

Notice of Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

Tuesday, 2 July, 2013 at 6.30pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday, 24 June 2013

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact David Lowe / Elaine Walker on (01635) 519817 / 519441

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Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk



Agenda - Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to be held on Tuesday, 2 July 2013 (continued)

To: Councillors Jeff Beck, Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Marcus Franks, Dave Goff, Mike Johnston, Alan Macro, Gwen Mason, Tim Metcalfe, Andrew Rowles, Garth Simpson, Tony Vickers, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Substitutes: Councillors Peter Argyle, George Chandler, Sheila Ellison, Roger Hunneman, Carol Jackson-Doerge, David Rendel, Julian Swift-Hook and Keith Woodhams

Agenda

Part I

Page No.

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any),
2. **Minutes** 1 - 10
To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Commission held on 14 May and 21 May 2013.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members.
4. **Actions from previous Minutes** 11 - 14
To receive an update on actions following the previous Commission meeting.
5. **West Berkshire Forward Plan August 2013 to November 2013** 15 - 24
Purpose: To advise the Commission of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council from August 2013 to November 2013 and decide whether to review any of the proposed items prior to the meeting indicated in the Plan.
6. **Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme** 25 - 34
Purpose: To receive, agree and prioritise the work programme of the Commission for the remainder of 2013/14.
7. **Items Called-in following the Executive on 9 May 2013** 35 - 130
To consider any items called-in by the requisite number of Members following the previous Executive meeting.
- Adoption of the Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-18



Agenda - Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to be held on Tuesday, 2 July 2013 (continued)

8. Councillor Call for Action

Purpose: To consider any items proposed for a Councillor Call for Action.

9. Petitions

Purpose: To consider any petitions requiring an Officer response.

10. Fire Service

131 - 134

Purpose: To understand how the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) provides cover for the West Berkshire area.

Andy Day
Head of Strategic Support

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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, 14 MAY 2013**

Councillors Present: Peter Argyle (Substitute) (In place of Andrew Rowles), Jeff Beck, Brian Bedwell, Jeff Brooks, Marcus Franks, Dave Goff, David Holtby, Mike Johnston, Alan Macro, Gwen Mason, Tim Metcalfe, Garth Simpson (Substitute) (In place of Virginia von Celsing), Tony Vickers, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Andrew Rowles and Councillor Virginia von Celsing

PART I

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Brian Bedwell be elected Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission for the 2013/14 Municipal Year.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Virginia von Celsing and Andrew Rowles.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Jeff Brooks be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission for the 2013/14 Municipal Year.

(The meeting commenced at 8.10 pm and closed at 8.11 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 MAY 2013

Councillors Present: Jeff Beck, Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), George Chandler (Substitute) (In place of Laszlo Zverko), Sheila Ellison (In place of Dave Goff), Marcus Franks, David Holtby, Alan Macro, Gwen Mason, Tim Metcalfe, Garth Simpson (Substitute) (In place of Andrew Rowles), Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb, Emma Webster and Keith Woodhams (Substitute) (In place of Tony Vickers)

Also Present: Mel Brain (Service Manager - Housing Strategy and Operations), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Caroline Corcoran (Education Service Manager), Ian Pearson (Deputy Corporate Director (Communities) & Head of Education Service), David Lowe (Scrutiny & Partnerships Manager), Councillor Irene Neill (Children and Young People, Youth Service, Education) and Elaine Walker (Principal Policy Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Dave Goff, Councillor Mike Johnston, Councillor Andrew Rowles, Councillor Tony Vickers and Councillor Laszlo Zverko

PART I

4. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2013 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Webster declared an interest in Agenda Item 8, but reported that, as her interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest, she determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

Councillor Franks declared an interest in Agenda Item 11, but reported that, as his interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

6. Actions from previous Minutes

The Commission received an update on actions from the previous meeting and raised the following comments:

Paragraph 2.8: Councillor Jeff Beck requested further clarification regarding the number of reported personal budget users.

Paragraph 2.6 and Appendix A: Councillor Jeff Brooks questioned whether West Berkshire Council's broad alignment with other local authorities in the timing of the scrutiny of performance information was acceptable, or whether the Council should strive for improvement. David Lowe explained that this issue had been raised with Management Board and the Executive but it had not been considered necessary to alter the current timetable.

[Note: 6:38pm Councillor George Chandler joined the meeting.]

Resolved that the Head of Adult Social Care clarify the information provided in relation to the number of people who manage their own budgets.

7. West Berkshire Forward Plan June 2013 to October 2013

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan for the period covering June to October.

The Chairman reminded the Commission that the purpose of reviewing the Forward Plan was to enable the Commission to consider whether scrutiny could provide meaningful challenge to a decision prior to it being considered by the Executive.

Councillor Alan Macro observed that a date was yet to be set for the publication of the accompanying report for a number of items listed in the Forward Plan, including some due for consideration in June 2013 and asked if this could be corrected.

Councillor Brooks suggested that the IT strategy would be appropriate for scrutiny. Following discussion, the Commission agreed that technology was relevant both within the Council and externally for residents, however the decision was due to be taken prior to the next meeting of the Commission.

Resolved that the Democratic Services Manager would clarify the date of publication of reports for items on the forward plan.

8. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme for 2013/14.

Councillor Brooks asked for clarification as to how the outstanding items from the Resource Management Working Group and the Health Scrutiny Panel would be managed. The Commission reviewed each item and agreed the following:

Health Scrutiny Panel

- Continuing Healthcare – This was due to conclude in September, and the Commission would receive the expected update at this time;
- PCT Quality Handover – This was due to conclude in September, and the Commission would receive the expected update at this time;
- Adult Social Care (ASC) Eligibility Criteria – This was being undertaken by a Task Group and was due to end later in 2013. The Task Group would conclude this item;
- Home Care – David Lowe suggested that a Task Group might be an appropriate route for consideration of this item. Councillor Quentin Webb requested that this Task Group follow the ASC Task Group in October.

Resource Management Working Group (RMWG)

- Energy Saving – This was due to be reviewed in April 2014, and could be added to the Commission's work programme for this time;
- Procedures for Blue Badge Holders – This item was due to conclude in May 2013 and it was agreed that a Task Group be formed to finalise the scrutiny;
- Shaw House – This item was due to conclude in May 2013 and it was agreed that a Task Group be formed to finalise the scrutiny;
- Other items, which were received by the RMWG on a regular basis - it was suggested that these transfer to the Commission's work programme.

David Lowe advised the Commission that there was sufficient staff resource for two Task Groups to run concurrently. The Commission agreed that a Task Group be established to

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conclude the work on Shaw House, to run alongside the current ASC Task Group. It was agreed that the following Councillors would form the Task Group: Councillors David Holtby, Marcus Franks, Jeff Brooks and Jeff Beck. Following the conclusion of this work, a subsequent Task Group would be established to consider Procedures for Blue Badge Holders.

Councillor Holtby related that the Portfolio Holder for Culture was taking a holistic review at the use of Shaw House and asked whether this work would be completed prior to the Task Group being set up. The Chairman advised that the Task Group should consider evidence from the Portfolio Holder during its discussions. Councillor Brooks questioned the Council's policy making process, requesting clarity around the appropriateness of the Portfolio Holder undertaking discussions with Officers and others that might impact on future decisions without the involvement of the Opposition. Nick Carter explained that Portfolio Holders held regular conversations with Officers to understand current and arising issues. These were held informally within the organisation and provided clarity on areas of policy. Where there was an indication of a requirement for a new, or change to existing, policy, this would proceed through formal routes. Councillor Webster suggested that the Task Group invite the Shadow Portfolio Holder to give evidence.

Councillor Webster requested that discussion of the two suggested items for scrutiny (Newbury Parking and the Community Right to Bid) be postponed until Councillor Tony Vickers was present to provide further information on them.

Councillor Beck recounted a discussion at a recent Business Improvement District (BID) meeting where it was agreed that a review of car parking in Newbury would be undertaken, and that Council Officers would contribute to this. Councillor Beck was concerned that the Commission should not convene a Task Group on the same matter whilst this work was ongoing.

Councillor Webb asked when the Fire Service item would be brought to the Commission. David Lowe explained that invitations would be sent following the appointment of a new Chief Fire Officer. Councillor Brooks requested that the item be brought to the next meeting, indicating that the presence of a new Fire Chief should not impact on the information available.

Resolved that:

- 'Continuing Healthcare' be brought to the Commission in September;
- 'PCT Quality Handover' be brought to the Commission in September;
- A Task Group be established in late 2013 to consider 'Home Care';
- 'Energy Saving' be brought to the Commission in April 2014;
- A Task Group be established in Autumn 2013 to conclude 'Procedures for Blue Badge Holders';
- A Task Group be established to conclude 'Shaw House';
- The items formerly received regularly by the Resource Management Working Group be transferred to the Commission's work programme;
- The Commission would postpone consideration of two suggested items for scrutiny until the following meeting;
- David Lowe to clarify the detail of the proposed scrutiny of Newbury car parking raised at a recent BID meeting;
- 'Fire Service' would be brought to the next meeting of the Commission.

9. Items Called-in following the Executive on 9 May 2013

The Chairman advised the Commission that one item had been called in following the last Executive meeting, and that this would be heard at the next meeting of the Commission.

10. Councillor Call for Action

(Councillor Webster declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 due to the fact that the company she was employed with had worked for the developer involved in the Councillor Call for Action discussed during the meeting, but reported that, as her interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest, she determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

Councillor Tim Metcalfe asked for clarification as to what a Councillor Call for Action was. The Chairman explained that a Councillor Call for Action could be brought by a Councillor where a significant issue in the community was not being addressed. Issues would be submitted to Council for consideration and passed to an appropriate body for action.

The Chairman provided an example where a development in his ward which had not been maintained for many years, was mostly empty and was attracting vandalism. By bringing a Call for Action, the development had been successfully reinvigorated.

11. Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

12. Schools and Early Years Placement Strategy

The Commission received a report containing the Schools Place Strategy which was approved for consultation by the Executive on 9 May 2013.

Ian Pearson explained that the report set out how the Council planned for sufficient school places and identified where extra places might be required.

Caroline Corcoran explained that the strategy for forecasting school places was underpinned by an analytic model and overlaid with local intelligence to produce a five year forecast of required school places across the district. The model was updated three times each year and a strategic school place planning group assisted in identifying issues, challenges, and potential solutions.

Caroline Corcoran continued by stating that projected pupil numbers underpinned the model, but that these were based on national data sources which were often out of date and inaccurate. The system had been in development since October 2012 and had undergone strenuous testing using four years' worth of past data, including the weighting of some factors. This year the accuracy of the model had proved to be within 0.6% of actual figures which provided confidence that the system was robust.

The system included a data dashboard which allowed the information to be manipulated, for example the inclusion or exclusion of planned housing developments. The overlay allowed local knowledge to be mapped to provide a more comprehensive projection which might highlight areas of concern.

The strategy had been developed alongside talks with schools, and was now due for consultation with stakeholders and the public. An updated version would be available in September 2013.

Following questioning, Caroline Corcoran and Ian Pearson were able to provide the following information:

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- In 2012, 95% of primary places offered matched parental preference, despite there being insufficient places when requests were made. In 2013 this rose to 98.6% for primary schools, and 99.2% for secondary schools;
- A consultation plan had been developed which included the use of school newsletters to alert parents, and using Children's Centre mailing lists to contact parents whose children were due to enter primary education;
- The number of children attending private schools was reducing, resulting in a greater need for places in West Berkshire schools, however the number was not significant or of concern;
- There was some fluctuation in the number of places required in different areas as parents changed their preference during the year, however the extensive testing and regular update of information had provided confidence in the new system;
- Schools were recognised to have a great depth of knowledge about their local area and were able to provide a range of ideas which could be incorporated into the intelligence layer of the model;
- The assumptions about the number of children who would be living in new developments had significantly increased over time and this had to be recognised within the model;
- Secondary schools places were not a current priority as there was capacity at present, however the expected increase in the requirement for places would need to be addressed and the five year plan would assist this;
- The most accurate data for modelling would be GP data, however this was not currently available within West Berkshire, and therefore child benefit data had been modelled which provided a very close match. Caroline Corcoran reported that the availability of GP data had been an ongoing concern, particularly as it had been available in East Berkshire until recently when Bracknell Forest Council had been prevented from receiving it. Nick Carter advised the Commission that the Strategic Director for Public Health (Lisa Llewellyn) was working to correct the issue, and as the data was now held within local authorities following the transition of Public Health to local authorities, it was expected to be rectified very soon;
- Information specifying the number of children at Foundation Stage in January 2013 had not been prepared for the meeting but would be circulated;
- A review of primary school catchment areas was in the early stages and consultation on this was expected to commence after the May half term. Any recommended changes resulting from this work would require further consultation, but could be in place for September 2014;
- There had been an increasing requirement to provide early years places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. The required provision was not consistent across the age groups. Provision could be made through nurseries, childminders, play groups etc and West Berkshire Council was encouraging an increase in providers to meet demand;
- The Government had recognised the need for a greater number of school places nationally and had made available a pot of money that could be obtained through a bidding process for schools graded as 'good' or better. The improvement of schools was being addressed through the School Improvement Strategy and not the School Place Strategy;
- There was a significant financial pressure on capital budgets associated with ensuring sufficient school places were available which might result in a decreased ability for the authority to make improvements in other schools. In addition, whilst the Government

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provided funding for school capital projects, the calculation for the cost per metre squared used did not reflect the actual cost, resulting in a shortfall.

Cross Border Movement

The Commission expressed particular concern about the number of children crossing local authority borders to attend school and raised the following points:

- More children were entering West Berkshire from across the border, than were leaving to attend schools outside the area, in particular over 700 pupils were arriving from Reading. This was recognised as a significant risk to projections as the numbers were unknown. However conversations had been held with neighbouring authorities to improve the sharing of information;
- Revenue funding was received in relation to the number of pupils in West Berkshire schools regardless of where they lived. Capital funding was not received for pupils coming in to West Berkshire however it was not anticipated that new schools would be required to accommodate children from elsewhere;
- Reading Borough Council had been approached to address whether it should have a role in financially supporting the education of Reading children but so far this had not borne fruit;
- Although S106 contributions from developers were shared across the border, they were allegedly not requested by Reading Borough Council for education and so could not be shared with West Berkshire. Councillor Webster suggested that it might be appropriate to raise with Reading that West Berkshire be consulted in relation to the amount of contribution for education that should be asked of developers;
- There was no mention of children crossing the Wiltshire border for education.

Councillor Irene Neill requested that congratulations be given to Caroline Corcoran and Jason Teal who had given significant time to developing the model.

Resolved that:

- Caroline Corcoran would confirm the number of children at Foundation Stage in January 2013;
- Caroline Corcoran would confirm the number of children crossing the Wiltshire border for education;
- The provision of GP data would be monitored by the Commission;
- Recommendations be made to the Executive Member for Education that:
 1. A mechanism be established for the reporting and monitoring of the accuracy of the forecasting data;
 2. The required data held by General Practitioners be obtained;
 3. Financial contributions from Reading Borough Council be secured.

13. Housing Allocations Policy

(Councillor Franks declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11 due to the fact that he was employed by Sovereign Housing, but reported that, as his interest was personal and not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

The Commission received a report which provided an update on progress in the development of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. Mel Brain introduced the report informing the Commission that the detailed policy was undergoing consultation until 21

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July 2013, and a final policy was expected by October 2013. All relevant stakeholders had been notified of the consultation and it was also open to anyone to provide feedback, through Consultation Finder and on the Council's website. Testing of the Housing Needs Assessment was being undertaken to ensure it would remain effective following the changes resulting from the policy. Mel Brain drew the Commission's attention to the Queen's Speech during which potential legislative changes were raised which might impact on Housing and stated that should these come about, the policy would require further amendments.

Councillor Macro asked whether there was any doubt that the policy would be effective. Mel Brain responded that there were no concerns at present, and advised that the testing being undertaken was specific to the Housing Needs Assessment.

Councillor Brooks expressed surprise that many of the changes listed had not been included in the original policy. Mel Brain replied that the draft policy intended to clarify what could be expected, making the information more explicit, and advised that some of the changes represented new information in the policy, some provided clarity on information already contained within the policy, and some placed information within the policy which had previously been set out elsewhere.

Following questioning by the Commission, Mel Brain provided the following responses:

- The policy's application for students returning to their family home in the holidays was dependent on whether the student had accommodation available to them during this time. Those in private rented accommodation would normally not be required to leave during the holidays and would therefore not be considered under the policy. However, individuals could request a review where they believed an extra bedroom to be necessary and the need would be assessed;
- Where the care of children was shared between parents, the Housing Needs Assessment would recognise the parent who was responsible for 50% or more of the care of the child. Only one principal home could be recognised for a child;
- In relation to multiple units of affordable housing being available on new developments, a single advert would be placed for these, and a shortlist would be developed from those who applied. The Housing Association would manage the shortlist and final tenants;
- This review was significant as the policy had not been reviewed for several years;
- Applications were assessed on personal circumstance and not, for example, the receipt of Housing Benefit;
- Points awarded for medical needs were based on legislation which stated that preference (not priority) should be given to those with medical needs. A social needs assessment would contribute to the overall assessment;
- Where a reasonable offer of accommodation was made, and this was refused, no further offer need be made. The rules in relation to refusing accommodation were explained fully to each applicant;
- Points were awarded to families with children aged under ten years where no garden space was available. The age had been set in relation to safeguarding, as over the age of ten, a child was considered to be more responsible and able to utilise other open areas close to home;
- Those facing removal from the housing waiting list (due to their inactivity) received a reminder as well as the initial notification before any action was taken;

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- Applicants with a criminal record could not be excluded from the Housing process because of their record. A local lettings plan was in place.

Resolved that the report be noted.

14. Scrutiny Annual Report

The Chairman introduced the Scrutiny Annual Report, advising that it contained a summary of the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, the Health Scrutiny Panel and the Resource Management Group over the previous year. The Chairman asked whether the Commission would like to request any additions or amendments prior to its submission.

Councillor Brooks commented that it demonstrated that a significant amount of work had been undertaken involving both Member and Officer time. He requested clarification as to how the Leader of the Council viewed the work of the Commission. The Chairman responded that he believed the Leader of the Council wanted the Commission to provide robust scrutiny of the decisions made by the Executive. The Chairman commented that the upcoming scrutiny training session would be beneficial to all members of the Commission in being able to meet this expectation.

Councillor Franks requested that information be presented to show the number of recommendations that had been approved by the Executive.

Resolved that the number of recommendations approved by the Executive be added to the report.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

Agenda Item 4.

Title of Report:	Actions from previous meetings
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	2 July 2013

Purpose of Report: To advise the Commission of the actions arising from previous meetings

Recommended Action: To note the report

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell – Tel (0118) 942 0196
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Contact Officer Details	
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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission with an update on the actions arising from its previous meeting.

2. Resolutions

- 2.1 **Resolution:** Head of Adult Social Care to clarify the information provided in relation to the number of people who manage their own budgets.

Action / response: The following information has been provided to clarify the number of individuals in receipt of a personal budget either through on going payments, or a one off personal budget during 2012/13.

	2012-13			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Total Personal Budget Clients as at end of Quarter	631	652	669	688
of which:				
Ongoing Direct Payments	482	493	515	510
One-off Personal Budgets during the quarter	149	159	154	178

- 2.2 **Resolution:** The Democratic Services Manager would clarify the date of publication of reports for items on the forward plan.

Action / response: The Democratic Services Manager has confirmed that at the time the document was produced and then circulated, the date for the special Council meeting had not been confirmed. At the Annual Council meeting on 14 May 2013, the date for the special meeting was confirmed as 6 June 2013.

- 2.3 **Resolution:** 'Continuing Healthcare' be brought to the Commission in September;

Action / response: The item has been scheduled.

- 2.4 **Resolution:** 'PCT Quality Handover' be brought to the Commission in September;

Action / response: The item has been scheduled.

Resolution: A Task Group be established in late 2013 to consider 'Home Care';

Action / response: This action is complete.

- 2.5 **Resolution:** 'Energy Saving' be brought to the Commission in April 2014;

Action / response: The item has been scheduled.

Resolution: A Task Group be established in Autumn 2013 to conclude 'Procedures for Blue Badge Holders';

Action / response: Following a conversation between the Chairman, Vice Chairman and David Lowe, it has been agreed to consider this during a full meeting of the Commission. The work programme has been updated.

2.6 **Resolution:** A Task Group be established to conclude 'Shaw House';

Action / response: This action is complete.

2.7 **Resolution:** The items formerly received regularly by the Resource Management Working Group be transferred to the Commission's work programme;

Action / response: This action is complete.

2.8 **Resolution:** The Commission would postpone consideration of two suggested items for scrutiny until the following meeting;

Action / response: This action is complete.

2.9 **Resolution:** David Lowe to clarify the detail of the proposed scrutiny of Newbury car parking raised at a recent BID meeting;

2.10 **Action / response:** The Newbury BID is intending to examine parking and promotions in the town centre, concluding its work before Christmas 2013. It is the understanding of officers in the Highways Service that the focus of this work will be to identify ways of raising shopper numbers. They have expressed concern that they will be unable to support this review and a scrutiny review of parking in Newbury concurrently.

2.11 **Resolution:** 'Fire Service' would be brought to the next meeting of the Commission.

Action / response: This action is complete.

2.12 **Resolution:** Caroline Corcoran would confirm the number of children at Foundation Stage in January 2013;

Action / response: There were 2028 Foundation children recorded in January 2013.

2.13 **Resolution:** Caroline Corcoran would confirm the number of children crossing the Wiltshire border for education;

Action / response: The below table sets out the number of children from West Berkshire who have been offered places at Wiltshire schools for this September's intake:

LA	School	Total
Wiltshire	Baydon St. Nicholas CE Primary	5
Wiltshire	Chilton Foliat Primary School	11
Wiltshire	Great Bedwyn Primary School	8
Wiltshire	Ramsbury County Primary School	1
Wiltshire	Shalbourne C of E Primary School	1
		26

No children from Wiltshire have been offered a place at a West Berkshire school this September.

2.14 **Resolution:** The provision of GP data would be monitored by the Commission;

Action / response: This item will be added to the Commission's work programme for review in six months.

2.15 **Resolution:** Recommendations be made to the Executive Member for Education that, 1) A mechanism be established for the reporting and monitoring of the accuracy of the forecasting data; 2) The required data held by General Practitioners be obtained; 3) Financial contributions from Reading Borough Council be secured.

Action / response: The following recommendations were made to the Executive Member for Education in a letter dated 7 June 2013:

1. A mechanism be established for the reporting and monitoring of the accuracy of school placement forecasting data
2. Efforts should continue to obtain the data held by General Practitioners in order that the forecasting model is as robust as possible
3. All avenues should be pursued to secure financial contributions from Reading Borough Council for the provision of school places in the east of the district.

2.16 **Resolution:** The number of recommendations approved by the Executive be added to the annual scrutiny report prior to submission to Corporate Board.

