
**DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL
STRATEGY & POLICY**

JULY 2003

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SUMMARY

Why a new policy?

The Government has replaced the legislation covering repair and renewal grants with wider local authority powers to provide assistance to homeowners and, where appropriate, landlords. The Government has also signalled its belief that local authorities should encourage homeowners to use their own resources (particularly the equity in their homes) and that grants should be used for only those households that are vulnerable and have no access to other resources (including the equity in their homes).

Under the new legislation, from 18th July 2003 the old grant giving powers no longer apply and the new, wider Council powers (including power to give grants) can only be used where they are in line with a published policy.

The Council's new Housing Renewal Policy provides the basis for continuing with the provision of means tested grants for the remainder of 2003/04 and for replacing some grants thereafter with practical advice and assistance and access to loans, including an Equity Release Scheme.

Note: Disability Facilities Grants remain largely unaffected by these changes.

Objectives of the new policy

The new policy arises from -

- recent surveys of housing needs and of the condition of the private sector stock in Dartford (copies of these are available for inspection)
- the impact of being a part of the Thames Gateway, designated by the Government as an area of population and economic growth
- partnership developments within Kent that allow the Council to take a more strategic and enabling role to meeting the needs of individuals, communities and areas
- the need to use scarce public resources to encourage investment in homes and communities by the people who have a stake in them e.g. homeowners

The resulting policy objectives are summarised below.

Summary of Dartford Council's Strategic Objectives

- Responding to the needs of vulnerable households (particularly the elderly and disabled) through mandatory and discretionary grants and referral to Moat Care and Repair
- Responding to the needs of those who cannot afford essential repairs by provision of full or part funding with means-tested grants
- Promoting awareness of energy efficiency and providing access to partnership schemes such as insulation and boiler replacement
- Identifying empty properties and HMOs and liaising with the owners to ensure best and proper use
- Reacting to complaints with investigation and enforcement action

Dealing with Exceptional Circumstances

- The Council already uses its discretion to ensure that policy is not too restrictive and can respond to exceptional circumstances. Special circumstances require a tailored response such as providing temporary accommodation for a vulnerable household while works are being undertaken.
- Under the new powers (from April 2003) the Council will consider other options including financial assistance to facilitate a disabled person's move to more suitable accommodation where this is a more cost-effective solution than adapting the current home.

Complaints and Appeals

- The existing Council Complaints Procedure covers decisions made on grants (the procedure is available from the Council Reception or by post).
- This Procedure can also be used to pursue a formal Appeal against a Council decision.
- All residents have access to the Local Government Ombudsman if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the Complaints Procedure.

Practical Advice and Assistance

- The Council provides advice and assistance on a wide range of renewal activity including access to grants, home energy efficiency schemes, other sources of advice and useful literature such as its own list of local building contractors suitable for homeowners undertaking minor works.
- The Council plans to extend the range of advice and make it more accessible through leaflets targeted at particular needs and through its website. These developments are planned for implementation in 2004/05.
- The Council is exploring options for more practical assistance and encouragement through explanatory booklets for commissioning works and through schemes such as discounted building materials and tool and plant hire. Subject to further evaluation of the costs and benefits, these developments are planned for implementation in 2004/05.

Landlord Support and Liaison

- The Council expects private landlords to fund the required housing fitness standards from within the business resources.
- The Council recognises the importance of working with landlords in areas of complementary interest including housing fitness and renewal and making best use of homes available for Dartford residents. It has therefore set up a Landlords Forum in partnership with Gravesham Council.
- The Council's Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Officer will work with the above Forum to develop a locally appropriate HMO Licensing Scheme and voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme for implementation in line with the current Housing Bill that is going through Parliament.

Service Access

All private sector housing renewal services are available at the Civic Centre and by telephone using numbers advertised on the Council's website.

1. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

1.1 The Council's role

The Housing Act 1985 requires the Council to carry out surveys of the private sector stock and put in place plans for addressing poor housing conditions in that sector. These housing conditions are a result of –

- a. the physical condition of dwellings and the amenity they provide
- b. the circumstances and needs of the occupying households

The Council's role is to -

- promote and facilitate investment by property owners
- provide assistance as appropriate to household circumstances e.g. grants
- enforce statutory standards
- ensure that private housing standards and availability support other Council strategies e.g. homelessness and area renewal

1.2 Public sector conditions and tenure circumstances in Dartford

1.2.1 Background

In order to assess the housing conditions in the private sector Dartford Council commissioned a Stock Condition Survey and a Housing Needs Survey. Both of these were undertaken by Fordham Research in 2001. The following summary of the survey findings is set out to inform the development of the Council's strategy (the full Report and Executive Summary for each survey are available).

1.2.2 Tenure Profile

Set out below is a comparison of the private sector stock/tenure profile in Dartford, the South East and England as a whole.

		Dartford	South East	England
Tenure	Owner-occupied	88.9%	84.6%	83.6%
	Private rented	8.0%	8.8%	10.7%
	Housing association	3.1%	6.6%	5.5%
	TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
Building type	Terraced	42.0%	28%	30.5%
	Semi-detached	32.7%	26%	29.8%
	Detached	14.5%	28%	20.5%
	Purpose built flat	7.9%	11%	14.9%
	Converted flat	2.9%	6%	4.3%
	TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
Age	Pre - 1919	17.8%	21%	23.4%
	1919 - 1944	24.7%	16%	19.2%
	1945 - 1964	27.0%	20%	20.9%
	Post - 1964	30.5%	43%	36.6%
	TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Source: Fordham Research: Dartford Borough Council 2001 Private Stock Condition Survey

In summary, Dartford has -

- a comparatively high level of owner occupation and a level of private renting that is slightly below the average for the South East

- a significantly high proportion of terraced and semi-detached houses and only just over half the average proportion of detached houses for the South East
- a comparatively low proportion of flats and particularly converted flats
- a higher than the regional or national average proportion of homes built between 1919 and 1964 and correspondingly lower proportions of older (pre - 1919) and newer (post - 1964) dwellings.

1.2.3 Fitness and Unfitness

The stock condition survey assessed the structure of properties and the accommodation provided against the statutory Fitness Standard (Housing Act 1985 as amended by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989). Premises are “unfit” if they fail to meet one or more of the standards.

The survey found that an estimated 1,806 (5.9%) of the dwellings are “unfit”. Of these, over 75% were built pre - 1944, 53.4% failed on one item only and most (67.7%) failed on disrepair.

The relationships of unfitness with tenure and sub-area are illustrated in the **tables opposite**.

It is a significant but not unusual finding that the private rented sector features relatively highly amongst the unfit dwellings.

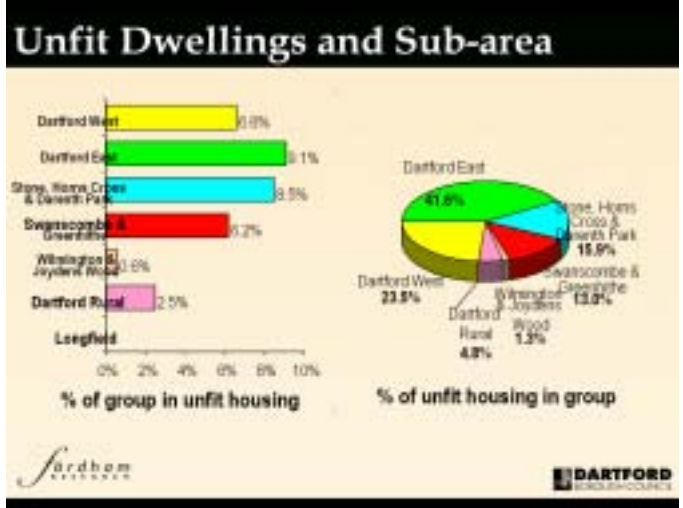
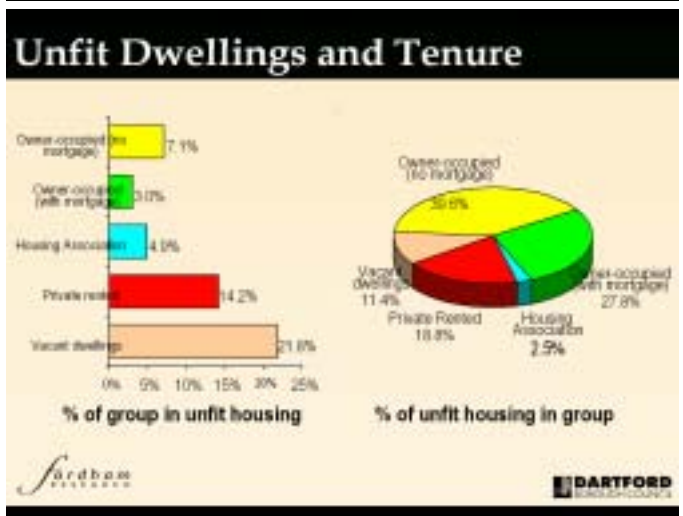
It is also significant that the owner-occupied sector without mortgages features quite prominently as this group will include a large number of older owners who have paid off their mortgages and may now be on low incomes (see Household Circumstances below).

