debated, voted upon and was carried.</p> | <p>Reported to June Council that Letts Wheeler prepared costings. Costings have been received and the public consultation material has been prepared.</p> | <p>Public consultation will start in the near future.</p> |

7 March 2005 - Post Office

Councillor Barron moved and Councillor Marriott seconded the following motion:-

“This Council deplores the proposal to convert the Northampton Crown Post Office in St Giles Street to a franchise operation from August 2005. This franchise could see the loss of a Crown Post Office in Northampton if in the future the private operator decides to cease trading.

This Council believes that the recent Post Office Urban Network Reinvention Programme has already had a detrimental effect on local communities and is alarmed to hear that independent research published recently acknowledges that privatised offices offer worse customer services.

Furthermore this Council recognises the excellent services offered to the whole community by Northampton Post Office and the value it adds to the commercial success of the Town. The Town area, its citizens and businesses should continue to be served by a directly managed Post Office and therefore the Council resolves to call upon Post Office Ltd to withdraw their plans to convert St Giles Street Post Office to a private operator.

Following some debate the motion was voted upon and carried.

NB Councillor Barron declared an interest in respect of the above and did not vote upon the motion.

Reported to June Council that Executive were asking a number of questions of the Post Office and the possibility of seeking the listing of the building as a Building of Special Architectural or Historical Interest.

Letter received from Post Office (attached) by way of response.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>7 March 2005 – Skateboard Facility</p> <p>Councillor Mason moved and Councillor Patterson seconded the motion.</p> <p>“This Council appreciates the need for a skateboard park in Northampton East and following extensive consultation and scrutiny of the proposal will ensure that the building of a Skateboard Park is completed by the end of June in time for the summer holidays.”</p> | <p>Reported to June Council that the supplier had advised that they intended to commence installation on 11 July with an anticipated completion for 29 July. It was anticipated that an official opening date could therefore be arranged for early August.</p> | <p>Now open. Work was completed on schedule. Official opening was Sat 13 Aug.</p> |
| <p>27 June 2005 – Housing Options Appraisal</p> <p>Northampton Borough Council re-affirms its commitment to the democratic process and a policy in which the final decision on the future of the landlord service of the Council’s Housing Stock will reside with the council tenants and that the Council will continue to develop a housing asset management structure to deliver high quality improvements to the current council housing stock.</p> <p>In pursuing the policy of seeking to meet the future needs of the people of Northampton and in reaching a decision on the future of the Housing Landlord service, Northampton Borough Council has taken the following into account.</p> <p>(i) All aspects of the Northampton Borough Council Housing Options Appraisal as required by Government policy</p> | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>(ii) Northampton Borough Council Stock Condition Survey 2003</p> <p>(iii) Northampton Borough Council's current position as a "recovering council"</p> <p>(iv) Northampton Borough Council's projected financial position 2006-2010</p> <p>(v) ODPM determination that there is no "fourth option" for Council Housing</p> <p>(vi) A meeting with the Town's MP's and Minister on 9 June 2005</p> <p>That the Chief Executive inform the Government Office of the East Midlands (GOEM) that having taken all of the factors into consideration the decision of the Council is for Stock Retention whilst further work is conducted, with full involvement of tenant representatives, into how improvements above that of the basic Decent Homes Standard can be achieved in future and into options that encourage and provide greater tenant involvement in the management of the Council's housing stock.</p> <p>The amendment was then voted upon and carried to be become the substantive motion.</p> <p>The substantive motion was then voted upon and carried.</p> | | <p>Following the motion and meeting with the appropriate Minister Yvette Cooper, Officer meetings have been held with the Chief Exec of Wakefield District Housing. Cross party meetings will be arranged in the near future to discuss delivery of Decent Homes in Northampton.</p> |
|---|--|--|

27 June 2005 – Firework Display
Councillor Barron moved and Councillor Wire seconded “This Council recognises the statement from the Round Table in that they no longer feel able to organise the annual Firework Display in Becketts Park. This Council places on record its appreciation for all that has been done by the Round Table in raising funds for charity.