Action / response: This action is complete.

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.

Agenda Item 5.

Title of Report:	West Berkshire Forward Plan
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	2 July 2013

Purpose of Report: To advise the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council from August 2013 to November 2013 and decide whether to review any of the proposed items prior to the meeting indicated in the plan.

Recommended Action: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission considers the West Berkshire Council Forward Plan and recommends further action as appropriate.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell – Tel (0118) 942 0196
E-mail Address:	bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
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Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Forward Plan attempts to cover all decisions, not just those made by the Executive, which the Authority intends to take over the next 4 months. The Forward Plan, attached at Appendix A, for the months of August 2013 to November 2013, also shows the decision path of each item including Council, Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
- 1.2 In order to hold the Executive to account, Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Members are asked to identify any areas of forthcoming decisions which may be appropriate for future scrutiny.

Appendices

Appendix A – West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – August 2013 to November 2013.

West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – August 2013 to November 2013

Reference	Decision and Purpose	Decision Body	Decision Path	Directorate	Contact	Lead Member (Porfolio Holder for . . .)	Part II	Date Report Published	Consultee(s)	Notes	Decision Month
AUGUST 2013											
ID2707	Car Park Charges on Bank Holidays in Newbury <i>To determine the level of parking charges to be applied on Bank Holidays</i>	ID	01/08/13	Environment	Martyn Baker	Highways, Transport (Operations), Emergency Planning, Newbury Vision		5 clear working days before the signing			August 2013
ID2631	Adoption of Parish Plans <i>To adopt Parish Plans.</i>	ID	01/08/13	Resources	Jo Naylor	Partnerships, Equality, Communities, Hungerford and Eastern Area Visions		5 clear working days before the signing	Local Members and Stakeholders		August 2013
ID2708	Petition for the designation of the footpath between Craven Road and St David's Road, Newbury as a public right of way <i>To respond to a petition that has been submitted to the Council.</i>	ID	01/08/13	Environment	Andrew Garratt	Highways, Transport (Operations), Emergency Planning, Newbury Vision		5 clear working days before the signing			August 2013
ID2620	West Berkshire Forward Plan – 01 October 2013 to 31 January 2014 <i>To advise Members of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council over the next four months.</i>	ID	22/08/13	Resources	Moira Fraser	Leader of Council		14/08/13	Corporate Directors, Heads of Services, Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission	Not subject to call-in	August 2013
ID267	Adoption Annual Report <i>To provide an annual report which details the adoption performance of the Family Placement Team.</i>	ID	05/08/13	Communities	Sandi Dopson	Children and Young People, Youth Service, Education		26/07/13			August 2013

The items included in the Forward Plan were correct at the time of publication. The Forward Plan may, however, change and you are advised to contact Moira Fraser – Tel: 01635 519045 or e-mail: mfraser@westberks.gov.uk to confirm the contents of any agenda before attending a meeting. **Executive decisions may be taken by the Executive acting as a collective body or by officers acting under delegated powers.**

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West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – August 2013 to November 2013

Reference	Decision and Purpose	Decision Body	Decision Path	Directorate	Contact	Lead Member (Porfolio Holder for . . .)	Part II	Date Report Published	Consultee(s)	Notes	Decision Month
ID2698	Adoption Statement of Purpose <i>To provide information on the annual performance regarding adoption prioroties in the Family Placement Team.</i>	ID	05/08/13	Communities	Sandi Dopson	Children and Young People, Youth Service, Education		26/07/13			August 2013
ID2699	Fostering Annual Report To provide information regarding the annual performance of fostering activity in the Family Placement Team.	ID	05/08/13	Communities	Sandi Dopson	Children and Young People, Youth Service, Education		26/07/13			August 2013
ID2700	Fostering Statement of Purpose <i>To provide information regarding the Fostering priorities over the last year within the Family Placement Team.</i>	ID	05/08/13	Communities	Sandi Dopson	Children and Young People, Youth Service, Education		26/07/13			August 2013
SEPTEMBER 2013											
ID2632	Adoption of Parish Plans <i>To adopt Parish Plans.</i>	ID	01/09/13	Resources	Jo Naylor	Partnerships, Equality, Communities, Hungerford and Eastern Area Visions		5 clear working days before the signing	Local Members and Stakeholders		September 2013
ID2621	West Berkshire Forward Plan – 01 November 2013 to 28 February 2014 <i>To advise Members of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council over the next four months.</i>	ID	12/09/13	Resources	Moira Fraser	Leader of Council		04/09/13	Corporate Directors, Heads of Services, Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission	Not subject to call-in	September 2013

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West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – August 2013 to November 2013

Reference	Decision and Purpose	Decision Body	Decision Path	Directorate	Contact	Lead Member (Porfolio Holder for . . .)	Part II	Date Report Published	Consultee(s)	Notes	Decision Month
GA2559	Review of the Council's Anti-Bribery Policy <i>In accordance with the recommendation of the Governance and Audit Committee to revisit the Council's Bribery Policy adopted on the 10 September 2012 to ensure that it is fit for purpose.</i>	GA	02/09/13 GA	Resources	Ian Priestley	Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Human Resources, Pensions, Property		22/08/13			September 2013
GA2702	Annual Internal Audit Report	GA	02/09/13 GA	Resources	Ian Priestley	Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Human Resources, Pensions, Property		22/08/13			September 2013
GA2703	Annual Governance Statement	GA	02/09/13 GA	Resources	Ian Priestley			22/08/13			September 2013
GA2704	Annual Governance Statement - Statement in Support by the Section 151 Officer	GA	02/09/13 GA	Resources	Andy Walker	Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Human Resources, Pensions, Property		22/08/13			September 2013
GA2705	Annual Governance Statement - Statement in Support by the Monitoring Officer	GA	02/09/13 GA	Resources	David Holling			22/08/13			September 2013

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West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – August 2013 to November 2013

Reference	Decision and Purpose	Decision Body	Decision Path	Directorate	Contact	Lead Member (Porfolio Holder for . . .)	Part II	Date Report Published	Consultee(s)	Notes	Decision Month
EX2668	Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2013/14 <i>To inform Members of the latest financial performance of the Council.</i>	EX	05/09/13 EX	Resources	Melanie Ellis	Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Human Resources, Pensions, Property		28/08/13			September 2013
EX2646	Key Accountable Measures and Activities 2013/14. Update on progress: Q1 outturns <i>To report Quarter 1 progress against the key accountable measures and activities for West Berkshire Council for 2013/14 and to report by exception those measures/activities not achieved/expected to be achieved and cite remedial action that is being taken.</i>	EX	05/09/13 EX	Resources	Jason Teal	Strategy & Performance, Housing, ICT & Corporate Support, Legal and Strategic Support		28/08/13			September 2013
EX2645	Treasury Management Annual Report 2012-13 <i>To inform Members of the previous year's treasury management activities and the performance of the Council's investments.</i>	EX	05/09/13 EX	Resources	Gabrielle Esplin	Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Human Resources, Pensions, Property		28/08/13			September 2013
C2650	Compton Institute for Animal Health Supplementary Planning Document <i>To adopt the SPD</i>	C	19/09/13 C	Environment	Sarah McCulloch	Planning, Transport (Policy), Culture, Customer Services, Countryside		11/09/13			September 2013

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West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – August 2013 to November 2013

Reference	Decision and Purpose	Decision Body	Decision Path	Directorate	Contact	Lead Member (Porfolio Holder for . . .)	Part II	Date Report Published	Consultee(s)	Notes	Decision Month
C2675	Sandleford Park Supplementary Planning Document <i>To adopt the Supplementary Planning Document</i>	C	19/09/13 C	Environment	Liz Alexander	Planning, Transport (Policy), Culture, Customer Services, Countryside		11/09/13			September 2013
OCTOBER 2013											
ID2633	Adoption of Parish Plans <i>To adopt Parish Plans.</i>	ID	01/10/13	Resources	Jo Naylor	Partnerships, Equality, Communities, Hungerford and Eastern Area Visions		5 clear working days before the signing	Local Members and Stakeholders		October 2013
ID2681	Economic Strategy <i>To approve the updated strategy.</i>	ID	01/10/13	Resources	Janet Duffield	Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Human Resources, Pensions, Property		5 clear working days before the signing			October 2013
SC2692	Standards Committee Report Quarter 2 of 2013/14 <i>To update the Standards Committee on activity over the past quarter.</i>	SC	14/10/13 SC	Resources	Moira Fraser	Chairman of the Standards Committee		04/10/13			October 2013

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West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – August 2013 to November 2013

Reference	Decision and Purpose	Decision Body	Decision Path	Directorate	Contact	Lead Member (Porfolio Holder for . . .)	Part II	Date Report Published	Consultee(s)	Notes	Decision Month
EX2685	Adoption of the Housing Allocations Policy <i>To approve and adopt the Council's policy for assessment and allocation of applicants seeking social housing.</i>	EX	17/10/13 EX	Communities	Mel Brain	Strategy & Performance, Housing, ICT & Corporate Support, Legal and Strategic Support		09//10/13	CHR Applicants, residents, Members, Registered Providers & other itnersted stakeholders (e.g. agencies who work with CHR applicants)		October 2013
ID2622	West Berkshire Forward Plan – 01 December 2013 to 31 March 2014 <i>To advise Members of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council over the next four months.</i>	ID	24/10/13	Resources	Moira Fraser	Leader of Council		16/10/13	Corporate Directors, Heads of Services, Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission	Not subject to call-in	October 2013
NOVEMBER 2013											
ID2634	Adoption of Parish Plans <i>To adopt Parish Plans.</i>	ID	01/11/13	Resources	Jo Naylor	Partnerships, Equality, Communities, Hungerford and Eastern Area Visions		5 clear working days before the signing	Local Members and Stakeholders		November 2013
ID2623	West Berkshire Forward Plan – 18 December 2013 to 30 April 2014 <i>To advise Members of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council over the next four months.</i>	ID	14/11/13	Resources	Moira Fraser	Leader of Council		06/11/13	Corporate Directors, Heads of Services, Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission	Not subject to call-in	November 2013

The items included in the Forward Plan were correct at the time of publication. The Forward Plan may, however, change and you are advised to contact Moira Fraser – Tel: 01635 519045 or e-mail: mfraser@westberks.gov.uk to confirm the contents of any agenda before attending a meeting. **Executive decisions may be taken by the Executive acting as a collective body or by officers acting under delegated powers.**

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West Berkshire Council Forward Plan – August 2013 to November 2013

Reference	Decision and Purpose	Decision Body	Decision Path	Directorate	Contact	Lead Member (Porfolio Holder for . . .)	Part II	Date Report Published	Consultee(s)	Notes	Decision Month
EX2669	Financial Performance Report - Q2 of 2013/14 <i>To inform Members of the latest financial performance of the Council.</i>	EX	28/11/13 EX	Resources	Melanie Ellis	Finance, Economic Development, Health & Safety, Human Resources, Pensions, Property		20/11/13			November 2013

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Agenda Item 6.

Title of Report:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	2 July 2013

Purpose of Report: To receive, agree and prioritise the Work Programme of the Commission.

Recommended Action:

- To consider the current items and any future areas for scrutiny.
- To consider and approve the suggested topic for scrutiny: Newbury Town Centre Parking.
- To consider and approve the suggested topic for scrutiny: Asset Disposal via Community Right to Bid.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell – Tel (0118) 942 0196
E-mail Address:	bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Elaine Walker
Job Title:	Principal Policy Officer
Tel. No.:	01635 519441
E-mail Address:	ewalker@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission is attached at Appendix A for the Commission's consideration. Members are also asked to consider any future areas for scrutiny.
- 1.2 At the meeting of the 21 May 2013, consideration of two suggested topics for scrutiny was postponed. The Commission is requested to consider and agree the following:
- (1) Parking in Newbury Town Centre has been proposed by Councillor Vickers as a topic for scrutiny, and is presented at Appendix B.
 - (2) Asset disposal via Community Right to Bid has been proposed by Councillor Vickers as a topic for scrutiny, and is presented at Appendix C.

Appendices

Appendix A – Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

Appendix B – Scrutiny Suggestion – Town Centre Parking

Appendix C – Scrutiny Suggestion – Asset Disposal via Community Right to Bid

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme - 2013/14

Reference	Subject	Purpose	Format	Methodology	Start Date	End Date	Lead Officer / Service Area	Portfolio Holder	Status	Comments
OSMC/13/146	Fire Service	To understand how the RBFRS provides cover for the West Berkshire area	In meeting		02-Jul-13	02-Jul-13		Councillor Graham Jones	In progress	- item incorporated at OSMC meeting of 26/02/13
OSMC/11/129	Housing Allocations policy	To contribute to the development of a new policy	In meeting	In meeting policy development supported by task group and individual Member activity.		Aug-13	Mel Brain - 2403 Social Care Commissioning and Housing	Councillor Roger Croft	In Progress	- Added to work programme at the 10 January 2012 meeting, following a suggestion by Corporate Board - Following consultation exercise by Housing Service, expected to return to OSMC in May 2013
OSMC/12/144	Shaw House	To understand the utilisation and income generated	Task Group (Cllrs Franks, Brooks, Beck & Ellison)		Jun-13	Sep-13	Steve Broughton - 2837 Head of Culture & Environmental Protection	Councillor Hilary Cole	In Progress	Item incorporated at OSMC meeting of 11/12/12. Discussed at RWMG March 2013. Final discussion to follow visit to Shaw House. Task Group to conclude work undertaken to date.
OSMC/12/143	Adult Social Care Eligibility Criteria	To conduct a review of the Council's Fair Access to Care Services policy	Task Group (Cllrs Webb, Boeck & Mason)		Dec-12	Sep-13	Jan Evans-2736 Adult Social Care	Councillor Joe Mooney	In Progress	Terms of Reference for the review agreed to take place across five sessions.
OSMC/12/135	Annual target setting	To examine the annual targets being set for 2013/14.	Task Group (Cllrs Webb, Webster & Vickers)	Task group working directly with PM officers	Jun-13	Jul-13	Jason Teal – 2102 Strategic Support	Councillor Roger Croft	In Progress	Independent work, unsupported by scrutiny officers. Output directly for consideration in the following year's Council Plan.
OSMC/09/02	Performance Report for Level One Indicators	To monitor quarterly the performance levels across the Council and to consider, where appropriate, any remedial action. Quarterly Item	In meeting		Aug-13	Aug-13	Jason Teal – 2102 Policy & Communication	Councillor Roger Croft	Scheduled	Quarterly item.
OSMC/09/57	Revenue and capital budget reports	To receive the latest period revenue and capital budget reports	In meeting	Quarterly item.	Aug-13	Aug-13	Andy Walker – 2433 Finance	Councillor Alan Law	Scheduled	May lead to areas for in depth review.
OSMC/11/119	Continuing Healthcare (CHC)	To assess the effect of the CHC operations policy and procedures in practise	In meeting		Sep-13	Sep-13	Jan Evans – 2736 Adult Social Care	Councillor Graham Jones	Scheduled	Monitoring of the CHC independent review action plan. Update against actions requested after 6 months.
OSMC/12/133	PCT Quality Handover	To examine the PCT's arrangements for the handover of its quality responsibilities to Clinical Commissioning Groups	In meeting		Sep-13	Sep-13	Sam Otoropec, PCT	Councillor Graham Jones	Scheduled	6 month update requested.
OSMC/11/112	Medium Term Financial Strategy	To review the role and format of the MTFS Annual recurrence	In meeting	Annual item for October	Oct-13	Oct-13	Andy Walker	Councillor Alan Law	Scheduled	
OSMC/11/111	Risk Register	To scrutinise individual items on the Risk Register on an annual basis. Annual recurrence	In meeting	Annual item for November	Nov-13	Nov-13	Ian Priestley	Councillor Roger Croft	Scheduled	
OSMC/13/148	GP data provision for school placement modelling	To review whether GP data is being provided to the Council for the purposes of forecasting school placement needs.	In meeting		Nov-13	Nov-13			Scheduled	
OSMC/13/147	Welfare Reform	To understand the preparations for national Welfare Reform and consider any issues arising.	In meeting		Mar-14		Sean Anderson - 2149 Head of Customer Services	Councillor Alan Law	Scheduled	- Item incorporated at OSMC meeting of 16/04/13 - Schedule for early 2014

Reference	Subject	Purpose	Format	Methodology	Start Date	End Date	Lead Officer / Service Area	Portfolio Holder	Status	Comments
OSMC/11/110	Energy Saving	To review the Council's policies and procedures for Energy Saving.	In meeting		Apr-14	Apr-14	Adrian Slaughter	Councillor Hilary Cole	Scheduled	Completed in April 2012. Review to be undertaken in April 2014.
OSMC/11/113	Procedures for Blue Badge Holder	To review the operation of the new procedures, criteria and rules of use for Blue Badge holders following the introduction of them in January 2012.	In meeting				Mark Edwards	Councillor Keith Chopping	To be scheduled	Requested by RMWG on 26 July 2011. Update received Mar 2013. Financial update required after full year in operation. Report only to be presented to RMWG in May 2013.
OSMC/12/122	Home Care	To understand and critically appraise the processes in place for the provision of Home Care.	Task Group				Jan Evans-2736 Adult Social Care	Councillor Joe Mooney	To be scheduled	Established within the ASC Efficiency programme with a review of inhouse service and a new procurement mechanism for external domiciliary care - to be reviewed in Oct 2013 Task Group to be established following completion of Adult Social Care Eligibility Criteria TG.
OSMC/11/107	Update on the Health Service in West Berkshire	To update members on the changes to Health Service in West Berkshire Ongoing item						Councillor Graham Jones	To be scheduled	

Suggest a topic for scrutiny

About you – contact details	
Title	Cllr
Firstname*	Tony
Surname*	Vickers
House No./Name*	62
Address (Line 2)	Craven Road
Address (Line 3)	
Address (Town/City)	Newbury
Postcode*	RG14 5NJ
Email Address	tonyvickers@phonecoop.coop
Telephone Area Code/Number*	01635 230046

* These details must be filled-in.

Your suggested topic(s)	
Your suggested topic for scrutiny:	
Newbury town centre parking policy, as an asset management issue	
Your reasons for requesting that this topic be considered: <i>(Please include your reasons for suggesting the topic and include details of any evidence you may have)</i>	
see attached notes for further details	
Topics suggested for scrutiny need to meet one of the following criteria. Please click the appropriate box(es):	
(1) The issue is an area of key public concern (e.g. as identified through Members surgeries, constituents' concerns, the Annual Satisfaction Survey, raised in the local media, etc).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(2) There is evidence of poor performance within the activity (i.e. through performance indicator data, experience of Members, internal or external auditor findings, etc).	<input type="checkbox"/>
(3) It is a budgetary area in need of examination to ensure value for money is being obtained.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(4) There has been a pattern of budgetary overspends within the area.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(5) It is a corporate priority for the Council as published within the Council Strategy.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(6) It has an external focus (e.g. scrutiny of the Council's partners, government agencies, utility providers, private sector companies, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>
(7) It is a Central Government priority area.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(8) It is an area of new Government legislation that has significant implications for the Council or its partners.	<input type="checkbox"/>

The outcomes you hope scrutiny of this topic will achieve:

better utilisation of council-owned car parks and public highways in vicinity of retail, commercial and residential town centre area, with increased net revenue

If you have already raised this issue with a Member or Officer of West Berkshire Council, please provide details here:

numerous occasions with parking and planning services and at planning and transport member task groups

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Whilst we cannot guarantee that your suggestion for scrutiny topics will always result in a scrutiny project, every suggestion or comment will be carefully considered.

If you wish to post your form, please send to:

Elaine Walker,
Strategic Support
West Berkshire Council
Market Street
Newbury RG14 5LD

or email to: ewalker@westberks.gov.uk

Newbury town centre parking policy, as an asset management issue

Note on proposed scrutiny task for Resource Management Working Group, by Cllr Tony Vickers.

1. There are currently hundreds of empty spaces at all times in the Council's Newbury town centre multi-storey car parks. Meanwhile there is a serious shortage of on-street parking spaces for town centre residents, such that if residents entitled to a permit in the town centre (and nearby) zones were to obtain one they could rarely find a space in which to use it within 400m of their homes – which is the furthest that many residents can walk.
2. Newbury town centre is unique in West Berkshire District in its mix of employment types and associated travel patterns of private car use. Despite requests to have a 'holistic' look at all aspects of parking in this area, within the context of a review of overall parking policy that has long been promised, the only reviews undertaken by the parking service have been to modify the residents parking zones and to extend on-street parking charges. These reviews have not included the potential for residents to use their permits in nearby off-street car parks nor for shoppers and commuters to move from off-street to multi-storey car parks.
3. The purpose of this scrutiny task is to see if there is any way in which the council owned car parking assets (multi-storey, off-street surface and on-street) can be used to maintain (or even increase) net revenue from parking, while at the same time maintaining or improving service to all categories of user.
4. In justification, the criteria ticked on the form were (1) public concern; (3) value for money; and (5) corporate priority.
5. **Public Concern.** Constituents of Northcroft and Victoria Wards have become increasingly unhappy, as officers in the parking service can confirm, at the reduction in available road space for parking near their homes. These are not residents of newly developed properties but live in established streets, where the impact of nearby developments (both residential and non-residential) with inadequate parking has harmed their amenity in terms of ability to park near their homes. Meanwhile since the electronic displays of available spaces in the pay-on-exit car parks has been introduced, it has been very evident to residents that the Council owns a very under-used parking resource which is denied to them, as council tax-payers.
6. **Value for Money.** It would seem likely that by displacing some commuters and shoppers from off-street car parks in or near residential areas into nearby multi-storey car parks (e.g. Eight Bells to Market Street M/S, or West Street into Northbrook Street M/S), with some adjustment – even a reduction - to hourly rates of charging and by allowing residents with parking permits – possibly for an increased annual charge – to have unrestricted use of certain off-street car parks, a better use of council-owned assets could be achieved, with increased net revenue.

7. **Corporate Priority.** The vibrancy of Newbury Town Centre is a key priority. Many businesses support a holistic review of parking policy of the kind described: Newbury BID recently expressed concern at the on-street parking charges proposals that the Council is advertising. At present there is friction between some residents and some businesses because the latter are seen to be using (or in the case of M/S car parks not using!) the former's assets: car parks which they are paying to maintain empty.

8. [A related issue which causes friction between residents and the Council corporately is the temporary use of vacant sites as privately run car parks which under-cut the Council-owned ones and meanwhile pay little or nothing into the Council's coffers and are not available to council-tax-paying residents for parking. However it would require change of national policy to address this.]

Suggest a topic for scrutiny

About you – contact details	
Title	Cllr
Firstname*	Tony
Surname*	Vickers
House No./Name*	62
Address (Line 2)	Craven Road
Address (Line 3)	
Address (Town/City)	Newbury
Postcode*	RG14 5NJ
Email Address	tonyvickers@phonecoop.coop
Telephone Area Code/Number*	01635 230046

* These details must be filled-in.