Fitness Standard

Requirements of the Standard

- It is free from serious disrepair
- It is structurally stable
- Free from dampness prejudicial to health
- Adequate lighting, heating and ventilation
- Adequate piped supply of wholesome water
- Effective draining of foul, waste and surface water
- Suitability located WC
- Suitable bath or shower and wash-hand basin
- Suitable facilities for food preparation

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1.2.4 Household Circumstances

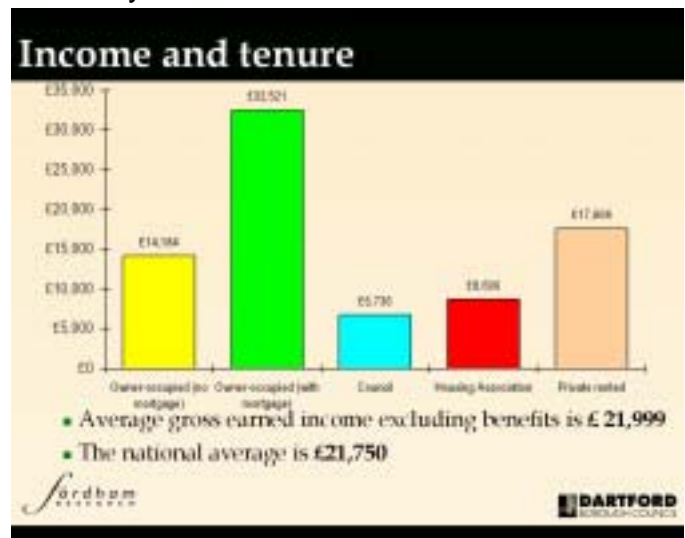
The relevant circumstances include –

- **Level and stability of income** – the ability to afford to buy and maintain a suitable home
- **Health and disability** – the requirement for particular features and amenities to make the dwelling suitable to household needs
- **Equality and social inclusion** – access to good housing and the information and services to help with its maintenance/improvement

The Housing Needs Survey carried out alongside the Stock Condition Survey includes an analysis of income by tenure as shown here.

The **table** shows the average income in Dartford to be just above the national average. Although comparative data for the South East is not provided, it is reasonable to assume that this puts Dartford well below the regional average.

Tenants are shown to have very low average incomes but their landlords are assumed to be responsible for the maintenance of their homes.



Of particular significance is the average income of owner-occupiers who do not have a mortgage. As noted above, this group includes those older residents who own a substantial capital asset in the form of their home but for whom this may become a liability if they cannot afford to maintain it at a standard that meets their needs.

1.2.5 Equalities

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001 requires local authorities to make positive efforts to combat discrimination and to establish processes for measuring progress. Housing conditions, suitability of accommodation and access to associated services can be a manifestation of the effects of discrimination.

In 2000 Dartford and Gravesham Councils commissioned a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing and Community Needs Survey. The survey was commissioned through Presentation Housing Association and carried out by the Samec Trust. The survey involved 800 personal interviews of which 293 were undertaken in Dartford. The full report and the summary of findings and policy recommendations are available. The following is a relevant selection of the findings.

- The black and minority ethnic (BME) population of Dartford was estimated at 7% (source: Social Services).
- The main BME communities are Asian, of which the predominant group is Indian Sikhs.

- There are small clusters of other communities e.g. Pakistani and Bangladeshi households and even smaller communities of Gujarati Indians, Mauritians, Chinese, Black Caribbeans and Black Africans.
- The predominant tenure is owner-occupation in all communities.
- Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Black groups are more likely than White groups to mention 'major repair' as a problem. This perceived problem is overwhelming amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi households and 15% of these groups expressed dissatisfaction with their home (twice the Borough average).
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi households have lower than average incomes whereas Indian and Chinese households have higher than average incomes.

The policy recommendations arising from these findings include:

- targeting renewal strategies at lower income owner-occupiers and private tenants – and particularly at Pakistani and Bangladeshi households
- incorporating BME issues in housing investment strategies
- providing translated literature and translation services
- improving Council understanding of the range of the local communities and engaging positively with them
- developing inclusive partnerships for housing, health and regeneration

The Council's Housing Strategy Statement 2002-2005 includes a commitment to the development of a Black & Minority Ethnic Strategy during 2003.

Also in response to the survey findings, Moat Housing Group Care & Repair (HIA) has employed an Asian caseworker to generate referrals from the Asian communities.

This Housing Renewal Strategy is designed to take account of these identified findings and needs.

1.2.6 **Social Care and Health**

Amongst the Council's key objectives for a Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy are helping older, infirm or otherwise vulnerable people to –

- stay in and enjoy their own homes
- keep mobile and engaged with the community around them
- avoid the physical and mental health problems that can be associated with unsuitable housing
- return from hospital to suitably adapted accommodation
- avoid accidents and other crises in the home

The three key housing related issues affecting the above objectives are:

- disability and unsuitable/unusable accommodation
- fuel poverty resulting in cold and damp living environment and sometimes insufficient money to eat properly

- disrepair compounding the problems of maintaining a warm and safe environment.

Disability: The Council already uses its partnership with Moat Care & Repair to promote and facilitate the take up of mandatory Disability Facilities Grants. This is not just for the elderly and the 2002 Survey of English Housing found that 43% of people aged under 16 with a disability were living in unsuitable accommodation compared with 77% of those aged 65 and over. Joint working with Health and Social Services ensures that these are also targeted at the needs that facilitate hospital discharge. The West Kent Joint Management Group for services to the disabled provides an overview of this partnership working.

Fuel poverty: The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2001 estimates that 31.3% of single pensioners in Dartford are living in fuel poverty.

Disrepair: The Council's eligibility criteria for discretionary renovation and Home Repair Assistance Grants focus on the elderly and the infirm on low incomes.

Many of those in Dartford who are vulnerable to the effects of disability, fuel poverty and disrepair are on low incomes and have no access to alternative sources of funding. However, a large proportion will be amongst the group of owners who have no mortgage or a very small mortgage outstanding. These are often described as "property rich, income poor". The Government estimates that nationally there is some £367 billion of unmortgaged equity amounting to £72,000 per property. In 'Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing – A strategic framework' the government argues for the release of some of this equity to fund essential repair and improvement works for older and possibly infirm homeowners.

1.2.7 Estimate of Potential Demand for Grant

The Stock Condition Survey findings point to the following estimated expenditure requirements –

- **On repairs required to unfit dwellings:** £8.0m in the owner occupied sector and £3.7m in the private rented sector
- **On all urgent repairs:** £29.6m in the owner occupied sector and £5.6m in the private rented sector
- **On energy efficiency improvements:** £17.8m in the owner occupied sector and £3.1m in the private rented sector

It is assumed that in most circumstances it is the private landlord that will fund the improvement of rented property.

In the owner-occupied sector, taking account of owners' ability to pay for these works, the survey findings estimate a potential grant aid demand of –

- £5.0m for repairs required to unfit dwellings
- £15m for urgent repairs
- £7.3m for energy efficiency improvements

1.3 Best Value

The Council has a duty of Best Value under the Local Government Act 1999, which requires it to keep services under review and seek continuous improvement in value for money and meeting customer expectations on the scope and effectiveness of services. Part of this requirement is an annual Best Value Performance Plan setting out performance improvement proposals and targets against local performance indicators and nationally set Best Value performance indicators (BVPIs).

There are three BVPIs (BVPIs 62 – 64) covering renewal activity but only two (BVPIs 62 & 64) apply to the private sector.

Dealing with unfitness - BVPI 62: *'the proportion of unfit private sector homes made fit or demolished as a direct result of local authority action'*.

In relation to BVPI 62 the Council's Best Value Performance Plan 2002/03 states –

"Dartford's performance was in the top quartile in 2000/01 and improved from 5% to 7.8% in 2001/02. This is a reflection of the fact that demand for grants increased greatly in 2001/02. The lower target of 2.8% for 2002/03 is explained by the need to take account of findings of the 2001 private sector stock condition survey which has revealed a far greater level of unfitness than had hitherto been understood to exist. In percentage terms, this will undoubtedly result in less properties being made fit or demolished, even if the Council were able to slightly increase its level of action."

The targets of 2.8%, 3.0% and 3.2% in the years 2003/04 to 2005/6 reflect the anticipated impact of the HMO Officer and HMO licensing, the Landlords Forum and the proposed Voluntary Accreditation Scheme for Private Landlords. All of these are covered in this strategy review.

Energy efficiency SAP ratings – this only applies to local authority owned dwellings, although there are other duties under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (see 2.3.4 below) that impact upon the private sector.

Dealing with empty dwellings - BVPI 64: *'the number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished during the year as a direct result of action by the local authority'*.

The Council's Best Value Performance Plan set a 10% target for BVPI 64 in 2003/03. This BVPI was amended for 2002/03 and so a direct comparison with previous performance is not available. In any event, performance in 2001/02 was distorted by a number of dwellings being returned to use as a result of multiple purchase and reoccupation by a single individual. Targets of 10%, 12% and 14% in the years 2003/04 to 2005/6 reflect the Council's ever-increasing focus on empty properties.

The Council will continue to measure its performance by setting local targets against these national performance indicators. The Council will also set local performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the revised policies arising from this strategy review.

1.4 Who benefits? – return on public investment

There are four strategic targets for private sector housing renewal activity –

- **Property:** dealing with the state of repair, availability for use, energy efficiency and health and safety elements of individual properties and property types such as houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).
- **People:** providing financial and/or practical assistance to those who are vulnerable to the effects of poor or inappropriate housing e.g. tackling fuel poverty, providing disability facilities and facilitating return from hospital or convalescence.
- **Areas:** tackling area decline by targeting public spending in such a way that it encourages others to buy and invest in that locality.
- **Communities:** addressing the needs of communities of interests that may or may not be geographically defined but who share particular needs e.g. private tenants, black and minority ethnic extended households that are caring for the elderly.

The Council's approach to renewal has hitherto had its primary focus on individual properties and people (the wider strategy is outlined in **2.2** below). The main beneficiaries have been those receiving grants and practical assistance from the Council and through partnerships such as those with Moat Care and Repair and the Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP). This 'pepper pot' approach to the use of public funds has been successful in its own terms but has not contributed to a wider strategy of encouraging private investment.

The Council will continue this focus on the needs of vulnerable individuals. However, the greater freedoms under the new Regulatory Reform Order (see **3.1.2**) provide an opportunity to seek a "return" on social investment by using it to encourage private investment by current and in-coming property owners and to address needs identified through the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, Housing Needs Survey and Black and Minority Ethnic Housing and Community Needs Survey (see **1.2** above).

2. CURRENT RENEWAL STRATEGY AND POLICY

2.1 The Scope of “Housing Renewal”

“Renewal” is a key component of the Council’s overall strategy for the private housing sector. For the purposes of this *Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy* “renewal” activity is taken to cover the provision (directly or through others) of information, advice, practical assistance, financial support and use of enforcement powers to -

- address unfitness, health and safety and major repair needs
- match facilities and amenities to the needs of the household
- encourage and facilitate investment by property owners
- ensure that vulnerable owner-occupiers and tenants whose health and welfare are adversely affected by housing conditions are appropriately advised and assisted

2.2 Current Council Strategy

The Council’s current (pre-July 2003) Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy has evolved over time and is reflected in a series of policy initiatives as set out in **2.3** below. As noted in **1.4** above, the Council has focused its strategy on addressing the needs of individual properties and applicant households. In addition, it has an active approach to addressing fuel poverty, long-term empty homes and the inspection of HMOs.