In addition this Council also recognises the thousands of families who enjoy the annual event and regret that no organisation is committed to continuing with the firework display. Of particular concern is the prospect of unofficial firework displays taking place across the town which are not stewarded or controlled by the correct authorities.

Taking this into account this Council agrees to approach other agencies and authorities with a view to managing the firework display in Becketts Park to ensure a large family event continues. In addition the Roundtable will be able to continue with bucket collections for raising money for worthy causes.

The motion was carried.

This years firework display in Becketts Park will be organised by Explore Northamptonshire on Sunday 6 November.

27 June 2005 – Community Wardens
Councillor Patterson moved Councillor Boss seconded “The Labour Group are dismayed and disappointed that extra Community Wardens have failed to materialise so far this year. The Labour Group calls on the new cabinet member responsible for Community Safety to deliver more swiftly than his predecessor”.

On the 23 May 2005 the Executive agreed the roll out of new Neighbourhood Wardens across the Borough over the next three years. The roll out was agreed with and compliments the expansion of the Community Policing Services of the Northamptonshire Police.

Due to the restructuring and root and branch review of the Council it was evident there may be some existing posts within the Authority which would be at risk. In order to comply with legal restrictions and ensure that “at risk” people could be given maximum opportunity to retrain it was decided that recruitment of this year’s ten new wardens would be restricted to internal applicants only. An initial recruitment drive commenced in June, at first this did not generate a high level of interest. Additional effort has subsequently been put into promoting an interest in these posts and has now resulted in a reasonable number of internal applicants. These will be interviewed during October and training/placement on wards will begin as soon as possible after this but will be dependent on the individual circumstances of each applicant.



Council
29 September 2005

Item No.

Report of the Chief Executive

Directorate:

Author/Contact Officer:
Francis Fernandes

**PROPORTIONALITY AND OTHER
MATTERS**

Purpose of Report

To invite Council to review the representation and determine the allocation of seats on the Councils Committees and to approve the meetings cycle.

Background

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989, requires the Council, at its annual meeting, or as “soon as practicable after the meeting” to review the representation of political groups and determine the allocation of seats (i.e. proportionality). The rights of the various political groups are specified in relevant regulations.

Previous Council meetings have approved the maintenance of the status quo in memberships pending the Councils review of its political structures. However, the Council meeting on 21 July approved the new political structures and there is a need to identify the number of seats on each committee and to populate these committees.

The structures below include the Tree Panel, which is to be constituted as a committee, which means that the political balance rules apply to this committee.

Committees and Seats

The new structures involve the setting up of the following Committees:

An improvement Board (6 political Seats)

An Audit Committee (6 Political Seats)

An Overview and Scrutiny Committee (14 Political Seats)

Tree Panel (3 political Seats)

The following regulatory Committees already exist:

Licensing Committee (14 Political Seats)

Planning (11 Political Seats plus 1 Independent)

The Council will have a total of 55 seats to which the proportionality rules apply. The allocations will be as follows: the Conservative group will have a total of 22 seats, the Liberal Democrat Group will have a total of 19 seats and the Labour Group will have a total of 13 seats.

The Area Committees, Outside Bodies and Partnerships are not considered in this report and will be brought to a later meeting.

Appointments for the Chairs and Deputy Chairs need to be confirmed by Council following which the committees will have delegated powers to appoint the next Chair and Deputy Chair, using the formula agreed in the constitutional amendments.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have 2 deputy Chairs and there is a need for Council to appoint to this position.