Your suggested topic(s)	
Your suggested topic for scrutiny:	
Asset disposal involving Community Right to Bid	
Your reasons for requesting that this topic be considered: <i>(Please include your reasons for suggesting the topic and include details of any evidence you may have)</i>	
new policy with resource management implications	
Topics suggested for scrutiny need to meet one of the following criteria. Please click the appropriate box(es):	
(1) The issue is an area of key public concern (e.g. as identified through Members surgeries, constituents' concerns, the Annual Satisfaction Survey, raised in the local media, etc).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(2) There is evidence of poor performance within the activity (i.e. through performance indicator data, experience of Members, internal or external auditor findings, etc).	<input type="checkbox"/>
(3) It is a budgetary area in need of examination to ensure value for money is being obtained.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(4) There has been a pattern of budgetary overspends within the area.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(5) It is a corporate priority for the Council as published within the Council Strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(6) It has an external focus (e.g. scrutiny of the Council's partners, government agencies, utility providers, private sector companies, etc)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(7) It is a Central Government priority area.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(8) It is an area of new Government legislation that has significant implications for the Council or its partners.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The outcomes you hope scrutiny of this topic will achieve:

transparency and endorsement of implemented new policy

If you have already raised this issue with a Member or Officer of West Berkshire Council, please provide details here:

briefly discussed at RMWG 23/4/13, where it was supported, under 'work programme'

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Whilst we cannot guarantee that your suggestion for scrutiny topics will always result in a scrutiny project, every suggestion or comment will be carefully considered.

If you wish to post your form, please send to:

Elaine Walker,
Strategic Support
West Berkshire Council
Market Street
Newbury RG14 5LD

or email to: ewalker@westberks.gov.uk

Title of Report:	Item Called-in following an Executive Decision
	Adoption of the Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-2018
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	02 July 2013
Forward Plan Ref:	EX2580

Purpose of Report: To allow a review of the decision to adopt the Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-18.

Recommended Action: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission reviews the decision.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell – Tel (0118) 9420196
E-mail Address:	bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Roger Croft - Tel (01635) 868638
E-mail Address:	rcroft@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Elaine Walker
Job Title:	Principal Policy Officer
Tel. No.:	01635 519441
E-mail Address:	ewalker@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1. Executive Decision

- 1.1 The Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-18 was presented for consideration at a meeting of the Executive on 9 May 2013. The recommended action was to adopt the review and strategy which the Executive duly did.

2. Call-In of the Decision

- 2.1 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, five Elected Members (Councillors Jeff Brooks, Mollie Lock, Keith Woodhams, Tony Vickers and Roger Hunneman called in the Executive Decision (EX2580) on the basis that:

A: The majority of recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission in the meeting of 11 December 2013 have been ignored, in particular:

- 1 "The Executive Member for Housing should work with other local agencies to agree an accepted methodology for the counting of rough sleepers. A report outlining the production process and count should be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission within 6 months of agreement."
- 4 "The Executive Member for Housing should consider the production, either as part of the Homelessness Strategy or separately, of a 'reconnection' policy, to ensure that homeless people who have no local connection to West Berkshire are able to sustainably relocate to those places outside of the district with which they do have a link."
- 5 "The Executive Member for Strategic Support should ensure that time is made available at a District Parish Conference for Housing officers to explain to Councillors the content of, and rationale for, the Homelessness Strategy when agreed."
- 6 "At the next revision of the Council's Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Executive Member for Strategic Support should consider the offer by SHELTER to assist with housing advice, so as to ensure that the document contains the requirement for the Bureau to provide a dedicated housing advisor."
- 7 "Performance monitoring reports received from the Citizens Advice Bureau relating to homelessness (including all financial advice), which are sent to the Executive Member for Strategic Support should be routinely made available to the Executive Member for Housing and his Shadow."
- 8 "The Executive Member for Housing should work, through the Local Government Association, the Government and especially the Valuation Office Agency, to achieve transparency of the factors and values taken into consideration by VOA when setting the Local Housing Allowance and, if possible, an appeal mechanism."
- 10 The Executive Member for Housing should ask Newbury Town Council to consider the provision of lockers to allow rough sleepers to store their possessions (for example sleeping bags) securely during the day."
- 11 The Executive Member for Housing should ask the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire to establish closer links with Loose Ends to ensure that any

shortages of volunteers and other resources to enable them to provide a better service to their clients are met urgently and effectively.”

12 “Further investigation should be undertaken into the reasons why West Berkshire seems to have a very large proportion of young families facing homelessness whose friends and extended family are unwilling or unable to provide them with temporary housing/accommodation.”

B There is a lack of evidence in the review or strategy that the actions in the Action Plan have sufficient resources assigned to them, including the resources of partner agencies, to achieve what it sets out to do. For example:

- (1) What Council resources go into the homelessness forum?
- (2) Do other agencies attend?
- (3) How often does it meet?
- (4) Do other agencies send reps to meetings this council hosts that relate to homelessness?

3. Role of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

3.1 The role of the Overview and Scrutiny and Management Commission is to review the decision and determine whether it concurs with the decision (in which case it will take immediate effect) or refer it back to the Executive for further consideration.

4. Recommendation

4.1 It is recommended that Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission review the decision to adopt the Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-18.

Appendices

Appendix A – Letter calling in EX2580

Appendix B – Adoption of the Homelessness Review and Strategy Report to the Executive

Appendix C – Homelessness Review 2012

Appendix D – Homelessness Strategy 2013 -18

Appendix E – Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2017 Action Plan

Appendix F – Homelessness Strategy Flowchart

Appendix G – Homelessness Strategy EIA

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17 May 2013

Mr Andy Day
Head of Policy and Communication
Market Street
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 5LD

**West Berkshire Council Liberal
Democrat Group**
Market Street
Newbury
Berkshire RG14 5LD
Please ask for: Gillian Durrant
Direct Line: 01635 519097
e-mail: gdurrant@westberks.gov.uk

Dear Andy

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2012 - 2017 – Call In

In accordance with Paragraph 6.4.5 of the Council's Constitution, I hereby give notice that the undersigned wish to call in the Executive decision in relation to **the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2012 - 2017** as agreed by the Executive on 9 May 2013.

The Executive Summary for this item as printed in the agenda papers for the Executive meeting on 9 May states: "A whole day's scrutiny into homelessness by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission was also held in November 2011, the findings of which have also been incorporated into the documents where appropriate." However, the only one of 12 subsequent recommendations from the OSMC that has been included in this strategy is number 9, and that is because this was largely already contained in the strategy. It is now too late to implement several other recommendations. It is surely bizarre that a whole day of officer and councillor time was spent hearing evidence from many agencies and homeless individuals to then ignore so many recommendations.

Therefore the reasons for the call in are as follows:

- A** The majority of recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission in the meeting of 11 December 2013 have been ignored, in particular:
1. "The Executive Member for Housing should work with other local agencies to agree an accepted methodology for the counting of rough sleepers. A report outlining the production process and count should be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission within 6 months of agreement."
 4. "The Executive Member for Housing should consider the production, either as part of the Homelessness Strategy or separately, of a 'reconnection' policy, to ensure that homeless people who have no local connection to West Berkshire are able to sustainably relocate to those places outside of the district with which they do have a link."
 5. "The Executive Member for Strategic Support should ensure that time is made available at a District Parish Conference for Housing officers to explain to

Councillors the content of, and rationale for, the Homelessness Strategy when agreed.”

6. “At the next revision of the Council’s Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Executive Member for Strategic Support should consider the offer by SHELTER to assist with housing advice, so as to ensure that the document contains the requirement for the Bureau to provide a dedicated housing advisor.”
7. “Performance monitoring reports received from the Citizens Advice Bureau relating to homelessness (including all financial advice), which are sent to the Executive Member for Strategic Support should be routinely made available to the Executive Member for Housing and his Shadow.”
8. “The Executive Member for Housing should work, through the Local Government Association, the Government and especially the Valuation Office Agency, to achieve transparency of the factors and values taken into consideration by VOA when setting the Local Housing Allowance and, if possible, an appeal mechanism.”
10. “The Executive Member for Housing should ask Newbury Town Council to consider the provision of lockers to allow rough sleepers to store their possessions (for example sleeping bags) securely during the day.”
11. “The Executive Member for Housing should ask the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire to establish closer links with Loose Ends to ensure that any shortages of volunteers and other resources to enable them to provide a better service to their clients are met urgently and effectively.”
12. “Further investigation should be undertaken into the reasons why West Berkshire seems to have a very large proportion of young families facing homelessness whose friends and extended family are unwilling or unable to provide them with temporary housing/accommodation.”

B There is a lack of evidence in the review or strategy that the actions in the Action Plan have sufficient resources assigned to them, including the resources of partner agencies, to achieve what it sets out to do. For example:

- 1 What Council resources go into the homelessness forum?
- 2 Do other agencies attend?
- 3 How often does it meet?
- 4 Do other agencies send reps to meetings this council hosts that relate to homelessness?

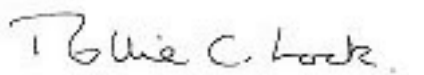
Yours sincerely

1.....




Councillor Jeff Brooks

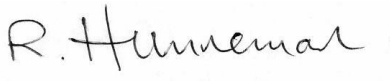
2



Councillor Mollie Lock

3.  ..Councillor Keith Woodhams

4... Councillor Tony Vickers

5.  ...Councillor Roger Hunneman

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Title of Report:	Adoption of the Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-2018
Report to be considered by:	Executive
Date of Meeting:	09 May 2013
Forward Plan Ref:	EX2580

Purpose of Report: To adopt the Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018.

Recommended Action: Executive approve and adopt the Homelessness Review and Homelessness strategy 2013-2018.

Reason for decision to be taken: The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to undertake a review of homelessness and to develop a Homelessness Strategy. The current Homelessness Strategy expired in 2011.

Other options considered: N/A

Key background documentation: None

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

CSP1 – Caring for and protecting the vulnerable

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Strategy principles:

CSP5 - Putting people first

CSP7 - Empowering people and communities

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy priorities and principles by:
ensuring that the Council works in partnership with other agencies to deliver effective and appropriate services that seek to prevent homelessness.

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Roger Croft - Tel (01635) 868638
E-mail Address:	rcroft@westberks.gov.uk
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	19 March 2013

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Mel Brain
Job Title:	Service Manager, Housing Strategy & Operations
Tel. No.:	01635 519403
E-mail Address:	mbrain@westberks.gov.uk

Implications

- Policy:** The proposed Homelessness Strategy sets out the Council's strategic approach to prevention of homelessness.
- Financial:** There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The Action Plan within the Homelessness Strategy makes reference to the likely resources required to deliver specific actions. Overall, it is expected that actions will be accommodated within existing resources (both internal and external) or that Homelessness Prevention Grant will be used to deliver identified actions.
- Personnel:** N/A
- Legal/Procurement:** The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to undertake a review of homelessness and to develop a Homelessness Strategy. The proposed Review and Strategy meet this duty.
- Property:** N/A
- Risk Management:** N/A

Is this item relevant to equality?	Please tick relevant boxes		Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:				
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcome (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)				
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at www.westberks.gov.uk/eia				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not relevant to equality				<input type="checkbox"/>

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months		<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only		<input type="checkbox"/>

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their district and to compile a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years. In line with the national agenda the West Berkshire focus is around early intervention and prevention of homelessness. The Council's current Homelessness Strategy expired in 2011.
- 1.2 Whilst the Council provides strategic leadership, the issue of homelessness is not the Council's responsibility alone. Many statutory and non-statutory services contribute towards the prevention of homelessness and a comprehensive Homelessness Strategy recognises this, and takes account of the most effective and efficient ways that agencies can pool resources and work together in order to deliver joined-up services.
- 1.3 The Homelessness Review, Strategy and Action Plan have been subject to consultation and responses have been considered, and where appropriate incorporated, into the documents presented for adoption. A whole day's scrutiny into homelessness by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission was also held in November 2011, the findings of which have also been incorporated into the documents where appropriate.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 The review highlighted three emerging issues that need to be addressed through the Homelessness Strategy:
 - (a) Impact of the ongoing welfare reforms
 - (b) Increasing difficulty in access to private rented accommodation, both as a consequence of the welfare reforms and due to the buoyant market in the district
 - (c) The concentration of young families (aged 24 years and under) who are asked to leave home by their family and friends.
- 2.2 The Homelessness Strategy is based on the following principles:
 - (i) That every homeless person should be treated with compassion and respect
 - (ii) That every person or family should be empowered to make informed choices that enable them to secure accommodation that is suitable for their particular needs and to work in partnership to ensure that once housed, they have the support they need to sustain their home in the future
- 2.3 After reviewing housing need, assessing the likely impact of the Government's welfare reforms and consulting widely with stakeholders, the Homelessness Strategy has five identified priorities:

- (1) Continue to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies
- (2) Mitigate the negative impacts of the welfare and housing reforms
- (3) Make best use of the District's housing stock
- (4) Improve the life chances of homeless people
- (5) Proactively work with partners to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness

2.4 A detailed action plan underpins the priorities identified in the Homelessness Strategy and identifies specific projects or actions that will assist the Council, in partnership with other relevant agencies, to prevent homelessness and to tackle the causes of homelessness.

3. Equalities Impact Assessment Outcomes

3.1 A positive impact would be applied to women and young people, both of whom are over-represented in homeless households. The Strategy has a number of actions focused on strengthening support and increasing access to suitable accommodation which should benefit households falling within these groups. Those applicants who are aged over 60 years may also have additional options available to them that can prevent or relieve their homelessness without the need for them to make a homelessness application.

3.2 Similarly, disabled people, particularly those with mental health issues, should be able to access appropriate housing-related support and, where appropriate, supported housing provision. The Strategy seeks to better understand the health inequalities experienced by homeless households and will aim to build services around this understanding to ensure that people receive services appropriate to their needs.

3.3 Some limited negative impacts may occur. These include gender. Men are more likely to be under-represented in priority need groups who receive statutory services. However, the Strategy operates within a statutory framework and is not discriminatory. The Strategy seeks to continue offering services to non-priority groups, including the provision of direct-access hostel provision and housing-related support and overall, this group of households should benefit from improved housing options services arising from the Strategy.

3.4 Overall, the Homelessness Strategy seeks to strengthen and develop existing homelessness services for the benefit of both priority and non-priority need groups, ensuring that all households are able to benefit from high-quality housing and homelessness advice services.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Executive are recommended to approve and adopt the Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their district and to compile a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years. In line with the national agenda the West Berkshire focus is around early intervention and prevention of homelessness. The Council's current Homelessness Strategy expired in 2011.
- 1.2 Whilst the Council provides strategic leadership, the issue of homelessness is not the Council's responsibility alone. Many statutory and non-statutory services contribute towards the prevention of homelessness and a comprehensive Homelessness Strategy recognises this, and takes account of the most effective and efficient ways that agencies can pool resources and work together in order to deliver joined-up services.
- 1.3 The Homelessness Review, Strategy and Action Plan have been subject to consultation and responses have been considered, and where appropriate incorporated, into the documents presented for adoption. A whole day's scrutiny into homelessness by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission was also held in November 2011, the findings of which have also been incorporated into the documents where appropriate.

2. The Homelessness Review

- 2.1 The purpose of the review is to map and understand homelessness across the district and to highlight any trends or emerging issues that are likely to impact upon homelessness. It takes account of all forms of homelessness, not just those who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.
- 2.2 The review of homelessness has been carried out against a rapidly changing context of both housing and welfare reforms. These reforms have reduced access to private rented accommodation and, combined with the economic climate which has impacted on delivery of new housing, are contributing to pressure on housing resources. Nationally, there have been increases in homelessness presentations and acceptances and a return to use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation as temporary accommodation. West Berkshire is not immune to these pressures and has experienced similar trends at a local level.
- 2.3 Whilst homelessness applications have increased, as indeed they have nationally, the actual numbers of households who approach the Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness remains low overall, with just 0.7 homeless approaches per 1000 of the population and 0.3 acceptances per 1000 of the population. The most recent rough sleeping estimate (December 2012) is very low at just 0.07 people per 1000 of the population.
- 2.4 The review highlighted three emerging issues that need to be addressed through the Homelessness Strategy:
 - (a) Impact of the ongoing welfare reforms

- (b) Increasing difficulty in access to private rented accommodation, both as a consequence of the welfare reforms and due to the buoyant market in the district
- (c) The concentration of young families (aged 24 years and under) who are asked to leave home by their family and friends.

3. The Homelessness Strategy

3.1 The Homelessness Strategy is based on the following principles:

- (i) That every homeless person should be treated with compassion and respect
- (ii) That every person or family should be empowered to make informed choices that enable them to secure accommodation that is suitable for their particular needs and to work in partnership to ensure that once housed, they have the support they need to sustain their home in the future

3.2 After reviewing housing need, assessing the likely impact of the Government's welfare reforms and consulting widely with stakeholders, the Homelessness Strategy has five identified priorities:

- (1) Continue to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies
- (2) Mitigate the negative impacts of the welfare and housing reforms
- (3) Make best use of the District's housing stock
- (4) Improve the life chances of homeless people
- (5) Proactively work with partners to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness

3.3 A detailed action plan underpins the priorities identified in the Homelessness Strategy and identifies specific projects or actions that will assist the Council, in partnership with other relevant agencies, to prevent homelessness and to tackle the causes of homelessness.

3.4 Tackling homelessness and the causes of homelessness is not the responsibility of any single agency. Whilst West Berkshire Council have a statutory role in responding to homelessness, and in providing strategic leadership on issues of homelessness, multi-agency working is an essential foundation if progress is to be made against the identified priorities.

3.5 The Homelessness Strategy has been developed in consultation with the multi-agency Homelessness Forum and it is anticipated that the same forum will lead on its implementation.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Action Plan identifies the resources that are likely to be needed to deliver each individual action. The term 'resources' does not refer solely to the Council's staffing and funding resources but recognises that all services working with homeless households will have access to resources that, if combined and used effectively, can contribute to the successful delivery of the identified actions.
- 4.2 In some cases the actions highlight a need to continue delivering existing services, whilst in others, it may be possible to use resources in a different way to achieve better outcomes. Some larger actions may require new or additional resources. These will be subject to a more detailed financial feasibility as the detailed delivery planning commences.

5. Changes since the Draft Homelessness Review & Homelessness Strategy

- 5.1 The draft Housing Strategy was subject to consultation and 6 responses were received. The proposed documents were well-received and respondents felt the Strategy had the right vision and supported its aims. No changes have been made to either the Homelessness review or the Homelessness Strategy as a consequence of the consultation.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 From the EIA it has been concluded that there are a number of positive impacts alongside a few negative impacts.
- 6.2 A positive impact would be applied to women and young people, both of whom are over-represented in homeless households. The Strategy has a number of actions focused on strengthening support and increasing access to suitable accommodation which should benefit households falling within these groups. Those applicants who are aged over 60 years may also have additional options available to them that can prevent or relieve their homelessness without the need for them to make a homelessness application.
- 6.3 Similarly, disabled people, particularly those with mental health issues, should be able to access appropriate housing-related support and, where appropriate, supported housing provision. The Strategy seeks to better understand the health inequalities experienced by homeless households and will aim to build services around this understanding to ensure that people receive services appropriate to their needs.
- 6.4 Some limited negative impacts may occur. These include gender. Men are more likely to be under-represented in priority need groups who receive statutory services. However, the Strategy operates within a statutory framework and is not discriminatory. The Strategy seeks to continue offering services to non-priority groups, including the provision of direct-access hostel provision and housing-related support and overall, this group of households should benefit from improved housing options services arising from the Strategy.
- 6.5 It is predicted that no impact will be apparent within the equality streams of faith, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership.

6.6 Overall, the Homelessness Strategy seeks to strengthen and develop existing homelessness services for the benefit of both priority and non-priority need groups, ensuring that all households are able to benefit from high-quality housing and homelessness advice services.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Executive are recommended to approve and adopt the Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018.

Appendices

Appendix A - Homelessness Review

Appendix B - Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018

Appendix C - Action Plan

Appendix D - EIA Stage 2

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: A one-day Scrutiny into homelessness was held in November 2012 by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission, with relevant stakeholders invited to give evidence. The recommendations from the scrutiny were incorporated into the Homelessness Strategy for consultation.

The draft Homelessness Review and Strategy were published for consultation on Consultation Finder and the Housing web pages. Copies were sent to key stakeholders, including all members of the Homelessness Forum.

Officers Consulted: Cathy Dodson, Housing Options Team Leader
Karen Felgate, Housing Strategy Team Leader
June Graves, Head of Care Commissioning, Housing & Safeguarding
Officers who attend the Homelessness Forum

Trade Union: N/A

Homelessness Review 2012

Document Control

Document Ref:	Homelessness Review	Date Created:	05 October 2012
Version:	1.1	Date Modified:	
Revision due			
Author:	Mel Brain	Sign & Date:	
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
0.1		Amended with consultation feedback	
0.2		Final version approved for adoption	

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to compile a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years. In line with the national agenda the West Berkshire focus is around early intervention and prevention of homelessness.
- 1.2 The overall purpose of this strategy is to set out how the Council and its partners intend to tackle homelessness within the district up until 2017, by:
 - Preventing homelessness in the first place
 - Increasing the supply of suitable accommodation available for people who are or may become homeless
 - Ensuring that support is available to people whilst they are homeless and/or to those who might otherwise become homeless
- 1.3 This Homelessness review sets out issues relating to homelessness against the national and local context and provides the background for the development of the Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017.

2. National Strategic Context

2.1 West Berkshire's approach to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is subject to national policy development by central Government. Over the last 18 months, there has been significant changes for housing arising from the Localism Act 2011 and national benefit changes, many of which will have implications for households that the Housing Service work for.

2.2 **Government's National Housing Strategy 2011-2016**

2.2.1 The Coalition Government published its new Housing Strategy, 'Laying the Foundations' in November 2011. Through their Strategy, the Government is seeking to achieve:

- An increase in the number of homes available to rent, including affordable homes, and the opportunities for people to own their home, whether through access to mortgage finance or by reinvigorating Right to Buy
- Improved flexibility of social housing (increasing mobility and choice)
- Protection of the vulnerable and disadvantaged by tackling homelessness and support people to stay in their homes
- Make sure that homes are of high quality, sustainable, and well designed

Full information can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/housingstrategy2011>

2.3 **National Approach to Homelessness Prevention**

2.3.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is investing £400m over four years in Preventing Homelessness Grant to support the work of local authorities and the voluntary sector. Local authorities have flexibility to use this grant in whichever way they want in order to prevent homelessness. Common use of the grant includes

- Rent deposits to help people obtain tenancies in the private rented sector
- Mediation services to help resolve family tensions in the home which might otherwise lead to a member of the family leaving home
- Provision of support to help people with difficulties such as managing debts or overcoming other personal problems such as alcohol or drug misuse.