This current Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy can be summarised as –

- responding to the needs of vulnerable households (particularly the elderly and disabled) through mandatory and discretionary grants and referral to Moat Care and Repair
- responding to the needs of those who cannot afford essential repairs by provision of full or part funding with means-tested grants
- promoting awareness of energy efficiency and providing access to partnership schemes such as insulation and boiler replacement
- identifying empty properties and HMOs and liaising with the owners to ensure best and proper use
- reacting to complaints with investigation and enforcement action

2.3 Current Council Policy

2.3.1 Council Grants and Loans Policy

Since the implementation of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 the renovation grants regime has comprised:

- Mandatory Disability Facilities Grants
- Discretionary Renovation Grants
- Discretionary Home Repair Assistance Grants
- Discretionary Common Parts Grants

All of these are subject to a test of the applicants' financial means (i.e. household income and savings).

Council policy has been to provide the first three of these Grants but not the fourth (Common Parts Grants). The latter is seen as less appropriate to the needs of the Borough and therefore not the best way of using Council financial resources (see **2.4.2** for Government support and budget provision).

The Council's last review of its Grants Policy (Community Services Committee October 1999) confirmed this approach.

Appendix 1 sets out for each of the Grants covered by Council Policy:

- Purpose
- Scope
- Eligibility criteria

The Council does not provide loans to homeowners or landlords and has looked to the commercial lending sector as the appropriate source of competitive, equity based loans.

2.3.2 Information and Advice Services

The Council's Private Sector Housing team (see **2.4.1**) provides advice on the rights and obligations of owners and tenants and on grant availability and eligibility. The team also provides practical assistance on seeking professional surveys and procuring works, including provision of a list of suitable local building contractors. The Council's website provides information on the services available.

The Council also provides a very wide range of information, advice and assistance through its various partnerships (see below).

The Council has recently established a Landlords Forum. This provides a focus for engaging with private sector landlords on the benefits of working together for a commercially viable, good quality, private rented sector that contributes to the wider housing needs of the Borough. Part of its work will be to consider the practicalities and benefits of an accreditation scheme for landlords and the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (see **2.3.6**).

2.3.3 Home Improvement Agency

Dartford Council jointly part funds a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) with Gravesham Council. HIAs also receive financial support from the Government, now under the Supporting People regime via the County Council. These agencies are often referred to as "staying put" or "care and repair" agencies and their primary purpose is to promote and facilitate the management of works and associated grant funding that enable older people and those with disabilities to stay in and make best use of their homes.

The Dartford, Gravesham and Kent County partnership supports Moat Care & Repair, a member of the Moat Housing Group. The operation of Moat Care & Repair is overseen by a Steering Group and is subject to a written Specification and Agency Agreement.

Dartford Council also funds Moat Care & Repair to provide –

- A Handyperson Scheme (£2,000 p.a.)
- A Gardening Scheme (£1,000 p.a.)
- A Decorating Scheme (£1,000 p.a.)
- A Security Scheme (£1,000 p.a.)

2.3.4 Energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty

The Council has various duties under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) and also has an obligation to have a strategy for addressing fuel poverty within the Borough (any household spending more than 10% of its income to heat the home is regarded as in “fuel poverty”). A recent report to Cabinet (26th June 2003) outlined the progress made in addressing these obligations. A summary of the initiatives that support a housing renewal strategy is set out below.

The Council is required to provide information to the Government on its annual improvement in energy efficiency across all homes in the Borough. The measure used is a numerical rating of efficiency based on the Standard Assessment Procedure and referred to as a ‘SAP rating’. The Stock Condition Survey shows the overall picture and the Council has, since 2000, been using questionnaire surveys to build up a database and geographic assessment to inform its strategy.

The Council has worked in partnership with local authorities and health authorities in Kent, utility companies, National Energy Action (NEA) and others to develop and implement the Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy. This partnership strategy aims to take all Kent residents out of fuel poverty.

The Kent Energy Centre is part funded by all Kent local authorities. Amongst the services provided by the Centre and its ‘parent’ company, Creative Environmental Networks, are –

- promotions and a free phone energy advice line
- assisted access to grants, discounts and energy saving schemes
- provision of discount schemes such as Kent Action to Save Heat (KASH)
- a quarterly newsletter distributed throughout Kent
- training and profile raising for energy conservation and sustainable warmth
- current development of a web-based service, ‘Energy Net’, that will provide Internet access to information on schemes and on grant availability and eligibility including an on-line “do I qualify?” and application service.

Partnership schemes that the Council participates in and which make the direct link between health and efficient energy use include –

- West Kent Healthy Homes for asthmatics and
- Health Through Warmth, which ensures that health workers identify and refer households who would benefit from grants and other schemes.

2.3.5 Empty Homes

The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey estimated that 942 private sector dwellings (3.1% of the overall private stock) are vacant and that 205 (21.8%) of these are 'unfit' (representing 11.4% of all unfit private sector dwellings). However, in an area of high demand for housing most of these will be made fit by new owners and the problem of empty properties is therefore an important but relatively small one in Dartford.

The Council introduced its current Empty Housing Policy in 1995 at a time when the estimated number of empty private sector dwellings was 900 i.e. very similar to the findings of the recent Stock Condition Survey. The policy is based on local circumstances, the work of a corporate Empty Housing Strategy Group and published good practice. The policy involves a designated Empty Housing Officer to provide a focus for public contact, publicity and action. Through that officer the Council has built up a register of empty properties and targets those where the owner does not appear to be taking any action and where the condition of the property is adversely affecting the neighbourhood. This targeting includes identifying and making contact with owners, discussing ways in which the Council can assist or make appropriate contacts that would help in bringing the property back into use. The success rate for this approach is high.

The Government has recently (May 2003) published new Guidance on tackling empty property in the private sector. The Council feels that the measures contained in the Guidance are more relevant to areas of low demand, however, it welcomes this new focus and clarity and will adopt all relevant approaches in order to ensure best use of the Borough's housing stock.

2.3.6 Houses in Multiple Occupation

The Council employs a Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Officer. This officer provides a link between HMO landlords and tenants and the Council. He is currently developing a positive working relationship with HMO landlords with a view to establishing a mutually beneficial Landlord Accreditation Scheme and responding to the HMO licensing provisions in the current Housing Bill.

HMOs are also being targeted for energy efficiency promotions and advice (see **2.3.4**) because of the need for improvements in this sector. The Stock Condition Survey shows a relatively low average SAP rating of 35 in this sector compared to the Borough private sector average SAP rating of 48.

2.3.7 Enforcement of standards

As already noted, the Council is required to by Section 605 of the Housing Act 1985 to consider, at least once a year, the condition of all housing in all tenures across the Borough. It must also consider "the most satisfactory course of action" for dealing with premises that are unfit for human habitation.

In accordance with Government Guidance and statutory powers, the Council's policy in determining the course of action is to first seek an

appropriate outcome through encouragement and possible assistance (e.g. grant) to the owner before using its powers of intervention in management, closing order, demolition order, works in default or compulsory purchase.

2.4 Resources

2.4.1 Staffing

The Council's Private Sector Housing Team forms a part of the Strategy Division of Housing. The Team comprises the following officers:

Private Sector Manager
Technical Officer (Grants)
Technical Officer (HMO)
Administration Assistant
(The Housing Advice Co-ordinator and HECA Officer supports the work of the Team).

2.4.2 Budget provision

The 2003/04 capital and revenue budgets for private sector renewal activity are set out below.

Capital	
Disabled Facilities Grants (including 60% subsidy)	£300,000
House Renovation Grants	£165,000
Home Repairs Assistance Grants	£20,000
Total	£485,000

Revenue (excluding Council staffing)	
Moat Care & Repair (excluding Government grant)	£22,750
Handyperson Scheme	£2,000
Home Energy Initiatives	£24,010
Total	£48,760

3. CONTEXT FOR THE REVIEW

3.1 National Policy, the Regulatory Reform Order and Housing Bill

3.1.1 Government Policy

In the Housing Green Paper *'Quality and choice: A decent home for all'*, the Government set out its aim "to provide better opportunities for people to maintain and repair their homes from their own resources where they are able to do so, and to help those who cannot do so". Amongst the proposed methods to meet this aim were:

- Review of the current local authority renewal grant and loan regime
- Consideration of the role of equity release schemes

In July 2002 the Government introduced the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order (the Regulatory Reform Order - see below). At that time the Government reaffirmed its policy on housing renewal and the purpose of the Regulatory Reform Order. The key paragraphs are set out below.

"Poor quality housing can have an adverse impact on the health and well being of the occupants in an area. The Government's view is that the primary responsibility to maintain a property must lie with the owner. However, the Government is committed to improving housing quality across all tenures including the owner-occupied sector and fully accepts that some homeowners, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable, do not have the necessary resources to keep their homes in good repair. Local authorities therefore have an important role to provide assistance in these cases. To this effect local authorities already have a statutory duty to review their housing stock and consider how best to use their powers to remedy deficiencies."

Source: ODPM Housing Renewal Guidance 2002

"Judgement will be needed in the circumstances in which authorities offer grants, loans or a combination of both. The Government accepts that loans will not be suitable for all those in need of assistance and the Order is not intended to bring about wholesale replacement of grants with loans. The Government would also consider that an authority was failing in its duty as a housing enabler and in its responsibility to consider the condition of the local private sector stock if it did not make some provision for assistance. **A blanket 'no assistance policy' whether for grants, loans or both, would therefore be unacceptable.**"

Source: ODPM Housing Renewal Guidance 2002

The Government has summarised the circumstances in which the public sector may need to provide assistance in carrying out essential repairs and improvements in the private sector as follows –

- "where the health of the occupier is at risk from poor quality housing and the owner cannot afford to repair the house
- where the poor condition of a house or group of houses is having a negative impact on the neighbourhood
- to support and sustain area-based regeneration"

Source: ODPM Housing Renewal Guidance 2002

3.1.2 The Regulatory Reform Order

Background

The Council currently gives grants to homeowners under powers contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 replaces these powers with new ones designed to give greater freedom to local authorities to enable, promote and support improvements to privately owned dwellings, where owners need financial assistance.