THE NEW COMMITTEES

Improvement Board

Councillor Membership Total: 6

Political Make up:

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|
| 2 (conservative) | 2 (Liberal Democrat) | 2 (Labour) | (Total 6) |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|

Audit Committee

Councillor Membership Total: 6

Political Makeup:

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|
| 2 (conservative) | 2 (Liberal Democrat) | 2 (Labour) | (Total 6) |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|

Overview and Scrutiny

Councillor Membership Total: 14

Political Makeup:

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|
| 6 (conservative) | 5 (Liberal Democrat) | 3 (Labour) | (Total 14) |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|

Tree Panel

Councillor Membership Total: 3

Political Makeup:

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|
| 1 (conservative) | 1 (Liberal Democrat) | 1 (Labour) | (Total 3) |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|

Regulatory Committees

Licensing

Councillor Membership Total: 14

Political Makeup:

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|
| 6 (conservative) | 5 (Liberal Democrat) | 3 (Labour) | (Total 14) |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|

Planning

Councillor Membership Total: 12

Political Makeup: (NB 1 extra place available)

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|
| 5 (conservative) | 4 (Liberal Democrat) | 2 (Labour) | (Total 12) |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Council approves the meeting cycles appended to this report.
2. Council approves the number of seats on each committee as outlined in this report.
3. Council approves the political make-up of each committee (non proportional Improvement Board and Audit Committee) but proportionality Council wide maintained as far as practicable.
4. Council reaffirms the Leader and Deputy Leader appointments for the Council and each group as follows:-

LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL – Phil Larratt (Leader);
Tim Hadland (Deputy-Leader)

LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE MAIN OPPOSITION GROUP. That Councillor Woods and Councillor Glynane be Leader and Deputy Leader of the main Opposition Group.

LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE LABOUR GROUP. That Councillor Barron and Councillor Marriott be Leader and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group.
5. Council approves a seven member Cabinet.
6. Council approves the membership of each Committee as outlined below
7. Council appoints the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Improvement Board, the Licensing and Planning Committee, and an additional Deputy Chair for Overview and Scrutiny committee
 - a). CABINET.
Councillor Larratt (Leader); Councillor Hadland (Deputy-Leader); Councillors Palethorpe; Miah, Flavell, J Lill and Caswell.
 - b). IMPROVEMENT BOARD.(6)
Councillors Larratt; Councillor Hadland, Councillor Palethorpe (substitute), Councillor Barron, Councillor Marriott, Councillor Evans (substitute), Councillor Woods and Councillor Markham.(Substitute to be determined)
 - c). AUDIT COMMITTEE (6)
Councillor Patterson (Chair); Councillor Perkins (Deputy-Chair); Councillors Hope, Lane, McCutcheon and Tavener.
 - d). OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (14)
Councillors Glynane (Chair); Councillor Roy (Deputy-Chair); Councillors Allen, Church, Eldred, Hill, M.Hoare, B Hoare, Lane, Malpas, Mason, Pritchard Simpson and Tavener.(Another deputy chair to be determined)
 - e). PLANNING COMMITTEE (12)
Councillors , Crake, Edwards, M Hill, B Hoare, M Hoare, Hollis, Malpas, Robinson and Yates.(Chair and Deputy Chair to be appointed from the group) (Labour group nominations to be confirmed)

- f) LICENSING COMMITTEE (14)
Councillors Acock, Duncan, Evans, Eldred, C Lill, B Markham, I Markham, Massey, Matthews, Roy, Stewart, Taylor, Wire and Woods (Chair and Deputy Chair to be appointed from the group)
- g). TREE PANEL(3)
Councillors C Lill and Matthews.(one labour to be nominated)
- h) STANDARDS COMMITTEE.
Mrs M Roberts (Independent Chair); Mr J Romose (Independent Member); David Hughes (Parish Council Representative) Councillors Allen, Taylor, Duncan, Edwards (Labour Member to be confirmed)
- i) LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE.
(To be confirmed)

- 7). CONSULTATION APPOINTMENTS.
To reaffirm the appointment of the following Councillors with whom consultations shall be held by the named Officer under the terms set out and delegated by the Council.

Civic Matters

The Mayor, The Deputy Mayor, Councillors Barron, Church, Hadland and Larratt.

Community Enabling Fund Advisory Panel

Councillors Boss, Hadland, Hill, I Markham ,Roy and Matthews.