2.3.2 The Government is also committed to working with lenders and money advisors to ensure that repossession is only ever treated as a last resort. A range of measures are currently in place, including:

- Financial Services Agency regulation of lenders

- A 'Mortgage Pre-Action Protocol' in the Courts
- Funding for debt advice services
- Support for Mortgage Interest
- The Mortgage Rescue scheme
- Preventing Repossession Fund

2.3.3 Further information can be found on the Directgov Mortgage Help website at www.direct.gov.uk/mortgagehelp .

2.4 Government Reforms

2.4.1 In November 2010, the Government published a consultation paper “Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing”, setting out their intended reforms to social housing. The Localism Act 2011 has incorporated the proposed reforms, including changes to tenure, rent levels and discharge of homelessness duties.

2.4.2 The Government also published the White Paper ‘Universal Credit: welfare that works’, which sets out its intention to reform the benefit system. The changes commenced in January 2011 and will conclude in October 2017, by which time it is anticipated that all claimants will be migrated on to the new Universal Credit.

2.4.3 The package of housing and benefit reforms have multiple implications for local households, with Housing Services already experiencing pressure on its housing options and homelessness service, as a consequence of the benefit reforms already introduced. It is anticipated that these pressures will increase as further reforms are introduced. The potential implications of each are considered below.

2.5 Benefit Reforms

2.5.1 The Government has indicated, through the Emergency Budget 2010, the Comprehensive Spending Review, and the publication of the White Paper ‘Universal Credit: welfare that works’, its intention to reform the benefit system. The most significant changes in respect of implications for housing are:

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) caps and 5-bedroom rate removed – effective from April 2011
- LHA rates to be set at 30th percentile of local rents – effective from April 2011
- Deductions for non-dependents uprated on basis of prices – effective from April 2011
- Age threshold for Shared Room Rent restrictions on HB increased from 25 to 35 – to be implemented in January 2012
- Housing benefit to be capped for couples, lone parents and single adult households – to be implemented in January 2013
- Introduction of new Universal Credit for new claimants – to be implemented from October 2013

2.5.2 The impact of the benefit reforms are already being felt in West Berkshire. The removal of the caps and the five-bedroom LHA rate have had minimal impact.

However, changes to the calculation formula for LHA are having an impact on the accessibility of the private rented sector for benefit recipients.

2.5.3 LHA set at 30th percentile

Previously, LHA was set at the 50th percentile of market rents. Legislation came into force from April 2011 to remove the 5 bed rate of LHA and restrict LHA rates at 30th percentile of local rents. Each of these measures applies to new claims after 1 April 2011, from the start of entitlement. Existing claims however will continue to receive protected rate of benefit until 9 months after their LHA anniversary date, the date they move, or the date there is a change in their household, whichever occurs the earliest.

2.5.4 The Coalition's intention was that changing the calculation formula for LHA from the 50th to the 30th percentile would place a downward pressure on rents in the private sector. Unfortunately its introduction has coincided with a marked upturn in the demand for private rented accommodation in West Berkshire and therefore rents have risen.

2.5.5 Reducing the LHA rate to the 30th percentile of market rents has restricted access to the private rented market and most applicants who have sought our assistance in accessing private rented accommodation have been unable to find accommodation within LHA allowances (see Appendix Two). 70% of the private rented market in West Berkshire is, in effect, inaccessible to applicants in receipt of Housing Benefit.

2.5.6 We have received anecdotal evidence from a local managing agent who, when asked about available property, replied to say "*we are receiving multiple applications for most properties. This is also forcing the rental prices up leaving far too bigger gap to what the council pay (even if direct) and as such I cant imagine we will have anything any when soon but will as ever keep you posted*".

2.5.7 Non-Dependent Deductions

Deductions for non-dependents are being uprated on the basis of movements in RPI since 2001, the date from which non-dependent deductions have previously been frozen. The new rate is effective from April 2011.

2.5.8 The increase in non-dependent deductions is likely to impact on existing tenants. It is possible that for at least 9 months following the claimants anniversary date, a claimant may wish to avoid household changes which bring transitional protection to an early end. Once transitional protection has passed however, the tenant will need to find the shortfall in housing benefit, either by asking the non-dependent to make the contribution or by funding it from their own income. This could result in increased approaches to the Council for housing advice and options by non-dependents, particularly younger people.

2.5.9 Single Room Rent

Single room rent for under 35's will take effect from the start of entitlement for new claims made after 1 January 2012. Current proposals are for existing claims to be affected throughout the subsequent year, depending upon the expiry of transitional protection, the next anniversary date, or the date of an address change, whichever occurs earliest following 1 January 2012

2.5.10 The implication of single room rent is to restrict the level of funding which is available via benefit to assist the individual to pay their rent, irrespective of the size

of their accommodation. It is likely that once transitional protection has passed, single people under 35 who are in self-contained accommodation will have a shortfall on their rent. It is unlikely that there will be sufficient shared accommodation in the district to accommodate this client group. Shared accommodation is not a form of supply that the Council has previously encouraged landlords to offer, and houses in multiple occupation may not always offer high quality accommodation. The single room rent significantly reduces the options available to younger people and may result in an increase in homelessness applications.

2.5.11 Introduction of Size Criteria for Social Housing

Currently, eligible rent levels for claimants in the social rented sector are not determined by reference to the size of the claimant's household. This is in contrast to the rules that apply in the private rented sector. In the private rented sector, claimants only receive Housing Benefit for accommodation based upon the reasonable accommodation needs of their household

2.5.12 From April 2013 it is intended to introduce size criteria for new and existing working-age Housing Benefit claimants living in the social rented sector. The size criteria will replicate the size criteria that apply to Housing Benefit claimants in the private rented sector and whose claims are assessed using the local housing allowance rules. The applicable maximum rent will be reduced by a national percentage rate depending on how many bedrooms the household is considered not to require. For example, one excess bedroom will lead to a 14% deduction in Housing benefit and two excess bedrooms will lead to a 25% deduction in Housing Benefit.

2.5.13 The Government have estimated that 26% of tenants of working age are likely to be affected by this change in the South East, with an average loss of housing benefit of £15 per week. They have also highlighted that there is potential for the measure to have a greater impact in rural areas and areas with lower concentrations of social rented housing.

2.5.14 Tenants affected by these measures may find that they receive a reduction in their benefit but that they have restricted choice when searching for alternative accommodation. Some will consider giving up their security of tenure to secure private rented accommodation. It is likely that the Housing Service will experience increased approaches housing options. One potential option is to increase promotion of mutual exchanges which could assist people to find other tenants who wish to swap accommodation.

2.5.15 Universal Credit

The introduction of Universal Credit is a year away, but potentially poses a problem for housing services. Universal Credit is an integrated working-age credit that will provide a basic allowance with additional elements for children, disability, housing and caring. The overall amount of welfare payments claimed by each household will be capped from 2013. The Government proposes that "total household welfare payments (of working age households)" be limited to £500 a week for couples and lone parent households, and to £350 a week for single person households.

2.5.16 A cap on the upper level of benefits that can be received by a household has already been introduced. In West Berkshire, this affected 72 households, with the largest loss of income being up to £150 per week. This initial cap has been

managed through reduction of Housing Benefit rather than reduction of other benefits.

2.5.17 Work is ongoing by Government to look in detail at the Universal Credit but one concern will be the sensitivity of the housing element to local rents. The conditionality element of Universal Credit may result on recipients losing some of their benefit if they fail to meet certain criteria and this could mean that recipients end up using their housing element for other purposes.

2.5.18 The arrangements for Universal Credit are unclear and Members will be briefed when plans are clearer and the implications can be assessed.

2.5.19 Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) provide customers with further financial assistance when a local authority (LA) considers that help with housing costs is needed.

2.5.20 The Government has increased its DHP funding to local authorities in anticipation of greater demand on their budgets to ensure that LAs are able to assist customers in a variety of ways. The additional funding had been allocated on the basis of the estimated impacts. In addition to the Government DHP allocation, the Council can contribute up to two and a half times the Government allocation from their own resources. This limit cannot be exceeded.

2.5.21 The impact of the benefit changes is likely to result in an increased demand for DHP and is more likely to require full amount of Government and Council contributions.

2.6 Housing Reforms

2.6.1 Reform of Social Housing Tenure

A new tenure, known as 'affordable rent', was introduced from April 2011. Affordable rent is housing provided on the same basis as social rented housing, but at rent levels above social rents (currently set at 40-50% of open market rents) and up to 80% of open market rents. The HCA Framework makes it clear that their starting point is 80% of market rents rent unless the provider can provide justification for lower rents: this has specific implications in higher rent areas, particularly in relation to affordability for lower-income households. Within West Berkshire, we have commonly referred to social rent as affordable rent: in the future, we will need to be certain to distinguish between the two forms of tenure. Please see Appendix One for an explanation of the different tenures.

2.6.2 Social housing providers will also have flexibility over the term of the tenancy offered through affordable rent. The minimum term will be two years, although no upper limit is applicable, meaning social landlords could offer much longer terms where appropriate. Some of our providers intend to offer the minimum term. However, Sovereign, the district's largest provider, intends to offer a one year probationary tenancy in line with their current practice, followed by a five year affordable rent tenancy.

2.6.3 In addition, social landlords are able to convert re-lets of social rented units to affordable rent units, with effect from 1st April 2011. Based on bid information submitted to the HCA, most of our providers intend to convert between 40 and 50%

of their re-lets to affordable rent, although some are considering up to 100%. Given the geographic nature of the district, and the intense pressure on the housing stock, any loss of social rented housing is of major concern.

2.6.4 When a flexible tenancy ends, the Registered Provider will be required to provide advice and assistance to its tenants to help them find alternative accommodation, if they are not offering a further tenancy. There is a concern that Registered Providers may not be resourced or skilled to do this properly, but more importantly, the statutory duty sits with the local housing authority. It is possible therefore, that we will see an increase in demand over the next three to six years, as flexible tenancies bed in. This could result in an increase in the number of repeat presentations.

2.6.5 Publication of a Tenancy Strategy

The Localism Bill will require local authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy, within 12 months of the relevant section coming into force, that sets out the matters to which registered providers of social housing must have regard when formulating policies in relation to

- The kind of tenancies they grant
- The circumstances in which they will grant certain kinds of tenancies
- Where they grant tenancies for a certain term, the length of the terms
- The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy

2.6.6 Registered Providers must have regard to the Tenancy Strategy but are not required to adhere to it in any way. In addition, the HCA Framework has pre-empted some of the decisions that the local authority may wish to have made in their Tenancy Strategy, introducing the ability to convert social rented housing to flexible affordable rent tenancies from 1st April. By the time the local authority has given consideration to, and published its Tenancy Strategy, the Registered Providers will already be in contract to the HCA and bound by the terms of that agreement.

2.6.7 One of the critical factors for both Registered Providers and the Council will be the circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted upon the end of a flexible tenancy. The Council will be keen to ensure people who may fall within priority need groups for homelessness are considered for further tenancies. In addition, there would be concern that financial capacity is not a main determinant of whether or not a tenancy is renewed, as this could act as a disincentive to tenants to improve their circumstances.

2.6.8 Discharge of homelessness duties

Under current homelessness legislation, applicants to whom the Council owes a full housing duty are able to refuse offers of accommodation in the private rented sector and insist that they should be housed in expensive temporary accommodation until a long-term social home becomes available. This can mean that in some circumstances people in acute but short-term housing need acquire a social home for life, although they may not need one, while other people who do need a social home in the longer term are left waiting.

- 2.6.9 Under the reforms, local authorities will be able to discharge their homelessness duties through an offer of private rented accommodation. This is safeguarded through a provision that should that applicant become homeless again within the next two years through no fault of their own, the Council will retain a duty to that household.
- 2.6.10 This amendment is welcomed, as it increases the options available to the Council to discharge its duty. However, given the impact of the benefit reforms and the buoyancy of the private rented market in West Berkshire, it is unlikely to have a significant impact in the district
- 2.6.11 Reform of Social Housing Allocation Policies
Under current legislation, the Council is required to hold an ‘open’ housing waiting list, meaning that anyone can apply, whether they are in need of housing or not. As social housing is in great demand and priority is rightly given to those most in need, many applicants have no realistic prospect of ever receiving a social home. The current arrangements encourage false expectations and large waiting lists.
- 2.6.12 The Localism Act gives local authorities greater freedom to set their own policies about who should qualify to go on the waiting list for social housing in their area. This means that they will be able, if they wish, to prevent people who have no need of social housing from joining the waiting list. In framing their Allocation Policy, local authorities will be able to have regard to the applicant’s financial ability to secure their own housing, their suitability to be a tenant and their local connection to the district. The ‘reasonable preference groups’ will still be prescribed nationally, to ensure that social homes go to the most vulnerable in society and those who need it most.
- 2.6.13 In addition, transfer applicants will be removed from the main Allocation provisions, unless the applicant who wishes to transfer has a housing need that falls within the reasonable preference groups. This opens up the opportunity to deal with transfers in a different way.
- 2.6.14 The Housing Service has commenced a review of its Allocation Policy running alongside the refresh of the Homelessness Strategy. As part of this review, the Service intends to consult on the options opened up by the reforms and will develop the new Allocations Policy within the framework of the proposed reforms.
- 2.6.15 Reform of Social Housing Regulation
The Localism Act has reformed the way that social housing is regulated. The Act provides social tenants with stronger tools to hold their landlords to account. Landlords will be expected to support tenant panels – or equivalent bodies – in order to give tenants the opportunity to carefully examine the services being offered. The Act also abolished the Tenant Services Authority and transferred its remaining functions to the Homes and Communities Agency.
- 2.6.16 The Act has also changed the way that complaints about social landlords are handled. Currently, there are two separate ombudsmen (the Local Government Ombudsman and the Independent Housing Ombudsman) handling social tenants’ complaints about their landlord. In the future, a single watchdog (the Independent Housing Ombudsman) specialising in complaints about social housing will ensure greater consistency across the sector.

2.6.17 These proposals are not anticipated to have a significant impact on West Berkshire, as a non-stockholding authority. However, the Council will be keen to watch our partner's proposals on Tenant Panels with interest and to ensure that tenants have a strong voice through the new structures.

2.7 Measuring rough sleeping

2.7.1 The Government is committed to tackling and preventing homelessness, working in partnership with voluntary sector partners, local authorities and housing associations.

2.7.2 The coalition Government has overhauled the rough sleeping count methodology and introduced a more comprehensive method of assessing the scale of the problem across the country.

2.7.3 The new figures published on 17 February 2011 show a total of 1,768 people sleeping out across England on any given night. For the first time, the figures include robust estimates from all councils across the country.

2.8 Government Ministerial Working Group

2.8.1 On 6 July 2011, the Government published the first report from the Ministerial Working Group called '[Vision to End Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide](#).' The Coalition government have established a cross-Government [working group on homelessness](#). It brings together Ministers from eight government departments to work closely together to help rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness to stay off the streets.

2.8.2 The Ministerial Working Group will focus on people living on the streets and in temporary or insecure accommodation, such as hostels, shelters and squats, at significant risk of rough sleeping. The Government's 6 commitments are as follows:

- Helping people off the streets
- Helping people to access healthcare
- Helping people into work
- Reducing bureaucratic burdens
- Increasing local control over investment in services
- Devolving responsibility for tackling homelessness

3. Local Strategic Context

3.1 Strategic fit

3.1.1 The Council Strategy 2011-2016 contains strategic aims which focus on Housing and Homelessness. These include:

- **Explore** new opportunities and methods for delivery of affordable housing, including responding to the housing needs of rural communities;
- **Work with** owners of empty homes to bring them back into use;
- **Improve** access to private rented accommodation addressing issues of affordability and quality;
- **Continue** to work to prevent homelessness offering the widest possible range of options, advice and interventions.

3.1.2 In addition to this, the Local Strategic Partnership monitors the effectiveness of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2028. 'A Breath of Fresh Air' is the second Sustainable Community Strategy for West Berkshire, which presents a vision for the district spanning the next 18 years. The guiding principles that underpin the strategy are a community that are as follows:

- Greener
- Healthier
- Prosperous
- Safer
- Stronger

3.1.3 The Sustainable Community Strategy draws together the themes from a number of contributing strategies and partnership forums. More information can be found at: <http://www.westberkshirepartnership.org/index.aspx?articleid=15225>

3.1.4 The Homelessness Strategy fits strategically with a number of other West Berkshire Council Strategies and Plans. Look to **Appendix Two** for further information.

3.1.5 Finally, West Berkshire Council's District Profile and West Berkshire Council's Local Economic Assessment 2011 give full information on the area demography and economy which gives an overview of the issues that West Berkshire Council and its partners face in terms of priorities and services. For more information go to:

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8406>
<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=29621&p=0>

4. National Statistics for Homelessness

4.1 The Communities and Local Government (CLG) department published a Housing Statistical Release in August 2012, outlining figures and trends for Homelessness throughout the UK. Key points are as follows:

- In 2010/11, a total of **199,000 cases of homelessness prevention or relief** are estimated to have taken place outside the statutory homelessness framework in England. Of these cases 174,800 (88 per cent) were preventions and 24,200 (12 per cent) were cases of relief.
- The total number of cases of homelessness prevention or relief **increased by 5 per cent** when compared to 2010/11. This is mostly due to an increase in prevention cases, which increased by 7 per cent, whilst cases of relief decreased by 2 per cent.
- The most common action taken to prevent or relieve homelessness was the use of landlord incentive schemes to secure private rented sector accommodation. In 2011/12, **27,600 cases (14 per cent)** were assisted in obtaining alternative accommodation this way, though this was a decrease of 10 per cent compared to 2010/11.
- The amount of homelessness prevention and relief activity varied across the regions. The North East had the highest rate of cases of **prevention and relief** with 11.8 cases per 1,000 households. The West Midlands (11.7 cases per 1,000 households), YOurkshire and the Humber (11.5) and the East Midlands (10.8) also had high rates of prevention and relief. The East of England, with 6.8 cases per 1,000 households, had the lowest rate.

4.2 Whilst homelessness preventions have increased nationally, so too have homelessness applications and acceptances, although they are nowhere near the peak of 2003/04.

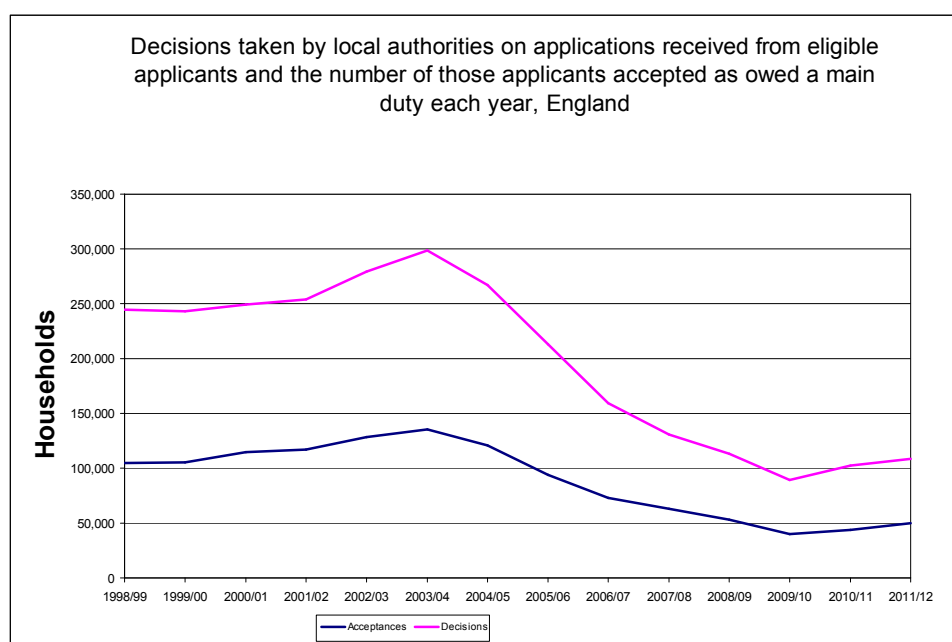


Chart 1: CLG, Table 770 (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/2102063.xls>)

- 4.3 Just under half (46% in 2011/12) of all homelessness applications made nationally are accepted. 28% (in 2011/12) were deemed not homeless and 18% (in 2011/12) were deemed to be non-priority need. The remaining 7% were considered to be homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so.
- 4.4 Any increase in homeless applications has an impact on the resources of the local authority to provide temporary accommodation. There are strict restrictions in place around the use of Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation, and a wider range of accommodation, in both the private and affordable sectors, must be sourced. Chart 2 (below) shows the national picture for temporary accommodation.

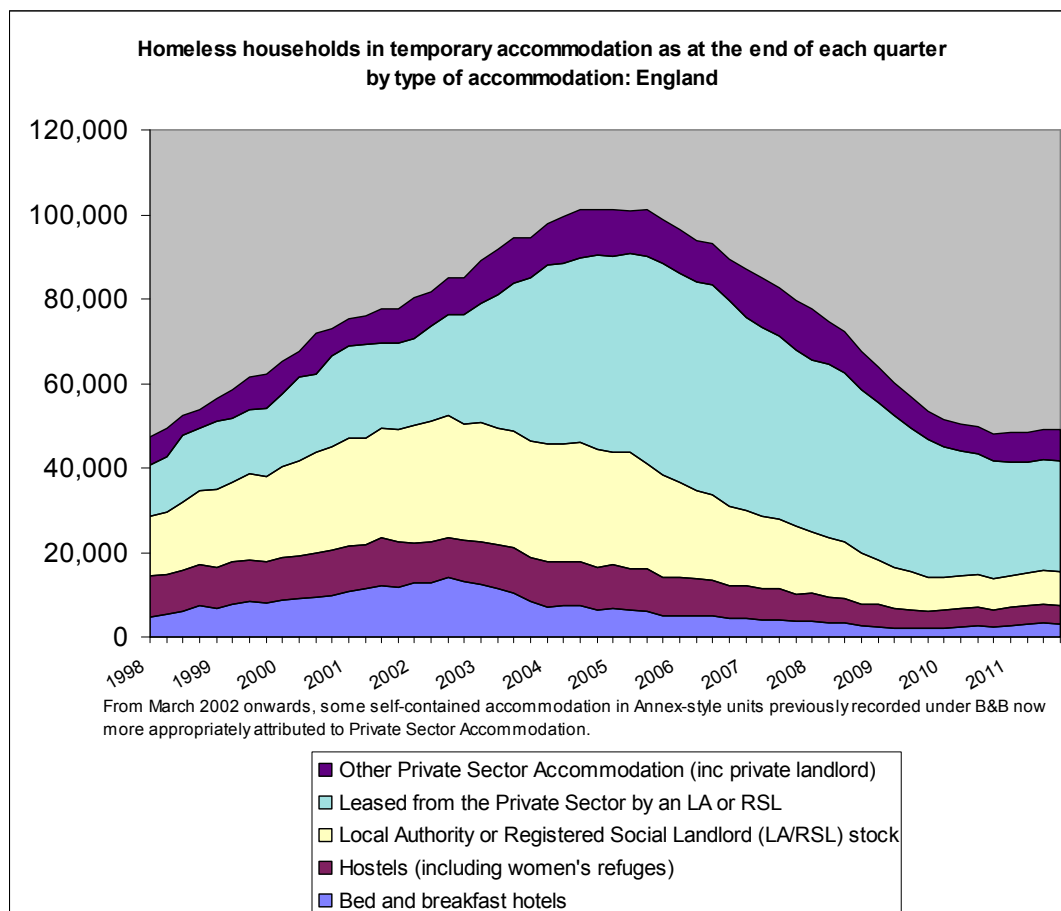


Chart 2, CLG, Table 775, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/2102078.xls>

4.5 The composite figures for 2011/12 (DCLG, June 2012) show that:

- During the 2011/12 financial year, 108,720 decisions were made by local authorities. This is an increase of 6 per cent from 102,200 in 2010/11.
- 50,290 applicants were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty in 2011/12, 14 per cent higher than 2010/11
- 50,430 households were in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2012, 5 per cent higher than at the same date in 2010
- 8 per cent of households were in bed and breakfast style accommodation. This is an increase from 2,750 to 3,960 (44 per cent) compared to the same date last year.