The Order was introduced on 18th July 2002 and it withdraws the current grant giving powers on 18th July 2003. From that date the Order empowers local authorities to give grants and other assistance for repair, improvement and adaptation or to enable improvement through demolition and reconstruction or through the purchase of alternative accommodation. However, before it can implement the Regulatory Reform Order, a local authority must agree and publish a Private Sector Renewal Policy stating how it intends to provide assistance.

In effect, Dartford Council cannot continue with a grant policy after 18th July 2003 unless it has published its strategy and associated policy.

i.e. to make use of the new powers the Council must first –

- adopt a strategy and approve a policy
- give public notice of the adoption of the policy through two local newspapers and other appropriate means
- make a copy of the full policy available at the Civic Centre for public inspection, free of charge and at all reasonable times
- provide copies of a summary of the document upon request and by post if required

The Government's view on the importance of the policy is set out below (see also **Appendix 4**).

“The policy is essential for determining the nature and extent of assistance that will be available and for ensuring that housing renewal services are appropriate and effective. It will need to be evidence-based, realistic and achievable and will provide the means by which the strategic aims and objectives of an authority are turned into actions.”

Source: ODPM Housing Renewal Guidance 2002

Key points of the Order

The Regulatory Reform Order makes the following significant changes:

- it introduces a new general power enabling local housing authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal
- it repeals the detailed legislative provisions in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 regarding Renovation Grants, Common Parts Grants, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Grants, Group Repair and Home Repair Assistance Grants
- it repeals the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 relating to loans given by local authorities for housing renewal. The 1985 Act powers

for loans will remain available for local authorities who are not housing authorities

- it streamlines the provisions governing the declaration and operation of Renewal Areas
- it makes minor changes to the provisions in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), but the system for providing mandatory DFGs remains largely unchanged

Implications

As noted above, the new general power to give assistance is available from 18th July 2003, subject to the Council having a published policy in place. Most of the existing powers in relation to private sector housing grants will be repealed on 18 July 2003. Amendments to the DFG regime will also take place from that date.

Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform Order contains the new general power to provide assistance for housing renewal. This may be for repair, improvement and adaptation of housing. Assistance may also be given for the demolition of a dwelling and help with rebuilding costs and may also be given by a local authority to provide alternative accommodation in any location where this supports the improvement of living conditions in the Borough. Such latter assistance can be made available in two specific circumstances. These are where:

- the authority proposes to purchase (whether voluntarily or compulsorily) the existing accommodation or
- the provision of alternative accommodation represents a better solution than repairing, improving or adapting the existing property.

The new power enables authorities to give assistance directly to people, or indirectly such as through a home improvement agency (HIA) (e.g. Moat Care & Repair), a specialist financial intermediary or some other 'special purpose vehicle'. The assistance includes payment for any fees and charges associated with the assisted works.

The power given by the Order is limited to the policy adopted and published by the Council. Information on the policy will also have to be made available to the public. If offering financial advice or information, the Council would also have to be satisfied that the recipient had obtained appropriate advice or information on any obligations arising from the assistance. If this includes having to make a repayment, the Council would need to have regard to the person's ability to afford it.

3.1.3 Draft Housing Bill (2003)

The Government's current Draft Housing Bill focuses on private sector housing and five main topics. These are:

- **Replacement of the Housing Fitness Standard:** The now long-awaited proposal is to replace the test of "fitness" (based on criteria first introduced 80 years ago) with a new Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This is a more precise tool that assesses actual risk rather than simply the physical conditions. It also provides for Category 1 and Category 2 hazards depending on their seriousness. In the current draft the presence of hazards

and yet to be specified circumstances gives rise to a duty of mandatory action by the local authority. Some discretionary action is under consideration. When enacted this legislation will have a significant impact on the application of the Council's housing renewal policy.

- **HMO licensing:** The Bill provides for a mandatory licensing scheme for "high-risk" houses in multiple occupation (HMO). The example given for "high-risk" is a three-storey house occupied by five persons (households) – this is a less common occurrence in Dartford than in areas with larger houses and more flatted conversions (see 1.2). The Bill also proposes discretionary powers to deal with problem HMOs outside the licensing scheme. When enacted this legislation will have a significant impact on the application of the Council's housing renewal policy and the activity of the Council's HMO Officer. The Council is already committed to the introduction of HMO licensing.
- **Selective licensing of other privately let accommodation:** This proposal is meant primarily for areas of low demand, with bad or even criminal landlords and low social cohesion leading to neighbourhood decline. As such, this is a measure designed for localities other than high demand areas like Dartford. However, although the Council will not wish to use licensing it is committed to the introduction of landlord accreditation to underpin the partnership working with landlords through the recently convened Landlords Forum.
- **Home information packs:** These "seller's packs" may impact upon the Council's renewal strategy but only at the margin and to positive effect.
- **Right to Buy:** The proposals on extending the qualification period and the period after sale during which part of the discount will have to be repaid are intended to -
 - a. retain as much affordable housing as possible
 - b. reduce the amount of ex-council property that moves across into the private rented sector (often through purchase by companies)

The latter point (b) may have some bearing on the implementation of the Council's renewal policy.

3.1.4 Neighbourhood Renewal

The Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit was set up to co-ordinate and guide local and national responses to what has been termed "postcode poverty" i.e. the link between ill health, poor housing, educational under-achievement and lack of social cohesion and individual prosperity within particular "deprived" neighbourhoods. While much of the focus for this in the South of England is within areas of public sector housing, these links also apply in areas of low-income owner-occupation and private renting. The 2002 report of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, "*Changing neighbourhoods, changing lives*", introduces three main strands of the strategic response –

- **Better spending:** co-ordinated and complementary public investment
- **Better partnerships:** best use of all contributions including the community itself

- **Better information:** sound data for policy direction and review

3.2 Regional and sub-regional policy and influences

GOSE

The Government Office for the Southeast (GOSE) has set nine regional priorities. These are listed in full within the Council's Housing Strategy Statement 2002-2005 (p.3) and include the following (in the order listed) –

- meeting the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic people and Asylum Seekers
- improving the quality and suitability of the housing stock
- promoting regeneration and neighbourhood renewal

Thames Gateway and Kent Thameside

The Government's Communities Plan identifies the Thames Gateway as one of the main areas for major growth in England. Rapid expansion of new housing, set around new economic and transport hubs has very significant implications for the future of the existing stock in Dartford. This Renewal Strategy has taken account of –

- the *opportunities* that come with inward migration and housing demand
- the *threats* that come with competing attractions of new homes when set against older homes needing substantial and ongoing investment

Within the Thames Gateway, Dartford's strategic partnership with Gravesham, *Kent Thameside – the future place*, provides a framework for managing these opportunities and threats. Within the *Kent Thameside Community Strategy 2003* there is a significant focus on –

- creating a balance - “the best of both old and new – a future place”
- identifying specific “Priority Communities” that are areas that can be targeted for renewal activity
- providing a focus on priority groups such as the elderly, disabled and minority ethnic communities
- encouraging community engagement
- promoting health action - Health Action North Kent (HANK) and the West Kent Health Improvement Programme (WKHIMP).

3.3 Local circumstances and strategic direction

3.3.1 Council Member Seminar

As part of the development of this strategy, Council Members were invited to a Private Sector Housing Renewal Seminar on the 24th of March 2003. The seminar introduced Members to Government policy, the Regulatory Reform Order and the results of the local Private Sector Stock Condition and Housing Needs Surveys. In discussing the Council's current and future strategy those Members present supported the following –

- consultation with stakeholders (see 4.2) on a wide range of options (see Section 5)

- maintaining current patterns of expenditure within a new strategy
- making best use of resources and seeking additional funding wherever possible
- strengthening the positive impact of housing renewal assistance on vulnerable groups
- a strategic focus on areas as well as individual property and household needs

The input of elected Members at this stage of the strategy development process provided strategic guidance and allowed for the very wide consideration of options at the Stakeholder Consultation event in April 2003 (see 4.2), to which they were also invited.

Since that time the local elections have resulted in new Members joining the Council and a new Administration. It is important that the new strategy and policy are agreed in time to ensure continuity beyond the coming into effect of the Regulatory reform Order on 18th July 2003. Members will have further opportunities to consider the policy when key components come forward for approval and when the effectiveness of the strategy is reviewed in consultation with stakeholders.

3.3.2 Council Values and Strategic Aims and Priorities

The Council's Private Sector Renewal Strategy is driven by its statutory responsibilities and by its Values, Strategic Aims and Corporate Priorities. These are set out below.

Statement of the Council's Values

Social justice, social inclusion, a sustainable, safe, quality environment for existing and new residents
Empowering and involving residents
High quality services responsive to the reasonable needs of residents
Working with others in partnership to maximise benefits for the Borough Sense of Civic Pride among Members, Officers, Stakeholders and Residents

The Council's Aims and Priorities

<p style="text-align: center;">Citizenship and Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage a spirit of citizenship and foster pride in Dartford, its heritage and its future. We will consult, involve and listen to the views of local people ▪ We will work in partnership with residents, business, the voluntary sector and other relevant parties to build a stronger, safer, socially inclusive community

Housing

- We will endeavour to ensure that everybody has access to safe, sustainable and quality housing that meets their needs at a price they can afford

Environment

- Work to achieve a quality environment for Dartford, one that is clean, safe and pollution free.

On this basis, the Council's **Strategic Aim for Private Sector Housing Renewal** is as set out below.