Markets Matters

Councillors Hadland, B Markham, Marriott, Stewart, Taylor and Wire.

PROPOSED MEETING CYCLE 2005/2006

| | September | October | November | December | January | February | March | April |
|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Monday | 29 Aug Bank Hol | | | | | | | |
| Tuesday | 30 Aug LSC 1000 | | 1 LSC 10.00 | | | | | |
| Wednesday | 31 Aug DIS | | 2 PL | | | 1 | | |
| Thursday | 1 RAC | | 3 IB | 1 IB 4 - 6 | | 2 IB | 2 IB 4 - 6 | |
| Friday | 2 | | 4 | 2 Pre CAB 300 | | 3 | 3 Pre CAB 3.00 | |
| Saturday | 3 | 1 | 5 | 3 | | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Sunday | 4 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| Monday | 5 GP | 3 | 7 AP2 | 5 CAB 7.00 | 2 | 6 | 6 CAB | 3 |
| Tuesday | 6 LSC 10.00 | 4 LSC 10.00 AP5 | 8 LSC 10.00 LC | 6 LJT LSC 1000 | 3 YF | 7 | 7 DIS | 4 |
| Wednesday | 7 AP2 YF | 5 | 9 | 7 AP5 | 4 AP2 | 8 AP6 | 8 AP2 YF | 5 AP5 |
| Thursday | 8 Pre EXEC LJT | 6 AP7 IB | 10 RAC YF | 8 A | 5 IB | 9 A 7.00 | 9 RAC | 6 OS |
| Friday | 9 | 7 Pre CAB 12 noon | 11 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 7 |
| Saturday | 10 | 8 | 12 | 10 | 7 | 11 | 11 | 8 |
| Sunday | 11 | 9 | 13 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 12 | 9 |
| Monday | 12 EXEC | 10 CAB 7.00 | 14 AP1 | 12 AP7 | 9 | 13 AP7 | 13 AP1 | 10 |
| Tuesday | 13 LSC 10.00 CDOS | 11 LSC 10.00 STDS | 15 LSC 10.00 DIS | 13 LSC 1000 DIS ∅ IB | 10 STDS RAC LSC 1000 | 14 COUNCIL + | 14 LC | 11 STDS |
| Wednesday | 14 PL LGB | 12 PL | 16 AP3 | 14 AP6 | 11 AP1 LGB | 15 PL | 15 PL LGB | 12 PL |
| Thursday | 15 PEN AP3 | 13 | 17 IB PEN LGB | 15 OS 7.00 | 12 AP3 PEN | 16 IB | 16 IB PEN | 13 IB |
| Friday | 16 | 14 | 18 | 16 | 13 | 17 | 17 | 14 |
| Saturday | 17 | 15 | 19 | 17 | 14 | 18 | 18 | 15 |
| Sunday | 18 | 16 | 20 | 18 | 15 | 19 | 19 | 16 |
| Monday | 19 AP1 | 17 | 21 | 19 AP8 | 16 | 20 AP8 | 20 | 17 |
| Tuesday | 20 LSC 10.00 | 18 LSC 10.00 OS 700 | 22 LSC 10.00 | 20 LC LSC 1000 | 17 AP4 LSC 1000 | 21 | 21 LJT | 18 AP6 |
| Wednesday | 21 AP4 WOM | 19 AP8 | 23 AP4 | 21 PL WOM | 18 PL | 22 OS 7.00 | 22 AP3 | 19 AP7 |
| Thursday | 22 Pre CL 2.00 | 20 IB | 24 Pre CL 2.00 | 22 CP | 19 IB Pre CL 2.00 | 23 COUNCIL * COUNCIL | 23 CP WOM Pre CL 2.00 | 20 A |
| Friday | 23 | 21 | 25 | 23 | 20 | 24 | 24 | 21 |
| Saturday | 24 | 22 | 26 | 24 | 21 | 25 | 25 | 22 |
| Sunday | 25 | 23 | 27 | 25 | 22 | 26 | 26 | 23 |
| Monday | 26 | 24 | 28 COUNCIL | 26 | 23 COUNCIL | 27 | 27 COUNCIL | 24 AP8 |
| Tuesday | 27 LSC 10.00 LC | 25 LSC 10.00 AP6 | 29 CP LSC 1000 | 27 | 24 DIS LSC 1000 | 28 CP | 28 | 25 LC |
| Wednesday | 28 CP | 26 CP | 30 PL | 28 | 25 CP | 29 | 29 AP 4 | 26 CP |
| Thursday | 29 COUNCIL Pre CAB 4.00 | 27 A 7.00 | | 29 | 26 AP5 Pre CAB 4.00 | | 30 IB | 27 IB |
| Friday | 30 | 28 | | 30 | 27 | | 31 | 28 |
| Saturday | | 29 | | 31 | 28 | | | 29 |
| Sunday | | 30 | | | 29 | | | 30 |
| Monday | | 31 | | | 30 CAB 7.00 | | | |
| Tuesday | | | | | 31 LC LSC 1000 | | | |