5. Homelessness in West Berkshire

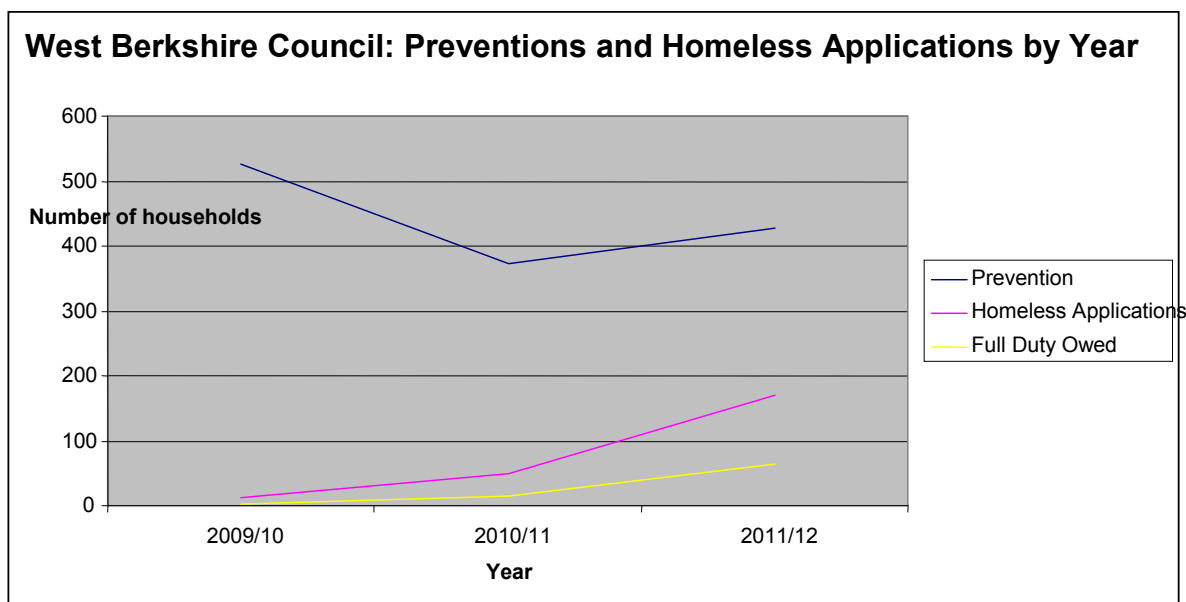
5.1 The West Berkshire Council Housing Operations Team is responsible for the full front line housing service, which includes managing West Berkshire's Common Housing Register (CHR) (Council waiting List), administering the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme for the district, offering a housing advice and options service and assisting homeless households, including taking homeless applications where homelessness cannot be prevented and undertaking relevant enquiries in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

5.2 Homeless Preventions and Applications

5.2.1 Housing Operations has been receiving consistently high numbers of enquiries and ongoing cases, since the beginning of the economic downturn. In 2009/10, the service prevented or relieved homelessness for 527 households and took 12 homelessness applications, of which a duty was accepted to two households.

5.2.2 In 2010/11, the service prevented or relieved homelessness for 374 households, and took 49 homelessness applications, of which a duty has been accepted to 16 households. There have been two reviews of homelessness decisions during 2010-2011.

5.2.3 Whilst the number of preventions has increased, from 374 in 2010/11 to 419 in 2011/12 (an increase of 12%), there has also been an increase in homelessness applications, largely due to restricted access to the private rented sector.



5.2.4 The latest National Statistics on Statutory Homelessness for January to March 2012 and 2011/12, England, were released on 14 June 2012. These showed that there has been a 16 per cent increase in the number of households to whom a full housing duty was owed to compared to the same quarter last year, and a 14% increase in acceptances between 2010/11 and 2011/12. In West Berkshire, the number of applications has increased from 49 to 170 and whilst this seems to be significantly higher than the national average increase, reflects the very low starting

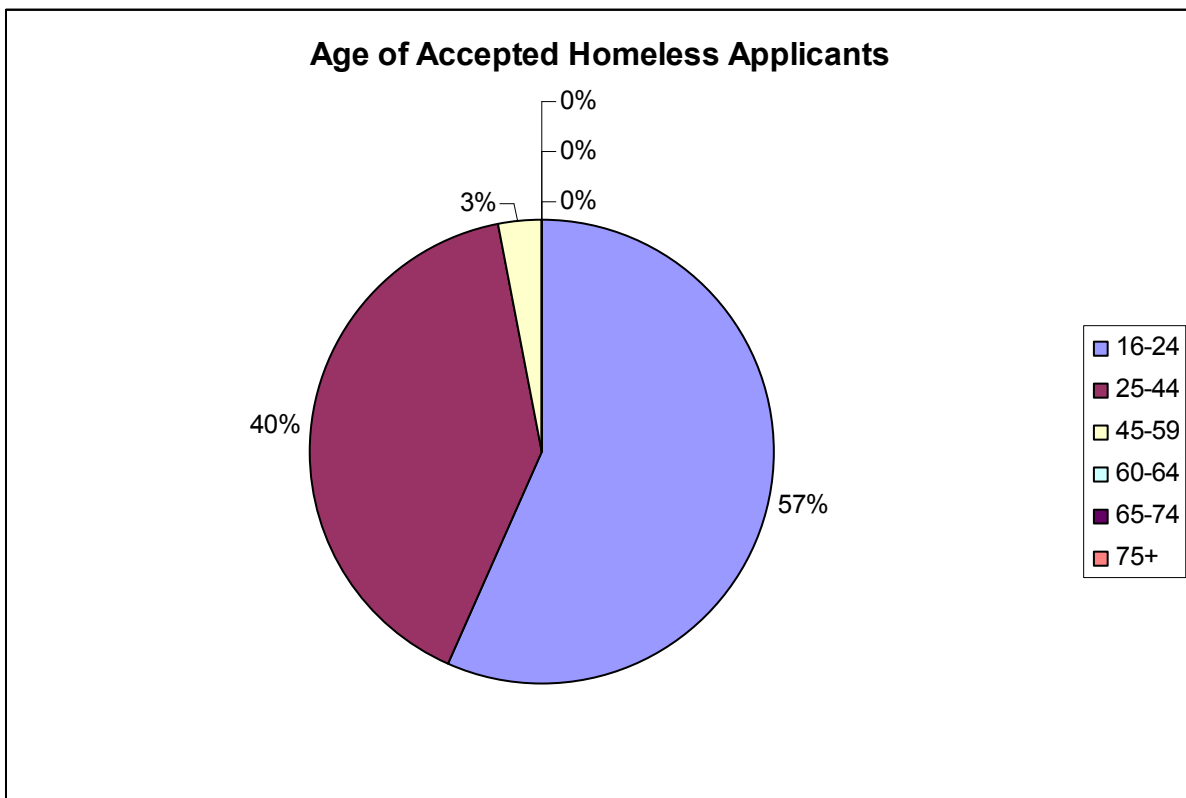
base and numbers involved. In contrast, nationally, 47% of applicants who made an application were accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty between January to March 2012. In West Berkshire, acceptances for the same quarter were 30% and consistently remain at around a third of all applications.

5.2.5 The Housing Team continues to experience a high number of approaches for housing advice and options. In the first half of 2011/12 (April to September), there were 1033 approaches for housing advice. The open case load at any given time is just over 400 clients, equating to 80 cases per Housing Officer, well above the usual case load of 25-30. These caseloads have not materially changed over the last few years and reflect well on the systems and professionalism of the officers. Case work is tailored to the needs of the individual and is often complex. Anecdotally, the clients approaching for advice, particularly those who are homeless, appear to have increasingly complex situations that require intensive work in order to determine what duty, if any, is owed by the local authority.

5.2.6 The increase in the number of applicants applying as homeless places additional pressure on the team. Each homeless application is equivalent to two housing options and advice cases in terms of officer time, and in particularly complex applications, will be higher still. Increasing numbers of homeless applications has also resulted in an increase in the number of applicants seeking a review of their decision when they are dissatisfied with the outcome, with two homeless reviews being conducted in 2010/11 and 29 in 2011/12, an increase of 13%. In the first half of 2011/12, there have been 13 requests for review. Reviews are conducted by an officer senior to the one who made the original decision.

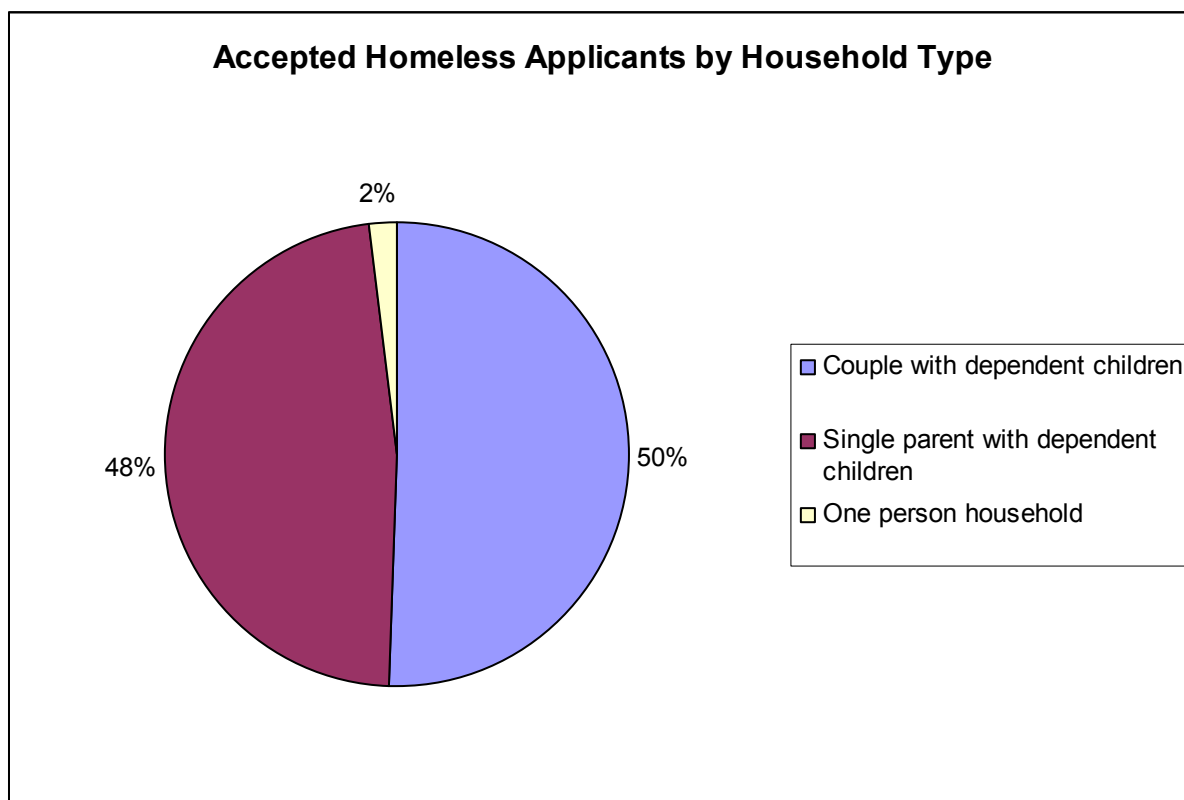
5.3 Age of Homeless Applicants

5.3.1 All applicants to whom a full duty is accepted are aged 59 or under, with the greatest proportion being applicants aged 24 or under.



5.4 Homelessness by Household Type

5.4.1 The overwhelming household make-up includes households with children, which account for 98% of all accepted households.



5.4.2 Of those households with children, 77% had one child, 16% had two children and 7% had three or more children. 8% of all accepted homeless households, included a pregnant woman with no other dependent children.

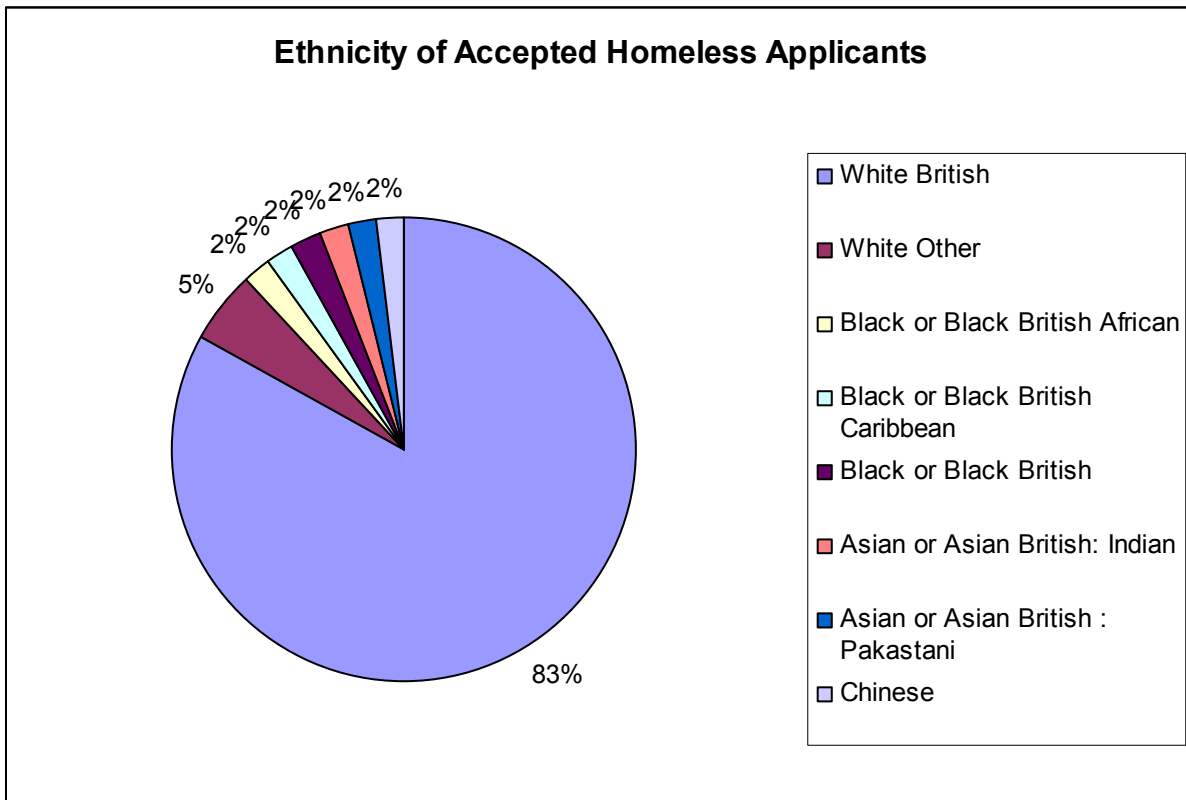
5.5 Ethnicity of Homeless Applicants

5.4.1 The 2001 Census shows that when compared nationally, there is a significantly lower proportion of people in West Berkshire who define themselves as coming from a black or ethnic minority (BME) background - 2.6% of West Berkshire residents as a whole, compared to 10% of people in England and Wales more generally. This reflects the spatial concentrations of minorities in the UK. Although this is a relatively small proportion of the total population, this amounts to some 4,000 residents in the district.

5.4.2 The largest ethnic groups in West Berkshire are Asian-Indian, and Black-Caribbean. These communities are largely centred in the wards on the Reading fringe, but also in the main district towns of Newbury, Thatcham and Theale.

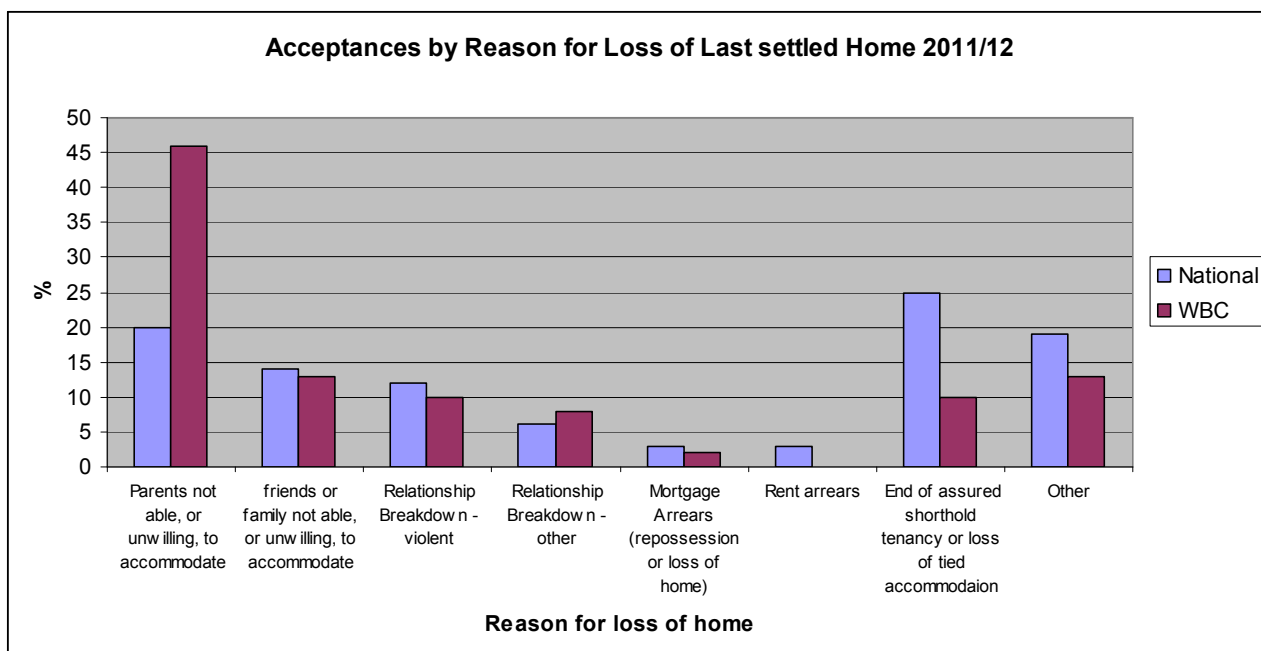
5.4.3 The profile of accepted homeless applicants shows a slightly higher percentage of households who define themselves as coming from a BME background. This is not

surprising, as the census data is out-of-date and the percentage is reflective of England and Wales overall.



5.5 Reasons for Homelessness

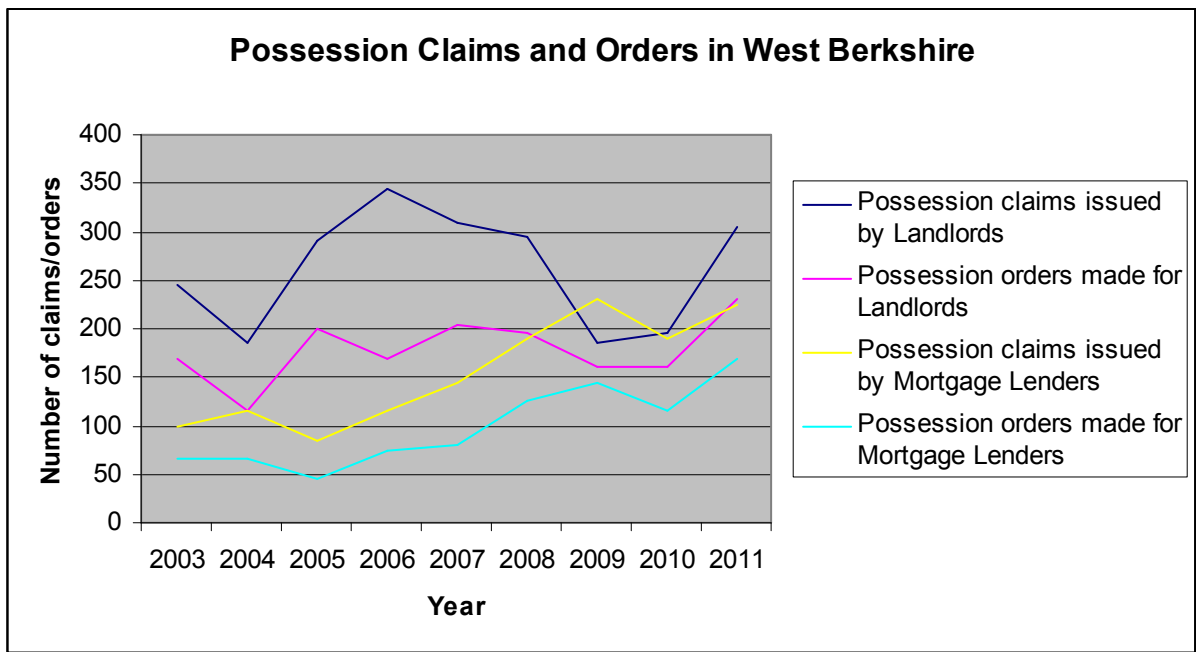
5.5.1 By far the largest reason for loss of last settled home in West Berkshire is family or friends being unable or unwilling to accommodate and a far greater number of households become homeless in West Berkshire for this reason than nationally. When you consider that 57% of households to whom a duty is accepted are 24 or under, and given that homelessness is a traumatic and unsettling experience, this is an issue of serious concern. Many of these homeless households will spend time in Bed & Breakfast accommodation, away from their support networks, and the impact of this should not be under-estimated. Better outcomes are achieved where young families move into independent accommodation in a planned way



5.5.2 Violent relationship breakdown is lower than the national average and this may reflect the proactive approach that West Berkshire takes to domestic abuse through the West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Forum and the West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Service that has been commissioned to support victims of domestic abuse. A Safer Spaces project, combined with significant outreach support also enables some victims to stay in their own homes, avoiding homelessness, where it is feasible for them to do so.