Dartford Council

Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

- To use public resources in such a way that they encourage private investment and sustained improvement to the quality of homes throughout Dartford - and particularly in areas requiring this public investment to lever in private investment.
- To encourage home owners and landlords to invest in their properties in order to create sustainable and high-quality housing and attractive and popular communities through –
 - Practical advice
 - Publicity and scheme promotion
 - Assistance to release and invest equity where appropriate
 - Enforcement action where necessary to meet statutory obligations, protect health and safety or contribute to the success of a wider investment strategy
- To provide grants and/or loans to those who cannot afford to meet the full costs of works that are necessary to provide an acceptable level of amenity and/or to contribute to the regeneration of a locality.
- To provide a range of financial and practical assistance for those who are vulnerable through age, disability or other reason and whose current housing conditions are deleterious to health and safety.

3.3.3 Links to other strategies

The development of this Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy has taken account of its contribution to and dependence upon other strategies and particularly those listed below:

- Homelessness** – access to good quality private rented housing
- Fuel poverty** – providing advice and assistance
- Supporting People** – practical help through a Home Improvement Agency
- Health** – links with health services for referrals and partnership working

- ☑ **Crime and disorder** – creating stronger neighbourhoods
- ☑ **Local Plan:** a focus on the Town Centre and renewal of other localities
- ☑ **Equal opportunities** – the flexibility to address the needs of particular groups and communities
- ☑ **Best Value** – achieving performance indicators and maximising value for the expenditure of public funds

The options appraisal in **Section 5** takes account of the links between these strategies and private sector housing renewal activity.

4. PARTNERSHIP & STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

4.1 Partnership Opportunities

The Council has the following partnership arrangements to support its Renewal Strategy.

A local strategic partnership (LSP) with Gravesham Council through which joint initiatives such as the Landlords Forum are being developed and funded.

A Kent County Partnership, or range of partnerships, on matters such as Supporting People and new policy evaluation. Kent authorities are also jointly pursuing an equity release initiative in partnership with a lender.

A Home Improvement Agency in the form of Moat Care & Repair, a partnership involving Moat, Gravesham and Kent County Council.

A fuel poverty and energy efficiency partnership with Kent Energy Centre.

Health partnerships such as the West Kent Joint Management Group managing a coordinated response to the needs of disabled people and joint promotions of grants through hospitals and general practitioners.

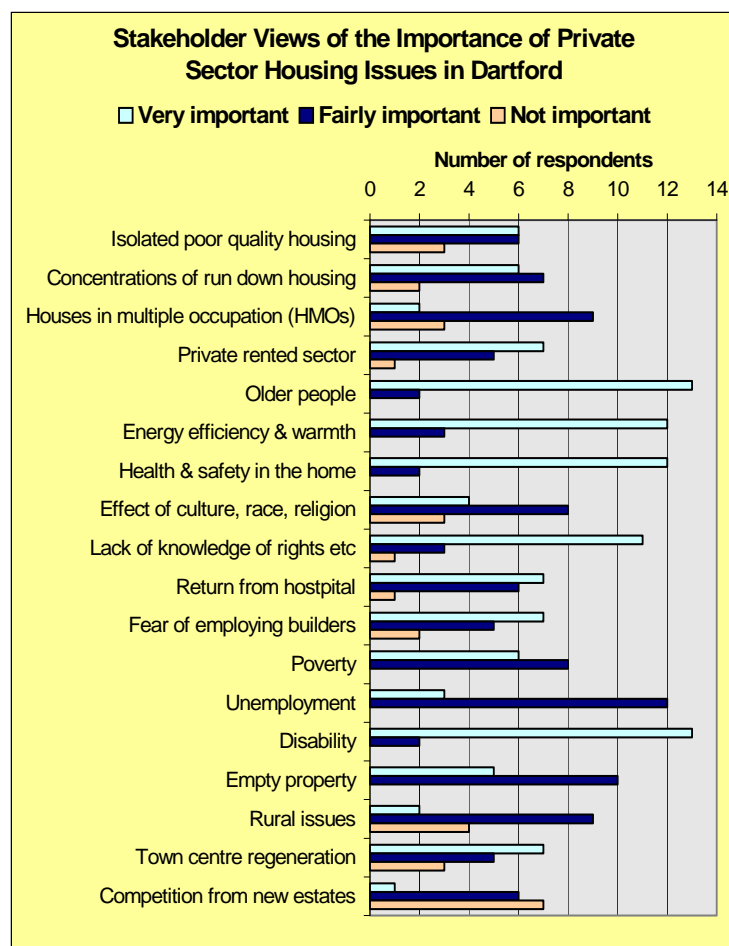
As part of this Strategy the Council is now considering further partnerships such as those with private sector landlords and property managers and others with lenders against property equity and suppliers who could be part of a materials and plant hire discount scheme.

4.2 Stakeholder Consultation

On 11th April 2003 Dartford Council held a stakeholder seminar entitled *Improving Private Sector Housing Conditions in Dartford through Partnership*.

The agenda covered the recent survey findings, the national, regional and sub-regional context, the policy options and group discussion on a partnership strategy for Dartford.

Representatives of landlords, property managers, lenders, estate agents, health services, social services, advocacy organisations and partner authorities and agencies were invited. They were also sent a short questionnaire

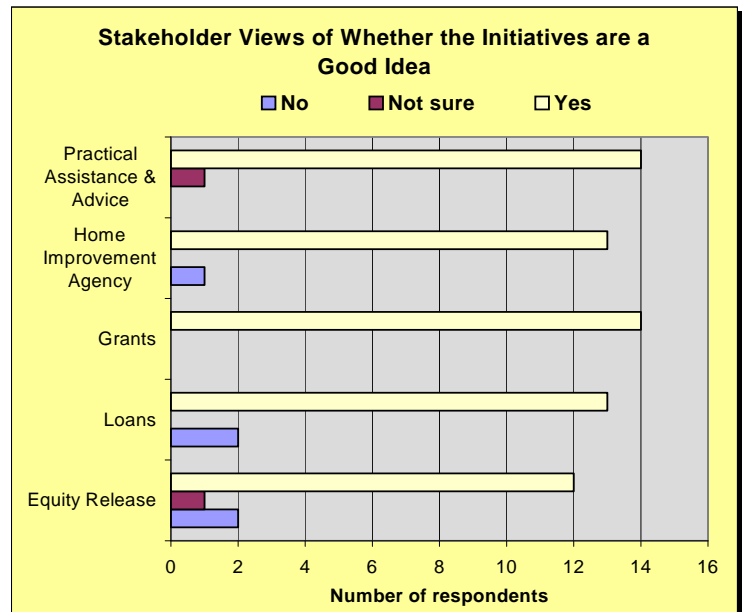


Appendix 2. Analysis of the 15 returned questionnaires generated the tables above and on the next page.

This useful event generated a number of ideas and new (renewed) commitments to joint working. These have been fed into this Renewal Strategy.

The wide range of useful comments made on the questionnaire covered the following:

- Opportunities for new and extended partnerships based on successful experience elsewhere e.g. working with an RSL on an empty homes agency
- Managing hospital discharge through partnership and cooperation with Health using Access and Capacity Grants through the HIA
- Energy efficiency promotions and partnerships that maximise the return on public investment, including match funding with grants
- Engagement with private sector landlords and managing agents based on shared interests in neighbourhood renewal
- Practical ideas such as the extension of a Handyperson Scheme and facilitating the engagement of building contractors
- Consideration of the impact of wider strategies such as sustainable communities and housing options for the elderly
- E-government opportunities for County or regional service access
- Broad support for most if not all the policy options and practical advice, together with concern for the vulnerable – particularly on equity release – and for what works best



5. STRATEGIC AND POLICY OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Strategic and Policy Options

The strategic and policy options can be classified in a number of ways.

In terms of **Council objectives** they can be classified as –

- Promotion
- Assistance
- Enforcement

In terms of **strategic priorities** they can be classified (in accordance with ODPM Guidance) as –

- a. **Client-based** e.g. single pensioners or extended BME households
- b. **Area-based** e.g. a focus on areas requiring public sector investment to encourage private sector investment by owners
- c. **Property-based** e.g. types of property that present particular problems e.g. pre-1919 houses or HMOs
- d. **Sector-based** e.g. making best use of the private rented sector
- e. **Theme-based** e.g. a focus on issues such as fuel poverty or hospital discharge

In terms of **policy options** they can be classified as –

A. Advice, information and referral to other agencies

- i. Housing renewal advice line and E-Government services (possibly in partnership with others)
- ii. Leaflet packs for user groups i.e. homeowners, landlords and tenants
- iii. Referral to appropriate lenders
- iv. Referral to partner agencies

B. Financial assistance

- i. Mandatory Disability Facilities Grants (not strictly an option and therefore not appraised below)
- ii. Discretionary grants for renovation, repair/making fit, security or relocation
- iii. Loans by the Council and/or others, including equity release
- iv. Other financial assistance such as cover for loan arrangement fees and loan/mortgage guarantees

C. Practical assistance

- i. Home Improvement Agency (Care & Repair and Handyperson scheme)
- ii. Energy efficiency schemes
- iii. Discount schemes – materials and/or tool and plant hire

- iv. 'How To' and 'Who to Contact' booklets for homeowners considering major works to the property
- v. Temporary accommodation to facilitate the carrying out of major works – particularly for the elderly or infirm

D. Encouragement and enforcement

- i. Empty property partnerships with a Registered Social Landlords
- ii. HMO licensing
- iii. Landlord accreditation – voluntary scheme
- iv. Statutory enforcement (a Council duty and so not strictly an option and therefore not appraised below)

5.3.2 to 5.3.5 provide an appraisal of these policy options under the service headings **A.** to **B.** above. The appraisal of each policy option takes account of local relevance of the strategic priorities listed at **a.** to **e.** above and the appraisal criteria at **5.2** below.

5.2 Options appraisal criteria

The appropriateness to the Dartford strategic context of each of the options under **A.** to **D.** in **5.1** above has been appraised using the following criteria.