| May | June | July | August | Monday |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1 //////////////// | | | | Monday |
| 2 | | | 1 | Tuesday |
| 3 AP2 | | | 2 PL | Wednesday |
| 4 Pre CAB 4.00 | 1 | | 3 | Thursday |
| 5 //////////////// | 2 //////////////// | | 4 //////////////// | Friday |
| 6 //////////////// | 3 //////////////// | 1 //////////////// | 5 //////////////// | Saturday |
| 7 //////////////// | 4 //////////////// | 2 //////////////// | 6 //////////////// | Sunday |
| 8 CAB | 5 | 3 CAB | 7 | Monday |
| 9 AP1 | 6 LC | 4 YF | 8 | Tuesday |
| 10 PL | 7 PL | 5 PL | 9 | Wednesday |
| 11 IB YF | 8 | 6 RAC | 10 | Thursday |
| 12 //////////////// | 9 //////////////// | 7 //////////////// | 11 //////////////// | Friday |
| 13 //////////////// | 10 //////////////// | 8 //////////////// | 12 //////////////// | Saturday |
| 14 //////////////// | 11 //////////////// | 9 //////////////// | 13 //////////////// | Sunday |
| 15 | 12 AP7 | 10 | 14 | Monday |
| 16 DIS | 13 LJT | 11 STDS DIS | 15 | Tuesday |
| 17 RAC LGB | 14 IB | 12 LGB | 16 | Wednesday |
| 18 AP3 PEN | 15 OS | 13 IB PEN | 17 | Thursday |
| Pre CL 2.00 | | | | |
| 19 //////////////// | 16 //////////////// | 14 //////////////// | 18 //////////////// | Friday |
| 20 //////////////// | 17 //////////////// | 15 //////////////// | 19 //////////////// | Saturday |
| 21 //////////////// | 18 //////////////// | 16 //////////////// | 20 //////////////// | Sunday |
| 22 COUNCIL | 19 AP8 | 17 | 21 | Monday |
| 23 AP4 | 20 | 18 LC | 22 | Tuesday |
| 24 IB | 21 AP6 | 19 | 23 | Wednesday |
| 25 An CL | 22 A WOM | 20 Pre CL 2.00 | 24 | Thursday |
| 26 //////////////// | 23 //////////////// | 21 //////////////// | 25 //////////////// | Friday |
| 27 //////////////// | 24 //////////////// | 22 //////////////// | 26 //////////////// | Saturday |
| 28 //////////////// | 25 //////////////// | 23 //////////////// | 27 //////////////// | Sunday |
| 29 //////////////// | 26 CAB 5.00 COUNCIL 6.30 | 24 COUNCIL | 28 | Monday |
| 30 AP5 | 27 | 25 | 29 | Tuesday |
| 31 CP | 28 CP | 26 CP | 30 PL | Wednesday |
| | 29 IB 4-6 | 27 IB | 31 | Thursday |
| | | | | |
| | 30 Pre CAB 3.00 | 28 //////////////// | | Friday |
| | | 29 //////////////// | | Saturday |
| | | 30 //////////////// | | Sunday |
| | | 31 | | Monday |
| | | | | Tuesday |