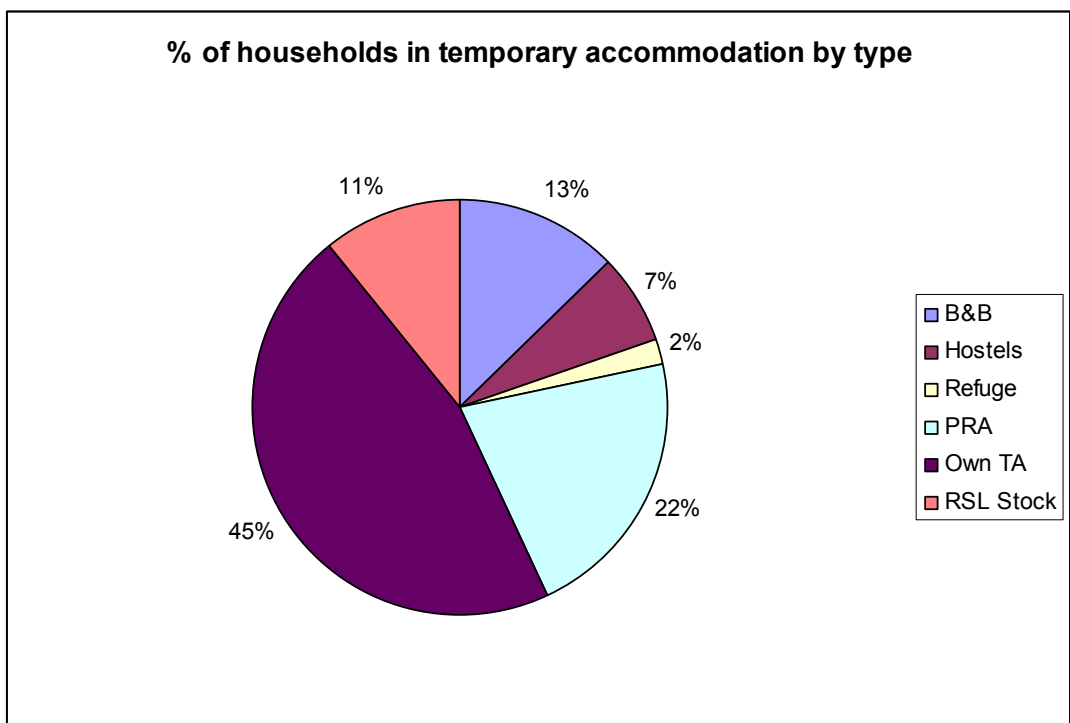
5.5.3 'Other reasons' include households who become homeless in an emergency, households who are sleeping rough or in a hostel, households that have returned from abroad and households leaving an institution, local authority care or the armed services. The Council is experiencing an increase in British nationals returning from abroad, particularly Spain, without having made alternative accommodation plans.

5.5.4 Possession orders, whether via a landlord or a mortgage provider are relatively low in West Berkshire. In particular, mortgage repossessions are low in West Berkshire at 3.07 claims per 1000 private homes, compared to 2.67 claims in the South East and 3.5 claims in England (Shelter, 2012). Landlord possession claims, whilst being one of the largest causes of homelessness acceptances in West Berkshire, are lower than the average, accounting for just 10% of acceptances compared to 25% nationally.



5.6 Use of Temporary Accommodation

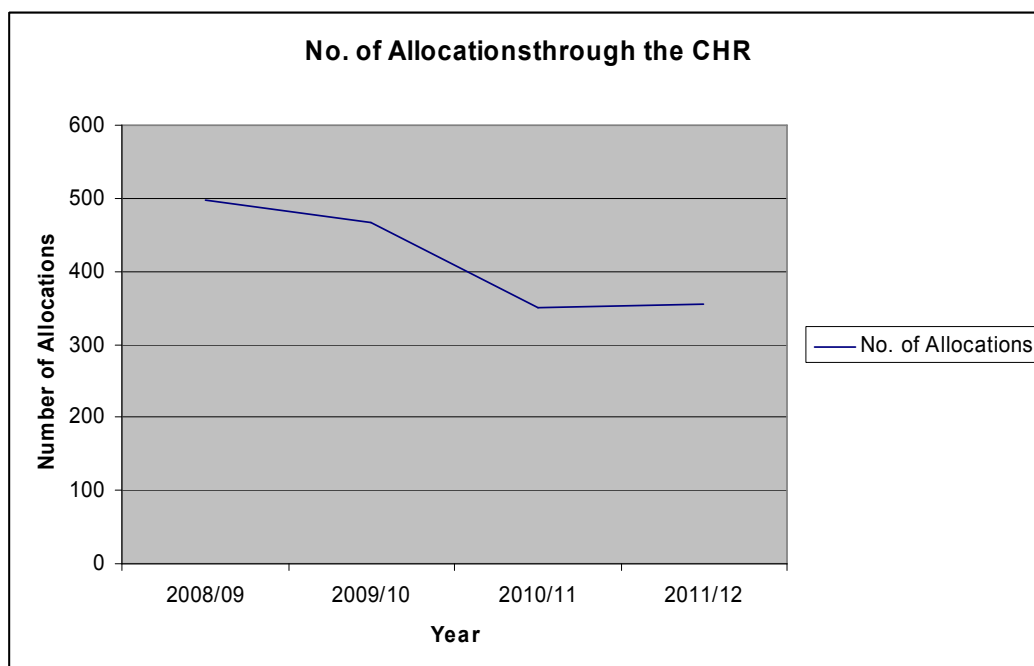
5.6.1 Where the Council has reason to believe that the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need, it has a duty to secure that accommodation is available. The Council had significantly reduced its use of temporary accommodation and had met the Government target to halve the number of applicants in temporary accommodation three years ahead of the 2010 headline. However, the increase in applicants applying as homeless has resulted in an increase in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation and on 31st March 2012 there were 46 households in temporary accommodation including Bed & Breakfast accommodation. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable temporary accommodation for people to whom the Council owes an interim duty.



5.6.2 Of those households placed in temporary accommodation as at 31st March 2012, 17% were placed in accommodation outside of the district.

5.7 Applications for Housing

5.7.1 The Common Housing Register (CHR) has also experienced an increase in the number of applicants. As at 1st April 2010, there were 3346 applicants registered on the CHR, with 4849 registered on 1st April 2011, falling back to 3907 on 1st April 2012. Of these, around 45% are considered to have a reasonable preference for rehousing under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The CHR is actively managed, with rolling reviews of all applicants, to ensure that the information held is up-to-date.

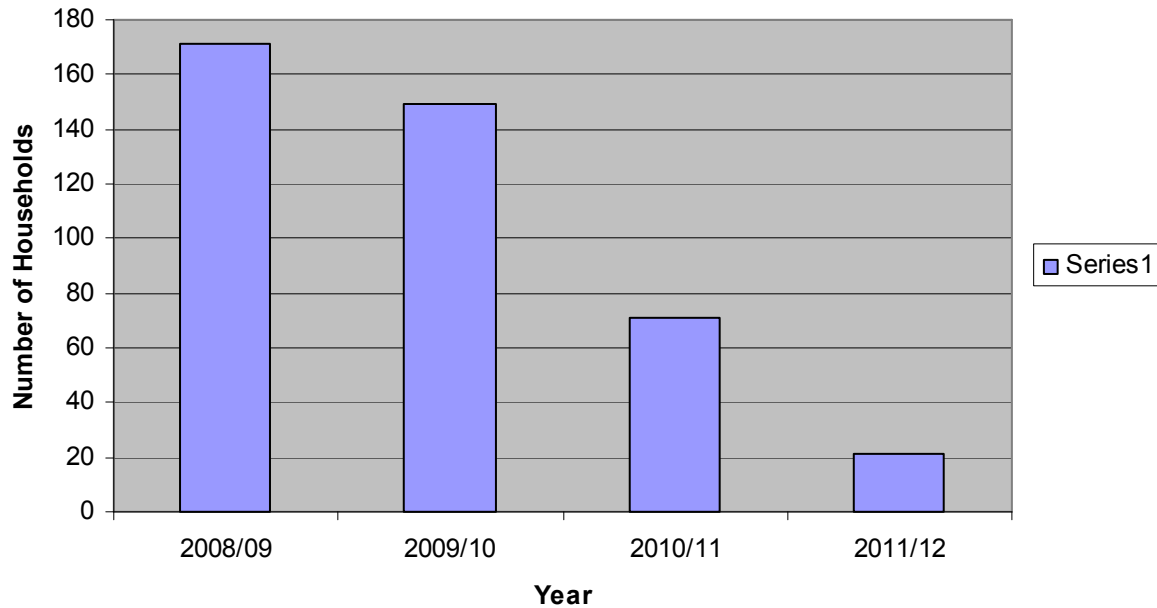


5.7.2 The average wait time for applicants on the CHR ranges from 15 months for sheltered accommodation to 33 months for 3-bed accommodation. The number of allocations made through the Common Housing Register is decreasing, from 498 in 2008/09 to just 354 in 2011/12.

5.8 Assistance into Private Rented Accommodation

5.8.1 Previously, the Housing Service has been very successful at placing applicants into private rented accommodation through the Threshold Loan Scheme. In 2008/09, the team assisted 171 clients into private rented accommodation through the scheme, with 149 assisted in 2009/10. This number decreased dramatically to just 71 clients in 2010/11 and just 21 in 2011/12. This is partially due to a tightening of the criteria for the scheme, but is also reflective of the changes in the private rented market brought about by the benefit reforms.

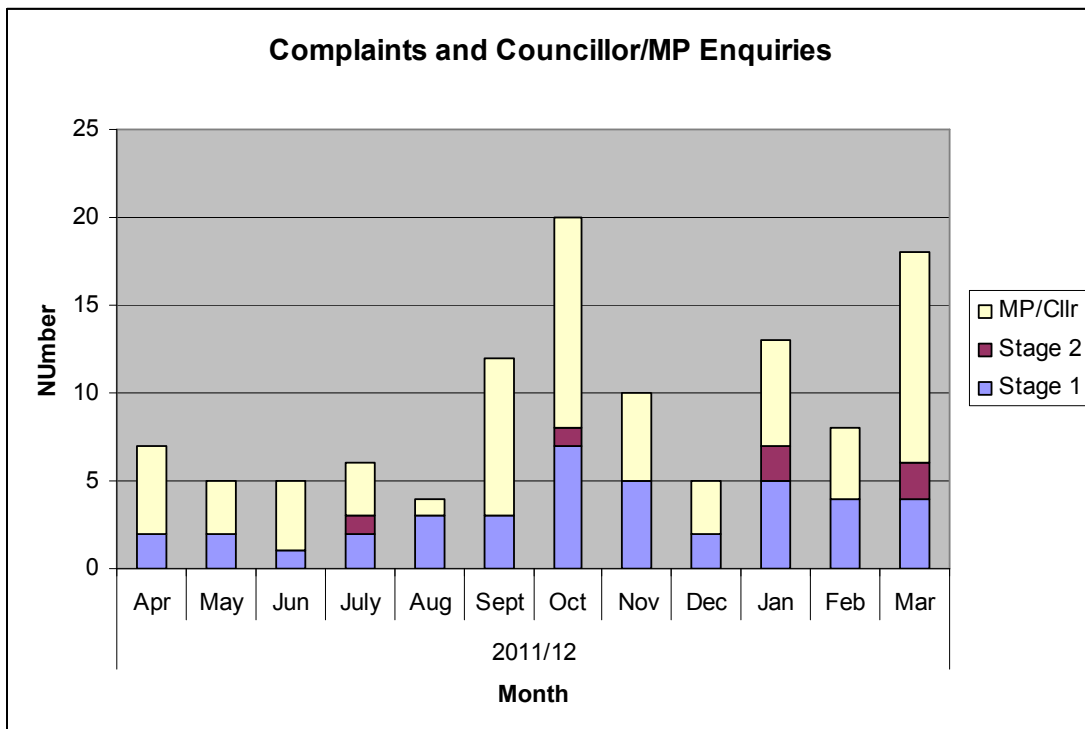
Applicants assisted through the WBC Threshold Loan Scheme



5.9 Complaints & Councillor/MP Enquiries

5.9.1 Many applicants have high expectations of the Housing Service. Since the 1st January 2011, there have been 40 Stage One complaints, six Stage Two complaints and 67 MP/Councillor enquiries. The majority of these are from, or on behalf of applicants, who think that they should be given more priority on the housing register or believe that they have had to wait too long for re-housing.

Complaints and Councillor/MP Enquiries

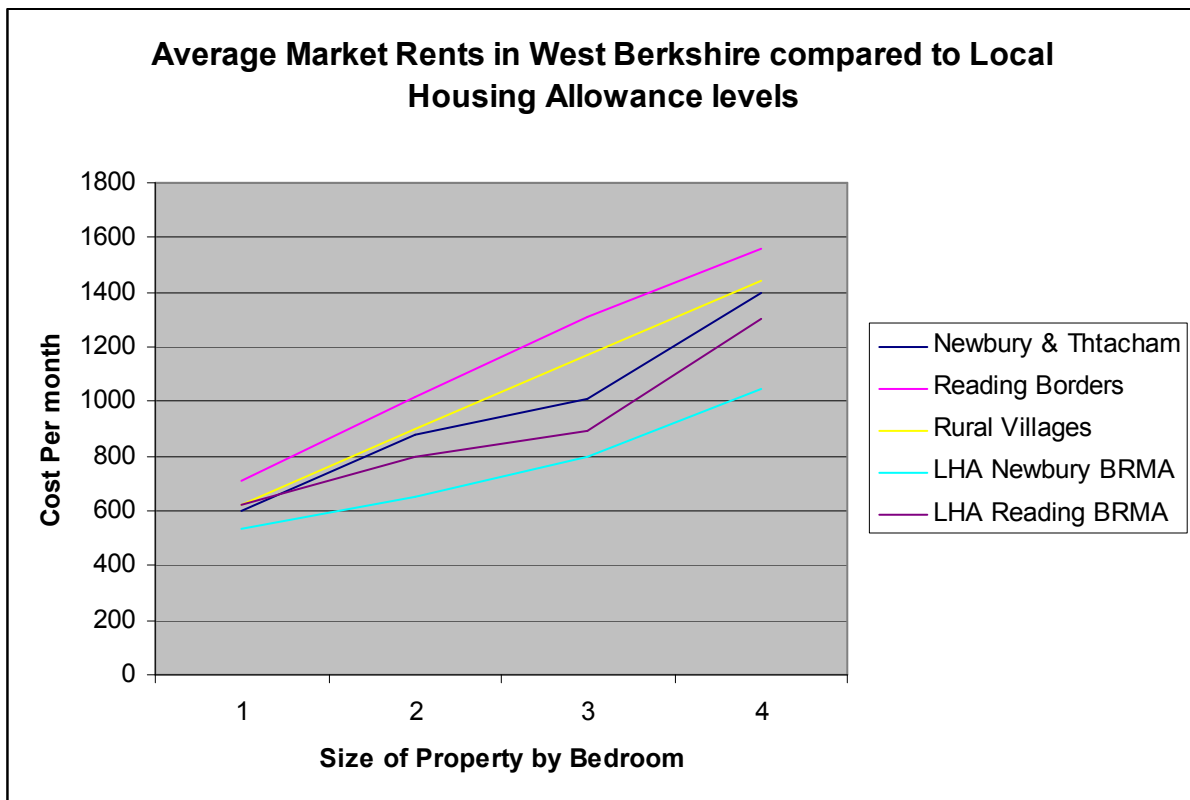


5.10 Housing Needs Assessment 2012

5.10.1 In 2012, the Council commissioned an update to its 2007 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), to understand the potential impacts of the new affordable rent regime. The new Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) shows an increase in the annual shortfall of affordable homes from 560 homes a year in 2007 to 746 homes a year in 2012. The study also showed that:

- 43% of households are unable to afford to rent in the open market;
- Combining estimates of household growth with the proportion unable to rent in the open market equates to 173 new households falling into need each year;
- 720 households who live within West Berkshire are actively interested in accessing intermediate housing products (e.g. shared ownership), of which 55% can afford to access a suitably sized property within the private rented sector. 95% of these do not have savings sufficient for a deposit;
- The income required to access average market rents starts at £24,800 per annum. This would allow the household to afford an average priced 1 bedroom property to rent. This increases to £32,360 for a 2 bedroom property and £42,010 for a three-bedroom property;
- In West Berkshire, households in receipt of the full amount of Housing Benefit would be able to afford Affordable Rent set at 70% or less across the District. 80% appears to be an insufficient discount to bring rents below LHA limits in most parts of the District.
- If Affordable Rents were set in relation to the incomes of those in need (on the waiting list), rents would need to be around 40-50% of market levels to be affordable to the majority of households

5.10.2 The HNA also provides some data on private rents in West Berkshire, showing that the average rents are higher than the Local Housing Allowance levels. Combined with the buoyant market, with landlords easily able to find working tenants who do not need to resort to benefit to pay their rent, access to private rented housing for those in severe housing need is extremely limited.



Note: For Local Housing Allowance purposes, West Berkshire falls within two Broad market rental Areas (BRMA): Newbury & Reading

5.11 Prevention

5.11.1 Prevention is always the first priority of the Housing Options Team. Officers proactively work with households threatened with homelessness to try and prevent the loss of their home and have a good track record in achieving this, using the following tools:

- Supporting clients to make backdated claims for housing benefit
- Where there are multiple issues and multi-agency engagement, paying off the rent arrears in order to keep a family in their home. This would be in conjunction with other services to offer on-going support to maintain the tenancy.
- Where the rent is unaffordable, assisting clients to make a claim for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), including a backdated claim
- Where the rent is unaffordable, assisting the client to claim benefits to which they are entitled but are not currently claiming (income maximisation)
- Where there are rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or damage to a property, speaking to the landlord (whether social or private) to see whether an agreement can be reached that would prevent homelessness, including referral to the tenancy support service or the family intervention project
- Signposting clients for further money advice where there are multiple debts

- Negotiating with family and friends where someone has been asked to leave, to see whether they would be willing for them to stay for a period of six months
- Offering the Rent-In-Advance and Rent Deposit Guarantee Schemes to eligible applicants to help them secure accommodation in the private rented sector
- Offering Safer Spaces to improve security for victims of domestic abuse, where it is viable to do so.

This is not an exhaustive list but provides an indicator of the wide range of service that are available to households threatened with homelessness.

6. Services for Vulnerable People in West Berkshire

6.1 This section focuses on the services that are available for those vulnerable people who are most likely to become homeless. It does not include all people who may be vulnerable.

6.2 Gypsies and Travellers

6.2.1 Decent homes are a key element of any thriving, sustainable community. This is true for the settled and Gypsy & Traveller communities alike.

6.2.2 There are two Gypsy & Traveller sites in West Berkshire: a private site at Paices Hill; and a Council-managed site at Four Houses Corner.

6.2.3 The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Services supports families with children to access education, in partnership with schools, Children's Centres, West of Berkshire PCT Health Activist and other local authority EMTAS provision.

6.2.4 Two Saints have been commissioned by the Council to offer floating support at the Four Houses Corner site. Benefits and debt advice is given to residents. More recently, the service has been offering support to Gypsies and Travellers whose van rental is above the rent officer's approved rent. For most of the Gypsies and Travellers, the Rent Officer rent levels do not allow them to rent a van that is suitable for all-year living. This is particularly concerning given that the Gypsy & Traveller community already experience higher than average ill health and morbidity.

6.2.5 There is a multi-agency Gypsy & Traveller group that oversees work in relation to Gypsy & Traveller issues.

6.2.6 As part of the development of the Core Strategy, a new Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is being undertaken during 2012 to provide information on housing need for this particular community.

6.3 Substance Misuse

6.3.1 West Berkshire's Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) is being dissolved with the post of DAAT and Joint Commissioning Manager transferring to Public Health as of April 1st 2013,. The annual Adult Alcohol and Drug Treatment Plan will be incorporated into the Needs Assessment and subsequent planning to meet the needs of substance misusing residents via Public Health Planning documentation. The Alcohol and Drug Strategy Group will continue to meet quarterly to monitor the implementation of the current Drug and Alcohol Treatment Plan (2012 – 14), monitor performance of commissioned providers, ensure care pathways and partnership working is appropriate and effective. The Alcohol and Drug Strategy Group in turn will report to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Safer Communities Partnership Strategy Group on performance against local set targets in respect of access to treatment, retention and successful discharge from treatment and engagement of substance misusing residents in treatment.

6.3.2 Young People's Substance Misuse treatment in West Berkshire is provided by The Edge, a department of Children and Young People's Services. The Edge provide

quarterly reports to both the Alcohol and Drugs Strategy Group and the Children and Young People's Partnership

6.3.3 West Berkshire Council via Public Health, will continue the current joint contract commissioned by West Berkshire Council and NHS Berkshire West Primary Care Trust with Turning Point to deliver services to meet the needs of substance misusers. The Alcohol and Drug Strategy Group, chaired by the DAAT and Joint Commissioning Manager, ensure any actions are linked to the Safer Communities Partnership Plan.

6.4 Ex-Offenders

6.4.1 The West Berkshire Integrated Offender Management Case Panel, a multi-agency group, meet every 4 weeks to discuss progress with individuals who have been identified as being prolific offenders in West Berkshire. Those offenders that wish to engage with the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme are encouraged to access treatment for substance misuse issues, suitable accommodation, training and employment, whereas those who will not engage are targeted by the Police and brought back into the criminal justice system as swiftly as possible.

6.4.2 In addition, there is an Offender Management Group, which is chaired by the West Berkshire Police Area Commander and this group seeks to co-ordinate the strategic operation of the IOM scheme in West Berkshire.

6.4.3 One of the priorities within the Reducing Reoffending Plan 2013-14, being monitored by the Offender Management Group, specifically relates to reducing the number of reconvictions of the IOM cohort and includes the following initiatives:-

(i) Maintain 70% of statutory IOMs in sufficiently settled accommodation to reduce the risk of reoffending

(ii) IOM briefings of front line staff to be undertaken within partner agencies.

6.5 Mental Health issues

6.5.1 Nationally 7% of homeless applications from single people result in acceptance due to mental health. In addition there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that mental health can be a contributory factor in many other cases of homelessness.

6.5.2 The Mental Health Housing Panel consists of the Community Mental Health Team, Supporting People Team and local accommodation providers to consider the housing and support needs of individuals referred, and to allocate resources if eligible. The Panel ensures that vacancies arising in supported housing schemes are allocated according to need and other options, either accommodation based or floating support, are offered where appropriate.

6.5.3 The jointly-commissioned Bromford Housing Fountain Gardens scheme offers short term supported accommodation for people with mental health needs for up to a maximum of two years. The service assists people out of hospital or residential care into independent living and consists of 8 units of self contained accommodation with support. There is also 1 Short Term Assessment Flat (STAF) that is available on a

licence agreement for up to 2 weeks for individuals with a mental health need and who are in crisis. The STAF flat is managed by the Crisis Response Home Treatment Team and individuals receive support from them alongside Bromford Housing colleagues.

- 6.5.4 Two Saints Resettlement and Floating Support Team support clients that do not always engage with statutory services but wish to sustain their own accommodation.
- 6.5.5 Altogether West Berkshire has access to 43 units of accommodation with support for people with a mental health need, provided through a range of specialist mental health service providers.