Options Appraisal Criteria:-	
i.	<p>Corresponding to stakeholder consultation feedback</p> <p>i.e. each option fits with the express views of partner agencies and interested parties. Inevitably there is some difference of opinion in these diverse groupings and this has been taken account of in considering the likely weight of opinion for and against (or neutral).</p>
ii.	<p>Meeting corporate/ strategic priorities</p> <p>i.e. the degree to which each option fits with the Council's renewal objectives but also its wider service and quality of life objectives</p>
iii.	<p>Providing value for money</p> <p>i.e. the degree to which each option represents the most economic and effective means of achieving the desired outcomes</p>
iv.	<p>Maximising investment impact</p> <p>i.e. the degree to which the application of each option has a wider renewal impact on the area or client group</p>
v.	<p>Fit with Government policy</p> <p>i.e. the match with Government policy on renewal, partnerships, citizenship and the role of the public sector</p>
vi.	<p>Fit with regional/sub-regional priorities</p> <p>i.e. the contribution that each option makes to joint strategies in Kent and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)</p>

5.3 Appraisal outcomes

5.3.1 Appraisal methodology and scoring

The following appraisals are a brief summary of the more detailed consideration of each option. The appraisal criteria set out above have been applied to each option under consideration. The scoring is not an exact science and opinion will vary on the actual score applied. Nonetheless, it does provide a way of differentiating the impact, local acceptability and likely effectiveness of the options to assist in policy development. Scores are applied to reflect the “fit” with each criterion i.e.

Little or no fit	‘0’	Reasonable fit	‘1’	Good fit	‘2’
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The scores are summarised in **Appendix 3**

5.3.2 Advice, information and referrals

Housing renewal advice line/web based service		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Well favoured in consultation	2
Corporate/strategic priorities	Good fit with corporate priorities	2
Value for money	Short term investment cost	1
Investment impact	Reliance on public activity/response	1
Fit with Government policy	Meets both Renewal and E-Govt. policies	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Could arise from current regional/sub-regional group working	1
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 75%
This option is a positive development on the current services and the Council’s wider service commitments. It will take time to develop but forms a part of the phased implementation of this Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.		

Leaflet packs for homeowners, landlords and tenants		Score
Stakeholder consultation	General support that could become stronger in more detailed consultation e.g. Landlords Forum	1
Corporate/strategic priorities	A positive contribution to the Council being able to facilitate self-help in the community	2
Value for money	Relatively low cost for a positive return	2
Investment impact	Designed to be part of a promotion campaign by area and/or target group (e.g. HMOs)	2
Fit with Government policy	Fully in line with the Governments approach to public sector enabling and citizenship	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Contributes to achieving renewal aims and could be developed jointly with the LSP	1
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 83%

This option is a positive development on the current services and the Council's wider service commitments. It could be introduced quite quickly and considered for a production budget in 2003/04 as part of the phased implementation of this Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.

Referral to appropriate lenders		Score
Stakeholder consultation	General support but some concerns about the risks of the Council becoming involved in financial advice	1
Corporate/strategic priorities	Appropriate if part of a partnership that shares the cost/risk of such a service	1
Value for money	Only if part of a recognised policy for maximising owner investment	1
Investment impact	Largely focused on a single homeowner but could be part of a promotion within an area or to target particular client groups	1
Fit with Government policy	The Government is keen to promote personal borrowing as part of a renewal strategy	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	As for value for money and investment impact above	1
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 58%
This option would only become a real priority if it was linked to an equity release scheme promoted by the Council (see under Financial Assistance). It is not a good use of Council time on its own and is not therefore included in the phased implementation of the Strategy.		

Referral to partner agencies		Score
Stakeholder consultation	A number of effective partnerships exist and more were suggested in consultation	2
Corporate/strategic priorities	Fully in line with the Council's partnership approach	2
Value for money	One of the key drivers of partnerships	2
Investment impact	Partnerships are more likely to deliver a wider impact	2
Fit with Government policy	Fully in line with Government promotion of inter-agency and partnership working	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Supports and draws on the existing joint working arrangements	2
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 100%
This option builds on existing partnerships and those in development. It allows for different partnerships to focus on particular needs (Care & Repair), areas (through the LSP) and tenure types (closer working with landlords and property managers). The phased implementation of the Renewal Strategy assumes the strengthening of existing partnerships and the development of new ones.		

5.3.3 Financial Assistance

Discretionary grants – renovation, repair, security, relocation etc.		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Strong support for some or all of these in appropriate cases	2

Discretionary grants – renovation, repair, security, relocation etc.		Score
Corporate/strategic priorities	Suitable response to cases where the applicant is vulnerable, a loan is inappropriate and/or there is a wider community benefit e.g. area renewal	2
Value for money	Good value in addressing particular circumstances	1
Investment impact	Little wider impact on the community or area	0
Fit with Government policy	Government urge that this option be retained to respond to particular circumstances	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Some wider impact in line with Kent Thameside Community Strategy and Kent quality of life strategies	2
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 75%
<p>The overall strategy is to promote and facilitate self-help but to provide appropriate assistance to vulnerable groups. This option is therefore appropriate in exceptional cases and is retained within the Renewal Strategy for these purposes. Phased implementation allows for the <u>retention of the current discretionary grants policy</u> pending a review alongside an evaluation of other and as yet untried parts of the overall policy.</p>		

Loans, equity release (directly or through others)		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Support for equity release but some concern about the practicalities and benefits for the elderly	1
Corporate/strategic priorities	The Council sees the commercial sector as the appropriate lender but would facilitate access to good advice and an approved lending and/or equity release product i.e. through a partnership scheme with a lender and other Kent authorities	1
Value for money	A relatively small investment of staff time to bring substantial private investment	2
Investment impact	Promotion could be targeted at areas that need investment – possibly linked to other advice and assistance and to grants in appropriate circumstances	2
Fit with Government policy	This is the Government’s preferred funding route for much of its renewal strategy	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Discussion is already taking place on a partnership scheme with Kent authorities and lenders	2
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 83%

Loans, equity release (directly or through others)	Score
<p>The 2002/03 Survey of English Housing reveals a reluctance amongst the elderly to borrow to carry out repairs, even if the Council is the lender and the terms include no interest or deferred interest. The Survey also reveals a preference amongst younger groups for commercial rather than Council loans (if available). The Council will therefore wish to promote the availability of loans rather than make loans itself.</p> <p>Consumer surveys, Joseph Rowntree Foundation research and Council of Mortgage Lender advice all suggest that further development of equity release is needed before it will be attractive to the target of older homeowners. The Council acknowledges the potential of equity release in achieving its renewal objectives and is already investigating the potential for a scheme in partnership with other Kent authorities and a building society. The phased implementation of the Renewal Strategy assumes a timetable for concluding this research and joining in a pilot equity release scheme.</p>	

Other financial assistance – loan arrangement fees and guarantees		Score
Stakeholder consultation	General support where this would unlock potential investment	1
Corporate/strategic priorities	This is something that the Council would normally regard as a matter for the owner taking the loan	0
Value for money	A small Council grant or 'soft loan' could facilitate investment that would not otherwise happen	1
Investment impact	This could form part of an area based package of measures to encourage owner investment	1
Fit with Government policy	The Government wishes such schemes to be considered subject to local circumstances	1
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Could fit with the local Community Strategy on a case by case basis	1
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 42%
This option is not a priority in Dartford where property values and levels of equity will normally be sufficient to off-set these costs.		

5.3.4 Practical Assistance

Home Improvement Agency – Care & Repair and Handyperson		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Widely supported	2
Corporate/strategic priorities	Fully in line with the Council's commitments to partnerships and to meeting the needs of vulnerable groups	2
Value for money	Good return on public investment	2
Investment impact	Good basis for outreach amongst client groups and within particular areas	2
Fit with Government policy	The Government promotes the use and further development of Home Improvement agencies	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	As for Corporate/strategic priorities	2
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 100%

The Council will continue to develop its relationship with Moat Care & Repair subject only to the normal processes of ensuring Best Value

Energy efficiency schemes		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Very high on everybody's list of priorities	2
Corporate/strategic priorities	The Council already has a record of achievement on energy efficiency, reflecting its priorities	2
Value for money	Good value through partnership	2
Investment impact	The schemes have a wider social/economic impact beyond the individual household	2
Fit with Government policy	Good fit with Government policy and statutory requirements (HECA 1995)	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Kent Energy Centre provides a sub-regional focus	2
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 100%
The Council will continue to be an active member of the partnerships with the Kent Energy Centre and other agencies, subject only to the normal processes of ensuring Best Value		

Discount schemes – materials and/or tool hire		Score
Stakeholder consultation	General support but some scepticism about the likely take-up/impact	1
Corporate/strategic priorities	These schemes could be made to pay for themselves and thereby offer good value	2
Value for money	See Corporate/strategic priorities	2
Investment impact	Could generate a build up of local interest	1
Fit with Government policy	The Government wants such schemes to be considered	1
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Little or no specific impact (unless it was a sub-regional partnership scheme)	0
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 58%
Not a high priority but something worth considering further within the phased implementation of the Renewal Strategy.		

'How To' and 'Who To Contact' booklets		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Wide support for this type of practical assistance	2
Corporate/strategic priorities	Positive promotion and support for a self-help approach alongside more direct assistance for vulnerable groups	2
Value for money	Projects a positive service image at relatively low cost	2
Investment impact	Largely limited to individual households but could be part of an area based renewal/promotion strategy	1
Fit with Government policy	Fully in line with the Governments approach to public sector enabling and citizenship	2
Regional/sub-	Contributes to achieving renewal aims and could be	1

regional priorities	developed jointly with the LSP	
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 83%
This option is similar to the leaflet packs above but provides more technical advice. It is a positive development on the current services and the Council's wider service commitments. It could be introduced quite quickly and considered for a production budget in 2003/04 as part of the phased implementation of this Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.		