* Council Tax Setting
+ Budget/Council

Ø Annual statement of Accounts

- CL – Council
- PL – Planning
- LSC – Licensing Sub
- LC – Licences Committee
- CAB – Cabinet
- STD – Standards
- LJT – Local Joint Committee
- OS – Overview & Scrutiny
- A – Audit

CP – Councillor Programme
IB – Improvement Board

AP – Area Partnerships

WOM – Womens Forum 12.30
YF – Youth Forum 1.00

PEN – Pensioners Forum 2.00

LGB – Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual People Forum 6.30

RAC – Race Equality Forum 6.30

DIS – Disabled Forum 5.30

DIS ◊ - Disabled Forum Budget Consultation Mtg



Council

Date: 29 September 2005

Item No:

Directorate: Finance, Governance and
Citizens

Author/Contact Officer:

Francis Fernandes
Solicitor to the Council
Ext. 7334

Title of the Report:

Review of Political Structures and
Governance Arrangements –
Constitutional Amendments and Other
Matters

Purpose of the Report

To seek Council's approval to amend the Constitution to bring into effect the Political Structures and Governance Arrangements agreed by Council on 21 July 2005.

Recommendations

Council is recommended to:-

1. Adopt the changes to the Constitution contained in the Appendices to this report.
2. Delegate specific powers to Members of the Improvement Board, the Chief Executive and Cabinet Members sitting on the Improvement Board.
3. To set up an Audit Committee.
4. To constitute the Tree Panel as a Committee of the Council. (Appendix 13)
5. To authorise officers to advertise the Constitutional changes as required by the relevant regulations.

Summary

This report seeks specific changes to the Constitution to implement Council's decision on 21 July 2005, seeking a review of the Political Structures and Governance Arrangements for the Council. The more important aspects of the changes, include the formation of the Improvement Board which will have the main purpose of driving forward the Council's Improvement and Recovery Agenda. All the old Overview and Scrutiny Committees will cease and be replaced by one single Committee, which shall have the power to set up Task and Finish Panels. New structures include an Audit Committee and the constitution of the Tree Panel as a Committee of the Council. A contract between the Council, Improvement Board, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny, will set the standards and behaviours required by the bodies and Councillors in interactions between them and will be monitored by the Standards Committee.

Context

Council approved a report on 21 July 2005, which sought significant changes to the Council's Political Structures and Governance Arrangements. Agreement in principle was sought and granted but could not be implemented until formal changes to the Constitution were drafted. This report brings forward the technical aspects of the amendments to the Constitution and if adopted by Council, new political arrangements will be able to commence immediately.

Key Changes

Improvement Board

The Improvement Board is the most significant and innovative aspect of the Political Structures Review. The details of the Constitutional changes are contained in Appendix 1 to this report. By way of explanation, the Improvement Board will have wide powers delegated to it, some of its members and the Chief Executive by both Council and Cabinet and will be able to make decisions, individually or collectively on any matter related to the Council's recovery/improvement programme. The Improvement Board individually or collectively will make Executive and non-Executive decisions respectively. Membership of the Improvement Board is limited to Leader and Deputy-Leader of each group, with provision for substitute members in exceptional circumstances. It is anticipated that the Board will appoint co-opted members from relevant organisations, for example the trade unions, business community and the County Council.

The Improvement Board will however, be required to regularly report to Council and Cabinet on its decisions.

Given that there is a potential overlap of decisions made between the Improvement Board and Cabinet, there is proposed a dispute resolution procedure at Appendix 2.

Delegations to Cabinet Members

The changes to the Constitution will allow both Cabinet and individual Cabinet members, to exercise delegated powers. Both Cabinet as a body and individual members, will therefore be able to make Executive decisions.