6.6 Young People and Care Leavers

- 6.6.1 The Children Act 1989 was updated from 1st April 2011, in relation to care leavers. It includes:
 - A requirement to have joint protocols to ensure partners understand their roles and engage in effective joint working
 - Ensuring the provision of a range of accommodation to meet the needs of the young person
 - Introducing staying put arrangements for young people who were look after and are not ready to leave care
 - Ensuring that accommodation is suitable and meets the young persons needs.
- 6.6.2 In West Berkshire, a new 'Transitions' guidance document is being written for Care Leavers. This proposes a new early intervention service to offer a more proactive and preventative method of tackling youth homelessness.
- 6.6.3 There are clear indications that the under 18 population in England is set to increase. Despite regional variations in size of population growth, there is an overall forecast growth of 5.5% by 2019. The effect of forecast population growth alone equates to an additional 3,000 looked after children by 2019 and an additional 1,900 children subject to child protection plans. Many of the reasons for the increase in the volume of safeguarding activity over the past three years will continue.
- 6.6.4 The Southwark Judgement placed a responsibility on Children's Services to make young people between the ages of 16-17 'Looked After' under the Children's Act, if they are accommodated for more than 13 weeks. This duty has increased the number of young people who are looked after and has increased their duty to find accommodation for these young people. There is increased public and professional awareness and improved multi-agency training for more complex cases where parental factors are affecting the children such as domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health.

- 6.6.5 West Berkshire Council has developed a joint protocol to address the Southwark judgement, meaning that 16 and 17 year olds who approach the Council are given a joint assessment by both Childrens Services and Housing. Further work is under way to develop and extend this partnership to improve the focus on prevention and to try and prevent young people from having to leave the family home and becoming homeless.
- 6.6.6 Current accommodation services available to young people in West Berkshire includes:
- Supported accommodation supplied by NACRO (Bramlings)
 - Supported lodgings scheme
- 6.6.7 There are three key issues affecting the provision of suitable accommodation for young people in West Berkshire:
1. Care Leavers can get a single occupancy rate for their Housing Benefit when they are 16-23 years old and so will be able to apply for a one bedroom flat. However, at the age of 24, they will return to a single room occupancy rate which will mean that they have to go back to living in a shared house.
 2. The Southwark ruling states that anyone placed into care as a child in need, after 13 weeks, becomes a 'looked after child' and WBC then has duties to provide housing and continued support until the young person is 21 years old.
 3. There is particular concern about homelessness amongst young women under 18 who are pregnant, for whom the current available accommodation options may not be suitable.

6.7 Domestic Abuse

- 6.7.1 In West Berkshire 10% of homeless applications made last year were as result of domestic abuse, in comparison with 12% nationally. Domestic abuse is one of the main priorities within the Safer Communities Partnership as well as one of the themed business priorities for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). Work currently underway to reduce domestic abuse in West Berkshire includes
- A West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Service that provides a significant outreach programme and a women's refuge providing support and accommodation for women fleeing domestic abuse
 - A Safer Spaces (Sanctuary) scheme that provides professionally installed security measures to allow those experiencing domestic abuse to remain in their own accommodation where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice and where the perpetrator no longer lives within the accommodation
 - Employment of a Domestic Abuse Reduction Co-ordinator, who owns the Safer Communities Partnership and LSCB Action Plans, domestic abuse training and raising awareness. The post supervises delivery of the Berkshire and Oxfordshire domestic abuse perpetrator scheme; 'Making Changes' and oversees local campaigns to increase reporting of incidents.

- An effective Domestic Abuse Practitioners group aligned with a Strategic Forum whose multi-agency membership is wide-ranging and which works together to deliver a strategy and action plan to tackle important issues of domestic abuse such as training development and delivery
- A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) which oversees and coordinates cases assessed as being medium or high risk

6.8 Rough Sleepers

- 6.8.1 In West Berkshire, the number of rough sleepers is reported to be low (less than 8), compared with the national statistics. This is due to a successful service level agreement (SLA) with the Two Saints hostel providing overnight accommodation and assessment for single people without accommodation on a self-referral basis. All individuals who access this service are then referred to the Housing Options Service for a full assessment of need.
- 6.8.2 In addition, the Council has a SLA with Two Saints hostel to provide Severe Weather Emergency Accommodation under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). This provides accommodation to anyone who needs it when the temperature is predicted to be zero degrees or below, for two nights in a row.

6.9 Learning Disability

- 6.9.1 For people with Learning Disabilities, homelessness is often not seen as a pressing concern, as most people are able to move in a planned way. Where service users meet the eligibility criteria for Adult Social Care Services, the Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities (CTPLD) will work with housing services and accommodation providers to secure accommodation at the earliest opportunity. However, there are concerns that this may not continue to be the case, with changing needs and changing demographics.
- 6.9.2 There are currently 480 people with a learning disability known to services, but national prevalence data would suggest that there could be as many as 3,500 people in West Berkshire. Funding for the majority of placements away from the family home comes from either the Adult Social Care Budget or Supporting People and in some cases, both.
- 6.9.3 Emerging needs arise from people who currently live with ageing parents but also those coming through transition from children to adult services. There are a number of supported housing schemes for people with a Learning Disability within West Berkshire, and there have been recent developments at Pelham House and Blagdon House, with further provision planned for the old day centre site in Newtown Road.

6.10 Older People

- 6.10.1 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' – A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society states that an ageing society poses one of our greatest housing challenges. By 2026 older people will account for almost half (48%) of the increase in the total households, resulting in 2.4 million more households than there are today.

- 6.10.2 By 2041 the composition of the older age group will have changed dramatically. There will be a higher proportion of the older age groups, including the over 85s, a greater number of older people from black and minority ethnic groups, and double the number of older disabled people. One in five children born today can expect to live to 100 years old. Information from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) predicts the numbers of people in different age bands is likely to change over the next 20 years in West Berkshire.
- 6.10.3 By far the most striking statistic is the proportionate increase in the over 65 age group. This age group is expected to increase by 10% between 2007-11 and by a further 27% over the next decade. Overall, this is expected to increase the total number of people aged over 65 by almost two thirds above 2007 numbers by 2029. This will mean just over 33,000 people over 65 in 2029.
- 6.10.4 The demographic trend clearly indicates an ageing population that will place increasing pressure on existing services. West Berkshire has a good supply of sheltered housing therefore there are very few older people who would need to pursue a homeless application. The waiting list for sheltered housing is relatively short when compared to the general needs waiting list and urgent needs can usually be addressed very quickly.
- 6.10.5 Extra care housing offers an independent self-contained home (owned or rented) with access to differing levels of care and support as required at different stages in a person's life. It also offers social activities and services, both to residents, and the wider community. West Berkshire has already worked in partnership with A2 Housing to build an extra care scheme in Newbury, and residents have recently moved into a popular scheme at Alice Bye Court, Thatcham, developed in partnership with Housing 21. To address the needs of West Berkshire's ageing population, a further scheme has been commissioned and is currently under development in Hungerford.

6.11 Armed Forces

- 6.11.1 West Berkshire Council has a small amount of family quarters within the district located in Hermitage and Burghfield. Only a very small proportion of those currently housed in armed forces accommodation present to the local authority for housing options or ultimately to make a homeless application.
- 6.11.2 On August 2012, new regulations came into force that prevent local authorities disadvantaging armed services personnel on the basis of local connection, and the recently-published Allocations Guidance also suggests that local authorities may wish to consider whether armed services personnel should receive additional preference for rehousing through the CHR. This issue will be considered through the Council's review of its Allocation Policy.

7. Key Issues in West Berkshire:

- 7.1 This review of homelessness has been carried out against a rapidly changing context of both housing and welfare reforms. These reforms have reduced access to private rented accommodation and, combined with the economic climate which has impacted on delivery of new housing, are contributing to pressure on housing resources. Nationally, there have been increases in homelessness presentations and acceptances and a return to use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation as temporary accommodation. West Berkshire is not immune to these pressures and has experienced similar trends at a local level.
- 7.2 The biggest concern locally is the likely impact of the ongoing welfare reforms, in particular, the changes to the age limit for single room rent restrictions, the introduction of Universal Credit and the changes to LHA. Mitigating the impacts of the welfare reforms is critical to West Berkshire's homelessness prevention agenda and consequently forms a central focus within the Homelessness Strategy.
- 7.3 The buoyant housing market within West Berkshire, combined with an economic climate that has seen reticence in the home ownership market, has resulted in private rental prices significantly exceeding LHA levels. Previously, the Council had been extremely successful in facilitating access to private rented accommodation for households at risk of homelessness but the buoyant market, combined with the introduction of a reduction in LHA levels to the 30th percentile of local rents, has resulted in the creation of a barrier for home seekers on welfare benefits. Landlords are able to exercise choice when it comes to finding tenants and are not reliant on households in receipt of benefit. The increasing difficulty in accessing private rented accommodation is of particular concern locally and the Homelessness Strategy will explore ways in which the Council and its partners can work with landlords to open up access to this stream of accommodation.
- 7.4 The review has also highlighted that homelessness in West Berkshire is concentrated on young families (aged 24 years and under) who are asked to leave home by their family and friends. This appears to be a particularly local issue when compared to national averages. Leaving home in a planned way is always preferable to homelessness and should be possible for the majority of young people. The impact on these young families, who are often placed in Bed & Breakfast, outside of the district, should not be underestimated. This also creates a significant burden on the Council who are non-stockholding and who are not able to meet the aspirations of these young people. The Homelessness Strategy needs to focus on understanding the reasons that young people are asked to leave home and on educating both for young people and their families, about the importance of planning for their future and the options that are available to them.

Appendix One

Affordable Housing Tenures

Social Rent - Homes rented through a Registered Provider at a target rent, set by the HCA. These tenancies are offered on a lifetime basis.

Affordable Rent - Homes rented through a Registered Provider at up to 80% of market rents. These tenancies can be offered on a lifetime basis or on a fixed term basis, with the minimum term being 2 years.

Intermediate Rent - Homes rented through a Registered Provider at up to 80% of market rents, on an assured shorthold basis, with a minimum term of 6 months.

Rent to Buy - Available through a range of Registered Providers on assured shorthold tenancies with an affordable rent of 80% (or less) of market rents. The rent is payable for a pre-defined and limited period, after which time there is an expectation that the tenant will buy the property under the same terms as Homebuy. The rental period provides the tenant with the opportunity to save for a deposit towards buying a share in the home.

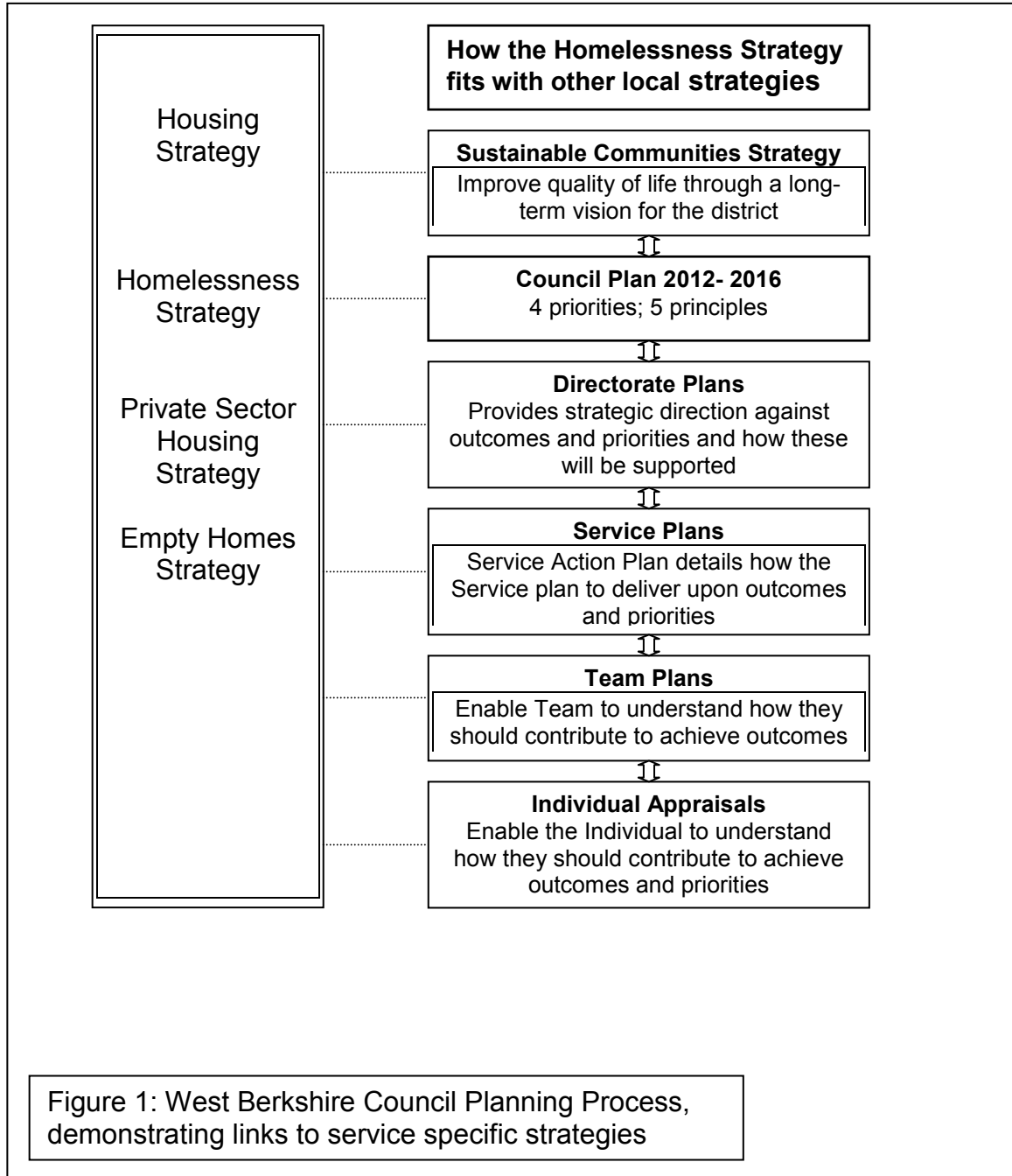
Shared Ownership / Homebuy - The purchaser buys between 25% and 75% of the home, with the rest of the equity staying with the Registered Provider. The purchaser pays rent on the remaining equity. In most cases, the purchaser can 'staircase' out (purchase additional equity shares) to eventually own 100% of the property.

Homebuy Direct - The purchaser buys a minimum of 70% of the market value of a property. An equity loan of up to 30% is provided to assist the purchase. There are no payments on the loan for the first five years. After five years there is a fee of 1.75%, which increases annually in line with inflation. The purchaser can staircase out to own 100% of the equity. Scheme is offered in conjunction with private developers on selected developments.

Social Homebuy – offers tenants the opportunity to purchase their social rented home, with a minimum initial share of 25% of the home. The remaining un-owned equity is retained by the Registered Provider or Local Authority. The landlord charges an affordable rent on the un-owned equity. In most cases, the purchaser can staircase out (purchase additional equity shares) to eventually own 100% of the property.

Appendix Two

Strategic Context



Glossary

Affordable Rent	Tenancies let by Registered Providers on rent levels of up to 80% of open market rents
Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA)	BRMA is an area, set by the Rent Officer, which comprises two or more distinct areas of residential accommodation adjoining at least one other area, within which a person could reasonably be expected to reside having regards to services and facilities. There are two BRMA in West Berkshire: Newbury/Thatcham and Reading
Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	A system to advertise available social housing that enables applicants to bid on properties that they wish to be considered for. Once the advert closes, a shortlist is run and the property is allocated to the applicant with the highest housing need
Common Housing Register (CHR)	A single waiting list for all social housing in West Berkshire, managed by the Council
Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	A discretionary payment that is able to assist people in receipt of Housing Benefit (or Universal Credit in the future) with housing-related costs where they can demonstrate hardship
Homes & Communities Agency (HCA)	A national Government-established agency responsible for the delivery of new affordable housing and for the award of national grant subsidy towards the cost of developing new affordable housing. The HCA also have a regulatory role in respect of Registered Providers.
Housing Benefit	A means-tested welfare benefit that assists people on low incomes to cover all or part of their housing rental liability
Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	LHA is a national scheme that came into effect on the 7 th April 2008. It sets the maximum rent levels that can be paid by Housing Benefit for particular sized properties. The rent levels are set annually by the Rent Officer at the 30 th percentile of open market rents, according to the Broad Rental Market Area
Offender Management Group	A strategic group that ensures appropriate provision is in place at a district level for the appropriate and effective management of offenders
Offender Management Panel	An operational meeting that oversees the management of persistent and prolific offenders

Registered Providers (RPs)	Housing providers who are registered with the Homes & Communities Agency
Right to Buy	National scheme that allows current Council tenants a discount to enable them to buy their current home
Sanctuary Scheme	A scheme that provides professionally installed security measures to allow those experiencing domestic violence to remain in their own accommodation where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice and where the perpetrator no longer lives within the accommodation. The West Berkshire scheme is called 'Safer Spaces'.
Social Rent	Tenancies let by Registered Providers on rent levels set at 'target' rents (usually 40-50% of open market rents) set by the Homes & Communities Agency. These are traditionally the cheapest rents in the market
Universal Credit	A new welfare benefit which will be an integrated working-age credit providing a basic allowance with additional elements for children, disability, housing and caring.

Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 When we developed our last Homelessness Strategy in 2008, the Council had already put in place a prevention-focused service that had achieved significant reductions in homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation. We had already met our target to reduce our use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, ahead of schedule.
- 1.2 During the past three years, the emphasis has been on preventing homelessness and reducing the Council's use of temporary accommodation, improving the quality of temporary accommodation and ensuring that people receive the advice and support they need to achieve independence. At the time the last Strategy was developed, whilst the Council and its partners were preparing to counter the impact of the weakening housing market, and its potential implications for the levels of homelessness, nobody could have envisaged the scale of the global recession or the sweeping benefit and housing reforms that were introduced by the coalition Government.
- 1.3 Since its Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010, the Government has substantially reduced its investment in public services and affordable housing. It has also announced a whole raft of welfare reforms that are designed to reduce public expenditure on Housing Benefit and remove any disincentives for people of working age to look for work.
- 1.4 The introduction of the Affordable Rent Model¹, along with the increased use of Flexible Tenancies², is expected to result in a sustained reduction in the supply of secure/assured tenancies at social rents. Benefit reform has decreased access to the private rented sector for households on housing benefit, with only three in ten privately rented properties becoming available and single people aged 35 or under being restricted to shared room rates.
- 1.5 Building on the experience gained during the last 3 years, this new Homelessness Strategy will seek to mitigate the negative impacts that the welfare and housing reforms have on the residents of West Berkshire. It will continue to ensure that homelessness prevention remains at the top of everyone's agenda and that, through partnership working, the residents of West Berkshire continue to be provided with effective, high quality services that provide value for money, improve their life chances and enable them to secure and sustain suitable housing.
- 1.6 The overall purpose of this strategy is to set out how the Council and its partners intend to tackle homelessness within the borough up until 2017, by:
 - Preventing homelessness in the first place
 - Increasing the supply of suitable accommodation available for people who are or may become homeless

¹ Affordable Rent enables Registered Providers to charge rents of up to 80% of market rents on new homes and existing social homes that become empty

² Flexible tenancies enable Registered Providers to offer fixed terms tenancies lasting 2 years or more

- Ensuring that support is available to people whilst they are homeless and/or to those who might otherwise become homeless

1.7 This Strategy marks an opportunity to review how we tackle homelessness in West Berkshire. It is hoped that it will assist West Berkshire Council and its partners to reduce the causes of homelessness and provide a quality response to those affected by homelessness. It provides the necessary framework for effective partnership working and for the delivery of efficiently managed and co-ordinated advice, housing and support services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless

2. Vision

2.1 The Council's vision is:

"Keeping West Berkshire a great place in which to live, learn, work and do business".

2.2 The purpose of the Council is to:

- Help you to help yourself
- Help you when you cannot help yourself
- Help you to help one another
- Promote and act in the interests of the community, people and business of West Berkshire.

2.3 Our guiding principles in developing our services to homeless people in West Berkshire are:

- To treat every homeless person with compassion and respect

To empower every person or family to make informed choices that enable them to secure accommodation that is suitable for their particular needs and to work in partnership to ensure that once housed, they have the support they need to sustain their home in the future

3. What is homelessness?

3.1 **Definition of Homelessness:**

By law, a 'homeless' household is defined as someone who does not have accommodation elsewhere which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is homeless if they cannot secure entry to such accommodation or if it is unreasonable or unsafe for them to do so. A person is also homeless if their accommodation is a moveable structure such as a boat or caravan and there is nowhere for it to be placed. A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 28 days.

- 3.2 Being homeless is about more than just not having somewhere to live. Not having a settled, secure and safe home can make it hard to stay in touch with friends and family. It can be difficult to travel to work or to find work. Moving around may, at best, mean having to register with a different doctor, and, at worse, having no access to health services. Children may have to change schools. Being homeless is a very stressful experience.
- 3.3 Many people can be threatened with homelessness at some point in their life. This can be because they are renting a property from a private landlord and they have been served with a notice asking them to leave. Alternatively, a relationship may break down which results in the family home having to be sold. There may not be enough money from the sale of the home to purchase two alternative properties. Sometimes the loss of a job can result in difficulties with paying the mortgage. In a few cases this can lead to repossession. Some people are actually roofless. They literally have no proper place to stay.
- 3.4 **West Berkshire Council's Statutory Duty**
Central Government requires councils to provide a proactive, planned and preventative approach to homelessness. The preventative approach should aim to work with those threatened with homelessness to either maintain existing housing or assist people in finding alternative housing options. Councils are required to help prevent homelessness whether the household is in 'priority need' or not. The preventative approach contrasts with the previous approach of being more reactive by responding to the crisis of actual homelessness, focusing on the person's rights and applying legal duties of the local authority.
- 3.5 The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) recommends efforts to prevent homelessness at three key stages:
- Firstly – early intervention, for those who may be at risk of homelessness
 - Secondly – prevention, when homelessness is imminent
 - Thirdly – preventing recurring homelessness, for those who have been resettled
- 3.6 West Berkshire Council has the overall responsibility of achieving these aims within the district and has the duty to provide advice and assistance to people making homeless enquiries. **The Council does not have a duty to accommodate all households who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness**, but does have a duty to accommodate homeless households that are unintentionally homeless and defined as 'priority need' until more settled accommodation is found (see Appendix One).
- 3.7 In determining whether or not it owes a duty to a particular household, the Council has regard to five tests:
- Eligibility - A person is not eligible for housing assistance if he/she is not a British citizen and/or does not have full rights to live here because of immigration status or is not considered to be habitually resident in the UK
 - Homeless - A person is homeless if s/he has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere that is available for his/her occupation and that s/he has a legal right to occupy; . has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it; has accommodation but is a moveable structure, for example, a caravan or houseboat; has accommodation but it would not be reasonable for her/him to

occupy it. A person is threatened with homelessness if s/he is likely to become homeless within the next 28 days

- Priority Need - A person is in priority need if she is pregnant or if dependent children live, or might reasonably be expected to live with her/him; s/he has become homeless or is threatened with homelessness as a result of a flood, fire or other disaster; s/he is aged 16 or 17 and is not a 'relevant child' or a child in need who would be covered by the Children Act 1989 (except a person who is in full time education and whose term time accommodation is not available during a vacation – 'a relevant student'); s/he is aged under 21 and was looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18 (except a 'relevant student'); s/he is aged 21 or over and is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18 (except 'a relevant student'); s/he is vulnerable due to 'old age, mental illness, handicap, physical disability or other special reason'; s/he is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular Navy, Military or Armed Forces; s/he is vulnerable as a result of having served a custodial sentence, being committed for contempt of court or other offence or being remanded in custody; s/he is vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence or harassment from another person that are likely to be carried out. The duty generally extends to other members of the person's household
- Intentionality - A person is considered intentionally homeless if s/he deliberately did or did not do something which caused her/him to leave housing which s/he could otherwise have stayed in and it would have been reasonable to stay there
- Local Connection - A person has a local connection if s/he has lived in the area by choice for a certain time (usually for six of the last twelve months or three of the last five years; has a family connection in the area; works in the area; has a connection with the area for 'another special reason')

4. Strategic context

4.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and, based on the findings of this review, to develop and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness.