Temporary Accommodation		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Promoted by advocates of vulnerable groups such as the elderly and disabled	2
Corporate/strategic priorities	In line with the Council's concern for vulnerable groups but only in exceptional circumstances	1
Value for money	This would be part of the case by case consideration	1
Investment impact	Focuses on a single property and set of circumstances	0
Fit with Government policy	The Government wants such schemes to be considered	1
Regional/sub-regional priorities	As for Corporate/strategic priorities	1
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 50%
This is an option that will be retained for dealing with the very particular circumstances of a vulnerable household and where essential work cannot otherwise take place and other options are more expensive		

5.3.5 Encouragement and enforcement

Empty Property Partnership i.e. purchase and let by an RSL		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Raised in the stakeholder consultation by the Council's existing partner for this purpose	1
Corporate/strategic priorities	Application limited to circumstances where the owner will not comply and other measures have not been successful	1
Value for money	Uncertain value in the current property market	0
Investment impact	Could help in the uplift of the neighbourhood	1
Fit with Government policy	A good fit but more applicable in areas of low demand and housing market collapse	1
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Not a specific priority	0
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 33%
There is an existing arrangement with Registered Social Landlords Association. Property prices limit the application of the scheme but it will be retained for dealing with particular circumstances and where it provides affordable housing		

HMO Licensing		Score
Stakeholder consultation	Mixed views but wide recognition that the HMO sector needs particular renewal attention	1

HMO Licensing		Score
Corporate/strategic priorities	The Council is already committed to this and has employed a HMO Officer to take it forward	2
Value for money	Remains to be seen; could be fully or partially self-financing through the levy of a license fee.	1
Investment impact	This is part of its justification	2
Fit with Government policy	A provision are in the Housing Bill	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	Could be a joint approach at sub-regional level	1
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 75%
A current commitment to be phased in with the passing of the Bill to an Act.		

Landlord Voluntary Accreditation		Score
Stakeholder consultation	As for HMO licensing	1
Corporate/strategic priorities	An existing commitment to finding mutual benefit in such a scheme through the Landlords Forum	1
Value for money	Remains to be seen. It need not take a lot of administration and to be worth doing it should have benefits beyond the Renewal Strategy	1
Investment impact	Indirectly links to the HMO licensing above	1
Fit with Government policy	The Government promotes voluntary partnership working to contribute to a wider availability of good accommodation in all sectors	2
Regional/sub-regional priorities	The Landlords Forum is a joint initiative with Gravesham Borough Council	2
Summary:		% Score (out of 12) 67%
The voluntary scheme will be designed to bring benefits to landlords through such things as the operation of Housing Benefit, practical advice on landlord and tenant matters and access to tenants referred by the Council. The scheme is a current commitment and will be developed and piloted alongside the phased implementation of the Renewal Strategy.		

6. RENEWAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Arising from this review the Council is pursuing the strategic objectives summarised in 2.2 and repeated below:-

Summary of Dartford Council's Strategic Objectives

- Responding to the needs of vulnerable households (particularly the elderly and disabled) through mandatory and discretionary grants and referral to Moat Care and Repair
- Responding to the needs of those who cannot afford essential repairs by provision of full or part funding with means-tested grants
- Promoting awareness of energy efficiency and providing access to partnership schemes such as insulation and boiler replacement
- Identifying empty properties and HMOs and liaising with the owners to ensure best and proper use
- Reacting to complaints with investigation and enforcement action

Based on the strategic and policy options appraisal in **Section 5** the Council proposes to adopt the following policies and implementation arrangements:

Policy	Implementation Timescale
i. Continue the existing (pre 18 th July 2003) Grants Policy as set out in Appendix 1 pending consideration of the impact of other policies set out below. Subject to further review outcomes, withdraw all or most discretionary grants in favour of other practical assistance and access to commercial loans.	With immediate effect. Reviewed by March 2004. Subject to review outcomes, withdrawal of all or most discretionary grants during 2004/05.
ii. Continue to promote mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants and support and develop Moat Care & Repair services in partnership with Gravesham Borough Council and Kent County Council.	Ongoing
iii. Establish and promote a suitable lending arrangement with other Kent local authorities and one or more suitable lenders to facilitate the release of equity for home renovation, repair and improvement.	Dartford to maintain a positive input to achieving a pilot scheme within 2004/05 Full implementation, subject to review of the pilot, by April 2005.
iv. Develop practical assistance, information and advice services based on E-Government commitments and the production of a range of user-friendly information and advice guides.	Full appraisal and development for budget consideration in October 2003. Implementation Quarter 1 of 2004/05.

Policy	Implementation Timescale
v. Introduce Voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme through the Landlords Forum. Balance the benefits of accreditation to the landlord with the impact on quality in the private rented sector.	Implementation in Quarter 4 of 2003/04
vi. Introduce Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation as a means of registering and responding appropriately to standards in this sector	To be ready for when the relevant provisions of the current Housing Bill are enacted.
vii. Maintain and develop the inputs for Dartford arising from the Kent Energy Centre and associated schemes	Ongoing
viii. Evaluate options for discount schemes through local suppliers that would encourage homeowners to undertake minor works either directly (where appropriate) or through a contractor. Evaluation to be on the basis of cost/benefit and likely impact.	Options to be evaluated and reported by March 2004
ix. Retain the Empty Property Partnership arrangement with Registered Social Landlords.	
x. Retain the option of providing temporary accommodation and other relevant assistance to vulnerable households where such assistance is consistent with the Council's definitions of "vulnerable" and is in all the circumstances appropriate and consistent with the nature and urgency of the works.	Ongoing

DISABILITY FACILITIES GRANT

Status	Mandatory i.e. the Council is obliged to give the Grant to qualifying households (this will continue to apply after 18 th July 2003)
Limit	Grant ceiling of £25,000
Government support	Government grant currently covers 60% of eligible expenditure on mandatory grant provision. These provisions now fall within the Supporting People funding regime.
Purpose	<p>A means tested grant to cover or contribute to the cost of adapting a home to meet the needs of a disabled occupant i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making the home safe to use ▪ Improving access to the home ▪ Improving access to amenities within the home ▪ Providing suitable bathroom, kitchen and sleeping facilities <p>The needs and appropriate works are assessed by an Occupational Therapist.</p> <p>The work is normally specified, procured and supervised through the Housing Improvement Agency i.e. Moat Care & Repair</p>
Eligibility criteria	<p>The following are eligible applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A registered or registrable disabled owner-occupier or tenant ▪ A person having a registered or registrable disabled person living with them ▪ A landlord with a registered or registrable disabled tenant <p>The Council must be satisfied that the proposed works are necessary and appropriate</p> <p>Eligibility and size of the grant as a contribution towards the costs are subject to a test of financial means i.e. household income and savings</p>

RENOVATION GRANT

Status	Discretionary i.e. the Council is not obliged to give such grants and does so by policy and in accordance with its private sector renewal strategy (this can continue to apply after 18 th July 2003 subject to the grants being in accordance with a published Policy)
Limit	No specific limit (subject to Council judgement on the requirement and reasonableness of the case)
Government support	No direct financial support
Purpose	A means tested grant contribution to the cost of improving or repairing a dwelling that is unfit
Eligibility criteria	<p>The following are eligible applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Landlords or landlord's agents in receipt of a statutory notice under the Housing Act 1985 ▪ A person who is registered or registrable as disabled ▪ A person who is over 60 ▪ An owner-occupier with housing conditions that grossly interfere with the occupation of habitable rooms or are life threatening ▪ An owner-occupier with housing conditions that place the household under extreme social or economic pressure <p>The residency qualification is 3 years ownership/occupancy of the dwelling concerned.</p> <p>The grant must be repaid if the applicant does not retain ownership of the dwelling for 5 years following the payment of the grant.</p> <p>Eligibility and size of the grant as a contribution towards the costs are subject to a test of financial means.</p>

HOME REPAIR ASSISTANCE GRANT

Status	Discretionary i.e. the Council is not obliged to give such grants and does so by policy and in accordance with its private sector renewal strategy (this can continue to apply after 18 th July 2003 subject to the grants being in accordance with a published Policy)
Limit	Grant ceiling of £5,000
Government support	No direct financial support
Purpose	<p>A means tested, small grant for minor works of repair, improvement or adaptation to a dwelling. Consideration is given where prevailing conditions are likely to affect the health, safety or welfare of occupants.</p> <p>Special priority consideration is given to the elderly on income related benefits and to the disabled and infirm for works involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heating to bedrooms and bathrooms ▪ New or improved thermal insulation (not covered under any other scheme) ▪ Secondary glazing to living room/occupied bedroom nowhere existing is single glazed
Eligibility criteria	<p>The following are eligible applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Those on income related benefits or are aged 60 or over or are disable or infirm or are a carer for any other above ▪ Those who live in the dwelling as their only or main residence or care for an elderly (over 60), disabled or infirm person ▪ Those who have an owner's or tenant's interest in the dwelling and have a duty or power to carry out the works in question <p>The residency qualification is 3 years ownership/occupancy of the dwelling concerned except where the works are to adapt a dwelling for the purposes it becoming the main or only residence of a carer.</p> <p>Eligibility and size of the grant as a contribution towards the costs are subject to a test of financial means.</p>

PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL DETAILS

NAME: POST (if applicable):
 ORGANISATION: CONTACT ADDRESS:
 EMAIL ADDRESS: TELEPHONE No.

A. ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

What priority do you attach to the following issues in relation to private sector house conditions and a strategy for Dartford?

'2' = very important in Dartford
 '1' = fairly important in Dartford
 '0' = not important in Dartford

Please put a '0', '1' or '2' as above against each issue listed below

Isolated poor quality private property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Return from hospital/'bed blocking'	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concentrations of run down housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fear of employing builders	<input type="checkbox"/>
'Houses in multiple occupation' HMOs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poverty	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private rented sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older people	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy efficiency and warmth	<input type="checkbox"/>	Empty property	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health and safety in the home	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
The effect of culture, race or religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Town centre regeneration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of knowledge about rights & services	<input type="checkbox"/>	Market competition from new estates	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. TYPES OF ASSISTANCE AND INITIATIVE

Do you think the following initiatives are a good idea or not?