The Constitution delegates powers to the Leader to specify a Scheme of Delegations for each Portfolio Holder within the Portfolios identified in Appendix 3. Once the delegations have been determined, copies will be sent to all Councillors for their information.

Connected to this, are the Procedural changes to the Constitution contained in Appendix 4 which allows individual Cabinet member decisions to be made in private, unless the Cabinet member determines otherwise. However, key decisions will need to be made in public. Although decisions may be made in private, there is a requirement for those decisions to be recorded and published and provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committee members as provided in the amendments to the Constitution in relation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Audit Committee

Following Council's approval to the setting up of an Audit Committee, the membership and Terms of Reference of the Committee are contained in Appendix 5. Members should be aware that the role and Terms of Reference for the Committee follow very closely the advice on such Committees provided by CIPFA.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The amendments to the Constitution now provide for only one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Terms of Reference and the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules are contained in Appendix 6. The Rules of Procedure differ very little from the old Rules except that the Committee will now have the power to appoint two Deputy-Chairs and the Committee will have the power to set up Task and Finish Panels to assist the Committee in carrying out reviews. Overview and Scrutiny Committee will

also have the power to scrutinise Executive decisions made by the Improvement Board (through individual members or the Chief Executive).

The Contract

The amendments to the Constitution include a “Contract” which is to form part of the Code and Protocols contained in Part 5 of the Constitution. Although termed a Contract, in law, the Council cannot contract with itself. However, the Contract specifies the roles, responsibilities and behaviours expected by the main Council Governance bodies, the interaction between them, and their expected focus on improvement and recovery. Whilst the Contract cannot be enforced in the normal way, the Standards Committee will monitor members interaction vis a vis the Contract and if there are any concerns, the Standards Committee will use any powers available to it which could include making reports to full Council on the compliance with the Contract and issues arising. Accordingly, the Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee have been amended to enable the Committee to do this. The relevant amendment is contained in Appendix 8.

Rules of Procedure - Questions

The current Constitution allows questions to be asked on the day of the Council meeting. This causes practical and substantive problems in responding to the questions both for officers, administrators and members responding to the questions. Therefore, an amendment to the Constitution is proposed which requires a 12 calendar day notice period. This ties in with a notice period for normal motions.

Officer Delegations

The officer delegation amendments contained in Appendix 10 seek to regularise the position because the current delegations refer to officers who are no longer with the Council.

General Amendments

Appendix 11 proposes changes to the Constitution to implement the changes in the name of Executive to the Cabinet.

Appendix 12 inserts Council's Recovery Plan as part of the Council's Policy Framework Documents as agreed by Council in its July meeting.

It is likely that further minor changes to the Constitution will be sought, as the Political and Governance Structures settle in. Apart from these minor changes, Council at its July meeting authorised officers to commence a review of the whole Constitution. This work will be led and directed by the Political Structures and Working Practices Review Working Group and a new Constitution will be proposed to full Council after the group has considered and finalised proposals for a new Constitution.



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council

Date 29 September 2005

Item No.

Report of Chief Executive

Directorate:

Author/Contact Officer:

Mairi McLean
Chief Executive

**APPOINTMENT OF SECTION 151
OFFICER**

Recommendation

That Council appoint Alison Betts as the Council's Interim Section 151 Officer, pending a permanent appointment to the post.

Background

Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, requires Council's to "make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and secure that one of their Officers have responsibility for the administration of those affairs".

Section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 outlines the qualifications required by the Section 151 Officer. In essence, the Section 151 Officer has to be a qualified accountant, with a membership of one of a number of prescribed Accountancy Bodies. The Council's current Section 151 Officer, very recently left the Council. Whilst the functions required the role are currently undertaken by the Deputy Monitoring, there is an immediate and urgent for an appointment of a replacement Section 151 Officer.

Alison Betts, the Council's Technical Finance Manager, has the necessary qualifications to discharge the roles duties. Once the Council's structures have been settled, a view will be taken on who exactly should occupy that role.

Consultation

Legal Services