	Good idea? ✓
<p>1. Equity release: In line with Government thinking, Dartford Council is exploring the possibility of working with lenders and others to help older homeowners to release some of the equity in their homes and, if appropriate, to invest the money in repairs and energy efficiency improvements.</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please give comments, ideas and examples of good practice:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px;"></div>	
<p>2. Loans (other than equity release): The Council has powers to provide loans or help people to make their own loan arrangements. A loan might be suitable for small but otherwise unaffordable works. In some cases, a combination of loan and grant could be appropriate.</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please give comments, ideas and examples of good practice:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px;"></div>	
<p>3. Grants: It is likely that Dartford Council will to continue giving means tested grants. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants will continue. Renovation, repair and improvement grants could be provided to particular groups, areas and/or property types and for particular reasons (subject to consultation and Council approval)</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please give comments, ideas and examples of good practice:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px;"></div>	

Good idea? ✓

- 4. Home Improvement Agency:** The Council supports the Moat Housing Group 'Care & Repair' scheme that helps older people to apply for grants and get adaptations and essential improvements carried out. It is expected that this support will continue.

Yes

No

Not sure

Please give comments, ideas and examples of good practice:

- 5. Practical assistance:** The Council wants to encourage renovation etc. and could consider forms of assistance such as advice booklets on getting work surveyed and undertaken, lists of reliable contractors and arranging discounted materials and tool/plant hire

Yes

No

Not sure

Please give comments, ideas and examples of good practice:

- 6. Others: Please set out and/or comment on –**

- any other ideas and initiatives that would be appropriate to Dartford's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy
- partnership opportunities that you can participate in and/or recommend
- other strategies that could be supported by Private Sector Housing Renewal e.g. sustainable energy use, crime and disorder, economic regeneration etc.
- anything else you feel is important

Thank you very much for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

Please return it whether fully or partially completed by 25th April 2003, either by bringing it to the seminar or sending it to **Andrew Palmer, Head of Housing Strategy** at:-

Dartford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Home Gardens
Dartford
Kent DA1 1DR

andrew.palmer@dartford.gov.uk

OPTIONS APPRAISAL MATRIX

APPENDIX 3

This is a summary of the Options Appraisals in Section 5 (see 5.3.1 for the scoring). It takes account of:-

- the Appraisal Criteria in the Matrix below and set out in 5.2
- opportunities for partnership working and maximising available resources
- the relevance of each option to one or more of the Strategic Priorities listed as a. to e. below.
 - a. **Client-based** e.g. single pensioners or extended BME households
 - b. **Area-based** e.g. a focus on areas requiring public sector investment to encourage private sector investment by owners
 - c. **Property-based** e.g. types of property that present particular problems e.g. pre-1919 houses or HMOs
 - d. **Sector-based** e.g. making best use of the private rented sector
 - e. **Theme-based** e.g. a focus on issues such as fuel poverty or hospital discharge

OPTIONS	APPRAISAL CRITERIA: Meeting the priorities of:-						Overall % & Proposal
	Stakeholders	Corporate priorities	Value for money	Investment impact	Government policy	The region/ sub-region	
A. Advice, information & referrals – See 5.3.2							
Housing renewal advice line/ E-Government services (possibly in partnership)	2	2	1	1	2	1	75% for phased implementation
Leaflet packs for homeowners, landlords and tenants	1	2	2	2	2	1	83% for phased implementation
Referral to appropriate lenders	1	1	1	1	2	1	58% not a priority
Referral to partner agencies	2	2	2	2	2	2	100% build on current and new partnerships

OPTIONS APPRAISAL MATRIX

APPENDIX 3

OPTIONS	APPRAISAL CRITERIA: Meeting the priorities of:-						Overall % & Proposal
	Stakeholders	Corporate priorities	Value for money	Investment impact	Government policy	The region/ sub-region	
B. Financial assistance – see 5.3.3							
Discretionary Grants – renovation, repair, security, relocation etc.	2	2	1	0	2	2	75% retain as current and review
Loans and Equity Release (directly or through others)	1	1	2	2	2	2	83% no Council loans - pursue Equity Release scheme in partnership
Other financial assistance – loan arrangement fees and guarantees	1	0	1	1	1	1	42% not a priority – not being pursued
C. Practical assistance – see 5.3.4							
Care and Repair and Handyperson scheme (HIA)	2	2	2	2	2	2	100% retain and develop
Energy Efficiency partnership schemes e.g. boiler scheme	2	2	2	2	2	2	100% retain and develop
Discounted materials/tool and plant hire	1	2	2	1	1	0	58% not a priority but consider further

OPTIONS	APPRAISAL CRITERIA: Meeting the priorities of:-						Overall % & Proposal
	Stakeholders	Corporate priorities	Value for money	Investment impact	Government policy	The region/ sub-region	
'How To' and 'Who to Contact' booklets including contractors list	2	2	2	1	2	1	83% high priority for introduction
Temporary accommodation	2	1	1	0	1	1	50% retain as option in exceptional circumstances

D. Encouragement & enforcement – see 5.3.5

Empty Property Partnership with an RSL	1	1	0	1	1	0	33% limited use in current market but retain as option
HMO Licensing	1	2	1	2	2	1	75% current commitment
Landlord Voluntary Accreditation	1	1	1	1	2	2	67% current commitment

The Government’s expectations of Private Sector Renewal Policies post July 2003 are set out in the following extract from the Guidance.

The full policy document detailing the assistance to be made available under Article 3 of the Order should include the following:

Government Requirement	Dartford Borough Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ how the policy will contribute towards the fulfilment of the local authority's strategic aims, objectives and priorities including those expressed through a local strategic partnership; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ the options appraisal criteria (5.2) takes account of local circumstances, partnerships wider and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ how the policy will contribute towards the fulfilment of the local authority's housing strategy and any other relevant corporate strategies; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ it links in with area and community strategies as well as vulnerable households with particular needs, it also supports best use of all available housing through work with landlords
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a statement of the key priorities which the policy will address and the reasons for selecting them; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ the Strategic Objectives are summarized in Section 6 and lead directly to the policy proposals and implementation timescales in the same Section
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the amount of capital resources that will be committed to implementing the policy, including resources provided by partner organisations; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ as committed for 2003/04 and subject to review by March 2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a description of the types of assistance available, what the assistance will be used for, and what key outcomes will be achieved by each form of assistance; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Section 3 sets out the context for the review and the outcomes sought, section 5 describes the associated policy options and appraises their suitability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the circumstances in which persons will be eligible for assistance; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Eligibility for Council grant assistance is set out in Appendix 1, other partnership schemes have clear documentation on eligibility and other (non-financial) assistance will be generally available on request
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the amounts of assistance that will be available to eligible persons, and how these amounts will be determined; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No change in 2003/04. Publicity thereafter as the policy is implemented in accordance with the published plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the types and amounts of preliminary or ancillary fees and charges associated with the provision of assistance that will be payable and in what circumstances; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No change in 2003/04. Publicity thereafter as the policy is implemented in accordance with the published plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the process to be used to apply for assistance, including any preliminary enquiry system; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No change in 2003/04. Publicity thereafter as the policy is implemented in accordance with the published plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ how persons can obtain access to the process of applying for assistance; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The policy Summary sets this out

The full policy document detailing the assistance to be made available under Article 3 of the Order should include the following:

Government Requirement	Dartford Borough Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ details of conditions that will apply to the provision of assistance, how conditions will be enforced and in what circumstances they may be waived; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No change in 2003/04. Publicity thereafter as the policy is implemented in accordance with the published plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ advice that is available, including financial advice, to assist persons wishing to enquire about, and apply for, assistance; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The policy Summary sets this out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the arrangements for complaints about the policy and its implementation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The policy Summary sets this out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the arrangements for applications for assistance to be considered where these fall outside policy; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The policy Summary sets this out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ key service standards that will apply to the provision of assistance e.g. how long it will take to approve an application for assistance once submitted, how long it will take for assistance to be completed once approved; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ These are explained in the publicity information on current assistance. Changes to policy will be accompanied by new service standards where applicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ national performance indicators that are relevant to the policy and the targets that the authority has set itself to improve performance; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ See 1.3 on Best Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ local performance indicators and targets that will be used to measure the progress made by policy implementation towards meeting the authority's strategic aims, objectives and priorities and the fulfillment of corporate strategies; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ See 1.3 on Best Value – new indicators will arise from the review (prior to March 2004) and the transition to the practical assistance and access to loans policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a policy implementation plan that will, amongst other things: state the policy commencement date; the planned date when a successor policy document will be issued; the frequency with which policy implementation (including performance against indicators and targets) will be reported and publicised; and the circumstances that might necessitate an earlier review of the policy document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Section 6 provides the initial implementation plan and dates for completion of detailed work leading to the introduction of new policy proposals

TERM/ACRONYM	MEANING
Care and Repair	A Home Improvement Agency (HIA) run by Moat Housing Group in partnership with Dartford and Gravesham Councils
Disability Facilities Grant	A mandatory grant for the adaptation and provision of facilities that make e home fully usable by a disabled person (see Appendix 1)
DFG	See Disability Facilities Grant
E-Government	A requirement of Government that local authorities plan the more extensive and best use of information and communication technology (ICT) (including the Internet) in the delivery and management of services
Equity release	A type of loan where the lender takes an interest in the equity in the borrower's home, which is then realised when the property is sold – this may be particularly appropriate for older homeowners who need work carried out on the property and who are on low incomes but have significant equity locked up in their homes (such schemes are already available from lenders but work is needed to make them more acceptable and user-friendly for older applicants)
Handyperson scheme	A scheme run by Moat Care & Repair and part funded by Dartford Council for carrying out minor works for the elderly and disabled
HECA	The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 that requires the Council to promote energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty
HIA	See 'Home Improvement Agency'
HMO	See 'House in Multiple Occupation'
Home Improvement Agency	An agency part-funded by the Government (now under Supporting People) and part-funded by the local authority that manages the grant application and works commissioning and supervision for the elderly and disabled
House in multiple occupation	A house converted into a number of dwellings that share communal space and access arrangements
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership – in this case the Kent Thameside partnership with Gravesham Borough Council
Means test	A test of a grant applicant's income and savings
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Regulatory Reform Order	The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 that from 18 th July 2003 replaces current grant giving powers with wider powers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

PRIVATE SECTOR STOCK CONDITION SURVEY 2001

HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY 2001

BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC HOUSING SURVEY 2000