4.2 This is West Berkshire's third Homelessness Strategy. It has been developed by the Council and its partners, all of whom are strongly committed to tackling the issue of homelessness and providing high-quality preventative services. Some key headlines include:

- 2816 approaches for advice and housing options in 2011/12
- 170 homelessness applications taken in 2011/12

- 63 homelessness applications accepted as being owed a full housing duty in 2011/12
- There are currently 3920 households on West Berkshire's Housing Register
- In 2011/12, there were 354 social housing lettings in West Berkshire
- Recognising the high levels of need, the Home and Communities Agency has invested more than £16.5 million in West Berkshire since 2007 to provide new housing, with a further £6.3 million allocated for the period 2011-2015
- Since April 2011, the Local Housing Allowance has been set at the 30th percentile of rents and has been 'capped'. This means that only 3 properties in every 10 will be let at rents that are at or below the amount that can be taken into account in the calculation of Housing Benefit
- 72 households have been affected by benefit caps introduced in May 2012, with 30 households losing up to £50, 18 losing up to £100, 15 losing up to £150 and 9 losing over £150 a week
- Analysis of West Berkshire's Housing Benefit data has revealed that 73 single claimants aged between 25 and 35 will see a reduction in their housing benefit entitlement when the Shared Accommodation Rate is applied to claimants under the age of 35.

4.3 A more detailed picture of housing needs can be found in West Berkshire's Homelessness Review 2012.

5. What we have achieved so far

5.1 West Berkshire's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2011 set out the District's five strategic objectives and 44 key actions. Good progress has been made towards delivering the action plan and the main achievements of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2011 include:

- 1584 households prevented from becoming homeless between 2008 and 2011
- 417 households assisted into private rented accommodation through the Threshold Loan Scheme between 2008 and 2011
- Delivered 346 new units of affordable housing between 2008 and 2011
- Introduced an Empty Homes Strategy, including financial support for empty home owners who wish to bring properties back into use
- Incorporated mutual exchanges into Choice Based Lettings
- Established a bi-annual Landlords Forum
- Continued to support staff to achieve professional qualifications

- Transferred responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of Discretionary Housing Payments into the Housing Operations Team to ensure vulnerable homeless applicants are given priority for the available assistance
- Developed a supported lodgings scheme and emergency 'Krush Pad' for young people
- Prioritised home visits for all 16/17 year olds at home who are threatened with homelessness, where this is appropriate
- Continued to lead on the operation and development of the Young Persons Housing Panel
- Developed and implemented a Sanctuary Scheme ('Safer Spaces')
- Established an internal staff policy to support victims of domestic abuse
- Contributed to the management of ex-offenders through the West Berkshire Offender Management Panel, Offender Management Group, and the Multi Agency Public Protection Panel
- Continued to fund the rough sleeper accommodation provided by Two Saints and provide follow up housing advice and guidance to assist rough sleepers in accessing housing and support services
- Worked to identify applicants on the Common Housing Register (CHR) who are under-occupying and facilitate moves to free up family-sized accommodation
- Held an open afternoon for professionals to explain how the CHR and homelessness works

6. Links with other strategies and plans

6.1 The Council Strategy 2011-2016 contains strategic aims which focus on Housing and Homelessness. These include:

- **Explore** new opportunities and methods for delivery of affordable housing, including responding to the housing needs of rural communities;
- **Work with** owners of empty homes to bring them back into use;
- **Improve** access to private rented accommodation addressing issues of affordability and quality;
- **Continue** to work to prevent homelessness offering the widest possible range of options, advice and interventions.

6.2 In addition to this, the Local Strategic Partnership monitors the effectiveness of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2028. 'A Breath of Fresh Air' is the second Sustainable Community Strategy for West Berkshire, which presents a vision for the district spanning the next 18 years. The guiding principles that underpin the strategy are a community that are as follows:

- Greener
- Healthier
- Prosperous
- Safer
- Stronger

6.3 The Sustainable Community Strategy draws together the themes from a number of contributing strategies and partnership forums. More information can be found at: <http://www.westberkshirepartnership.org/index.aspx?articleid=15225>

6.4 The West Berkshire Council's District Profile and West Berkshire Council's Local Economic Assessment 2011 give full information on the area demography and economy which gives an overview of the issues that West Berkshire Council and its partners face in terms of priorities and services. For more information go to:

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8406>
<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=29621&p=0>

7. Our priorities and how are we going to achieve them

7.1 After reviewing housing need, assessing the likely impact of the Government's welfare reforms and consulting widely with stakeholders, we have developed a Homelessness Strategy that has 5 key priorities:

1. Continue to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies

We will work proactively to prevent homelessness by intervening early, championing the development of tenancy sustainment services, and providing high quality advice and support services.

We will continue with the successful multi-agency approach that we adopted for our previous strategy, and we will look for new and even more innovative ways to prevent homelessness and help tenants to sustain their tenancies and remain in their homes.

We are going to achieve this priority by:

- Continuing to offer Safer Spaces to victims of domestic abuse, where it is appropriate to do so
- Identifying the reasons for no fault evictions and develop a new approach to negotiating with private sector landlords to prevent homelessness
- Enabling people to sustain their tenancies by developing pre-tenancy training delivered through a multi-agency approach, for Care Leavers, people moving—on from short term supported accommodation, and those entering the private rented sector through Council schemes

- Looking at the feasibility of introducing accreditation for tenants to recognise responsible tenants and provide them with a competitive edge when seeking new accommodation
- Ensuring that commissioned housing related support services are accessible to, and meet the needs of, vulnerable households, including young people, households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and victims of domestic abuse
- Working with young people in schools to intervene early by raising awareness of the realities of homelessness and signposting to relevant services that support and assist young people
- Working with Childrens Services and Connexions to develop a returning home or staying home 'virtual' team to provide early intervention to young people and families where breakdown appears to be a concern.
- Minimising evictions of vulnerable tenants by reviewing the Vulnerable Persons Protocol and implementing a revised scheme that meets current needs
- Working proactively with Registered Providers, sharing good practice and developing ways of reducing evictions from social tenancies through the Registered Providers Forum
- Continuing to work with Health Visitors, Social Workers and other professionals to educate them on housing options and homelessness to enable them to prevent homelessness by identifying early signs of problems and through early intervention
- Reviewing our service information to ensure that it is up-to-date and well publicised
- Consulting elected Members on the new powers under the Localism Act and any proposed changes to operations procedures

2. Mitigating the negative impacts of the welfare and housing reforms

We will do everything we can to mitigate the negative impacts that changes to welfare benefits will bring.

We will do this by identifying those households whose homes will be put at risk by the reforms and by working with them to prevent homelessness. To achieve this, we will work proactively with private landlords and rental agents to increase the supply of affordable private rented housing.

We are going to achieve this priority by:

- Working with partner agencies within West Berkshire to ensure that residents are able to access monetary advice and have support to negotiate with landlords to lower rents
- Working with the Revenues & Benefits to identify people negatively affected by the changes to welfare benefits, and with our partners to ensure households receive the help they need to find appropriate solutions

- Mitigating the impact of the changes to the single room rate by maximising the availability of good quality, well managed single rooms for rent for the under 35's

3. Make best use of the District's housing stock

We will maximise the supply of good quality, affordable housing, whether in the private or social sector, and make best use of the District's social housing stock. We will do this by removing barriers to the private rented sector, supporting the development of new affordable housing and by freeing up social rented family and adapted homes.

We are going to achieve this priority by:

- Continuing to work with developers and Registered Providers to maximise the delivery of new affordable housing in the district
- Continuing to support and work with the Rural Housing Enabler to identify local housing needs and deliver new rural exceptions schemes
- Working with private sector landlords and agents, to promote the benefits of working with West Berkshire Council, building relationships which act as an incentive and remove the barriers to procuring and accessing private sector accommodation
- Continuing to use the Rent Deposit Guarantee and Discretionary Housing Payment schemes to assist households access the private rented sector and support them to sustain their tenancy
- Working with colleagues in WBC Housing Benefit, Public Protection and Housing Strategy to provide advice and information to landlords
- Holding a bi-annual Landlord's Forum and developing a Landlord's Accreditation Scheme
- Continuing to work with Adult Social Care, through the Supported Living Development Programme, to bring about a co-ordinated approach for the procurement of accommodation for vulnerable people in need of supported housing
- Bringing empty homes back in to use through the Empty Homes Strategy and through effective promotion of the financial support that is available to owners of empty homes.
- Reviewing the supported housing provision for young people to make sure it meets identified needs, including the needs of young women aged under-16 who are pregnant
- Working with our Registered Providers, and through the review of the Allocations Policy, to tackle under-occupation, freeing up family-sized accommodation and developing a range of incentives and promotional materials to promote and develop this service
- Consulting with partners and the public to develop and implement a Tenancy Strategy in line with the Localism Act

4. Improving the life chances of homeless people.

Homelessness has a significant impact on the health, educational attainment, life chances and well-being of some of West Berkshire's most vulnerable residents.

We will work proactively with our partners to improve the life chances of homeless people by maximising opportunities for homeless people to engage in opportunities that improve their health, education and employment prospects.

We are going to achieve this priority by:

- Encouraging saving and enabling access to low cost finance by promoting the Community Savings & Loans (Berkshire Credit Union) scheme
- Working closely with the educational welfare service to minimise the disruption that may occur when families move to new accommodation
- Maintaining the number of people attaining and maintaining independent living through Housing Related Support Services
- Working with Real Lettings to facilitate procurement of good quality private rented accommodation suitable for people who are ready to move on from supported living into independent living
- Ensuring that vulnerable adults and children retain their support networks, by working with Children's and Adult Services, ensuring they are notified of housing decisions that affect vulnerable families
- Reviewing the data we collect so that have a clearer understanding of the health needs of households in temporary accommodation
- Ensuring that the health inequalities faced by homeless households are addressed through the forthcoming Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Ensuring staff have received training and are aware of safeguarding issues and referral mechanisms

5. Proactively work with partners to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness

We know we cannot tackle homelessness on our own. The last three years have shown us how much more we can achieve by working together.

We will actively encourage a way of working that involves a joint approach to problem solving and supports the pooling of resources, the co-location of services and the sharing of information and good practice.

We are going to achieve this priority by:

- Continuing to support, and be active participants in, multi-agency forums, including but not exclusively: MARAC, MAPPA, Offender Management Group, West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Forum, child protection conferences, Youth Housing Panel, Mental Health Panel and safeguarding conferences

- Maintaining the Homelessness Forum for partners to exchange information and best practice, to ensure that services are co-ordinated, inclusive and have a multi-disciplinary approach to meeting need
- Through the Homelessness Forum, seeking opportunities to pool resources, co-locate and avoid duplication to make the best use of our resources; ensuring services are delivered in the most effective way that gives value for money
- Through the Homelessness Forum, adopting a co-ordinated approach to grant bidding, working collaboratively to identify and share information on funding opportunities to secure additional resources and promote innovation
- Through the Homelessness Forum, working together to address the impacts of national and local changes and their implications for service delivery
- Ensuring a multi-agency approach to delivering the priorities of this Strategy through the Homelessness Forum.

8. How we will implement and monitor this strategy

- 8.1 Tackling homelessness and the causes of homelessness is not the responsibility of any single agency. Whilst West Berkshire Council have a statutory role in responding to homelessness, and in providing strategic leadership on issues of homelessness, multi-agency working is an essential foundation if progress is to be made against the identified priorities.
- 8.2 Progress against the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the West Berkshire Homelessness Forum, which brings together key agencies engaged in work to support households who are homeless or who are threatened with homelessness.
- 8.3 The Homelessness Forum will also undertake an annual review of the Homelessness Strategy, to consider the progress made during the year and to look forward to the priorities for the forthcoming year.
- 8.4 As well as monitoring the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy, the Homelessness Forum will identify and share good practice.
- 8.5 The Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan has been produced in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders through a multi agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group and public consultation. It will be a live document that will be reviewed and developed over the life of the Strategy, in response to emerging issues, concerns and policy changes.

Glossary

Affordable Rent	Tenancies let by Registered Providers on rent levels of up to 80% of open market rents
Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA)	BRMA is an area, set by the Rent Officer, which comprises two or more distinct areas of residential accommodation adjoining at least one other area, within which a person could reasonably be expected to reside having regards to services and facilities. There are two BRMA in West Berkshire: Newbury/Thatcham and Reading
Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	A system to advertise available social housing that enables applicants to bid on properties that they wish to be considered for. Once the advert closes, a shortlist is run and the property is allocated to the applicant with the highest housing need
Common Housing Register (CHR)	A single waiting list for all social housing in West Berkshire, managed by the Council
Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	A discretionary payment that is able to assist people in receipt of Housing Benefit (or Universal Credit in the future) with housing-related costs where they can demonstrate hardship
Homes & Communities Agency (HCA)	A national Government-established agency responsible for the delivery of new affordable housing and for the award of national grant subsidy towards the cost of developing new affordable housing. The HCA also have a regulatory role in respect of Registered Providers.
Housing Benefit	A means-tested welfare benefit that assists people on low incomes to cover all or part of their housing rental liability
Krashpad	Emergency overnight accommodation that can be offered pending a full assessment of the household's needs
Landlord Accreditation Scheme	A scheme to recognise and promote good landlords who provide their tenants with high quality, safe accommodation.
Landlord Forum	A meeting coordinated by the Council to share information and best practice, and develop stronger relationships, with private landlords
Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	LHA is a national scheme that came into effect on the 7 th April 2008. It sets the maximum rent levels that can be

paid by Housing Benefit for particular sized properties. The rent levels are set annually by the Rent Officer at the 30th percentile of open market rents, according to the Broad Rental Market Area

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	A partnership that brings together organisations from public, private and voluntary sector in a local authority area. The key objective of the LSP is to improve the quality of life in that area
Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)	A statutory process through which the Responsible Authorities (Probation, Police and Prison Services) work together with Duty to Cooperate Agencies such as Mental Health/YOS/Housing/Social Care (children and adults) Job Centre Plus/Health to manage the Risk and help reduce the re-offending behaviour of Sexual and Violent Offenders in order to protect the public including the victims from serious harm
Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	A victim-focused meeting where information is shared on the highest risk cases of domestic abuse between criminal justice, health, child protection, housing practitioners, IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) as well as other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. A safety plan for each victim is then created
Offender Management Group	A strategic group that ensures appropriate provision is in place at a district level for the appropriate and effective management of offenders
Offender Management Panel	An operational meeting that oversees the management of persistent and prolific offenders
Real Lettings	A private sector leasing scheme that aims to secure good quality private rented accommodation for homeless households, managing it on behalf of private landlords whilst still offering them a return, and to increase accessibility to private rented accommodation
Registered Providers (RPs)	Housing providers who are registered with the Homes & Communities Agency
Rent Deposit Guarantee	A written guarantee, in which the Council underwrites a tenancy deposit for private rented accommodation, given in lieu of a cash deposit
Rural Housing Enabler (RHE)	The Rural Housing Enabler works with rural parishes to identify local housing needs, raise awareness of affordable housing and help enable the delivery of new rural affordable housing developments

Sanctuary Scheme	A scheme that provides professionally installed security measures to allow those experiencing domestic violence to remain in their own accommodation where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice and where the perpetrator no longer lives within the accommodation. The West Berkshire scheme is called 'Safer Spaces'.
Social Rent	Tenancies let by Registered Providers on rent levels set at 'target' rents (usually 40-50% of open market rents) set by the Homes & Communities Agency. These are traditionally the cheapest rents in the market
Supported Lodgings	A scheme that finds lodging placements for young people, within a family home, and with additional support
Threshold Loan Scheme (TLS)	A scheme offering eligible housing clients a written guarantee in lieu of a cash deposit and a rent in advance payment, to facilitate access to private rented accommodation

Appendices

Appendix One – Homelessness Flow-Chart

Appendix C – Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2017 Action Plan

Action	Lead	Partners	Outcomes	Target Date	Resources	
1. Continue to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies						
1a	Continuing to offer Safer Spaces to victims of domestic abuse, where it is appropriate to do so	WBC Housing Service	Safer Communities Partnership Safer Partnerships West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Forum	Safer Spaces is offered to every victim of domestic abuse, where appropriate	Ongoing	Within existing resources
1b	Identifying the reasons for no fault evictions and develop a new approach to negotiating with private sector landlords to prevent homelessness: i) Establish a reportable monitoring process for no fault evictions	WBC Housing Service	Private Landlords Forum	Reasons for no fault evictions identified Consultation with landlords completed Outcomes	March 2015	Within existing resources

	<p>ii) Monitor no fault evictions monthly to identify reasons</p> <p>iii) Survey landlords to identify what could have prevented eviction</p> <p>iv) Run a workshop at the landlords forum to identify approach most likely to succeed in preventing homelessness</p> <p>v) Report outcomes of and recommend new approach</p>			<p>reviewed and new approach recommended</p>		
1c	<p>Enabling people to sustain their tenancies by developing pre-tenancy training delivered through a multi-agency approach, for Care Leavers, people moving-on from short term supported accommodation, and those entering the private rented sector through</p>	WBC Housing	Homelessness Forum	<p>Pool of staff identified and trained</p> <p>Sessions scheduled and Delivered</p> <p>Monitoring Report Completed</p>	March 2017	<p>Costs to be identified for development of training pack and delivery of training, potentially from Homelessness Prevention Grant</p>

	<p>Council schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Identify key staff that will deliver the training ii) Ensure key staff have attended training for trainers iii) Agree and implement a timetable of sessions to be delivered across advice and options service users, care leavers and people moving on from supported housing iv) Track tenancy success after 12 months to monitor effectiveness of scheme and adjust/ amend training where needed 			Pre-tenancy training updated		
1d	Looking at the feasibility of introducing accreditation for tenants to recognise responsible tenants and provide them with a competitive edge when seeking new accommodation	WBC Housing	Homelessness Forum Private Landlords	Research completed Report completed and recommendations made	March 2017	Costs to be identified for development and administration of accreditation scheme, potentially from Homelessness Prevention Grant

	<p>i) Research existing schemes and best practice, taking into account the cost and short and longer terms outcomes for tenants and landlords</p> <p>ii) Consult on proposals with clients and private landlords</p> <p>iii) Implement recommendations</p>			Recommendations Implemented		
1e	<p>Ensuring that commissioned housing related support services are accessible to, and meet the needs of, vulnerable households, including young people, households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and victims of domestic abuse</p>	WBC Care Commissioning	WBC Housing Services	Services reviewed and re-tendered as appropriate, with relevant service and service user input	Ongoing	Within existing resources
1f	<p>Working with young people in schools to intervene early by raising</p>	Connexions	WBC Housing Services	Pool of staff identified and trained	March 2014	Costs to be identified for development of training pack and delivery of training,

	<p>awareness of the realities of homelessness and signposting to relevant services that support and assist young people</p> <p>i) Identify key staff that will deliver the training</p> <p>ii) Ensure key staff have attended training for trainers</p> <p>iii) Agree and implement a timetable of sessions to be delivered across schools</p> <p>iv) Track the number of young people aged 16 and 17 who approach the Council for housing advice up to 24 months after receipt of training to monitor effectiveness of scheme and adjust/ amend training where needed</p>		<p>WBC Childrens Services</p> <p>Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>Sessions scheduled and Delivered</p> <p>Monitoring Report Completed</p> <p>School training updated</p>		<p>potentially from Homelessness Prevention Grant</p>
1g	<p>Working with Childrens Services and Connexions to develop a returning home or staying home 'virtual' team to provide</p>	<p>WBC Childrens Services</p>	<p>WBC Housing Services</p> <p>Connexions</p>	<p>Staff to be identified and trained</p> <p>Terms of</p>	<p>March 2013</p>	<p>Training costs to be accommodated within existing resources</p>

	early intervention to young people and families where breakdown appears to be a concern			reference to be agreed Monitoring system to be established		
1h	Minimising evictions of vulnerable tenants by reviewing the Vulnerable Persons Protocol and implementing a revised scheme that meets current needs	WBC Housing Services	Homelessness Forum	Scheme reviewed and revised protocol in place	March 2013	Within existing resources
1i	Working proactively with Registered Providers, sharing good practice and developing ways of reducing evictions from social tenancies through the Registered Providers Forum	WBC Housing Services	Registered Providers	Forum held to discuss best practice to reduce evictions and agree a protocol	March 2014	Within existing resources
1j	Continuing to work with Health Visitors, Social Workers and other professionals to educate them on housing options and homelessness to	WBC Housing Services	Homelessness Forum	Identify training needs Develop training programme	March 2014	Within existing resources

	enable them to prevent homelessness by identifying early signs of problems and through early intervention			Training sessions delivered		
1k	Reviewing our service information to ensure that it is up-to-date and well publicised	WBC Housing Services		All leaflets reviewed Web pages updated Review Locata to consider opportunities to improve system in respect of information and advice	March 2013	Within existing resources
1l	Consulting elected Members on the new powers under the Localism Act and any proposed changes to operations procedures	WBC Housing Services		Member Task group established to oversee review of Allocations Policy	March 2013	Within existing resources
2. Mitigating the negative impacts of the welfare and housing reforms						

2a	Working with partner agencies within West Berkshire to ensure that residents are able to access monetary advice and have support to negotiate with landlords to lower rents	WBC Housing Services	CAB Two Saints Berkshire Credit Union	Residents are signposted to agencies that are able to help them with monetary advice and negotiations	Ongoing	Within existing resources
2b	Working with the Revenues & Benefits to identify people negatively affected by the changes to welfare benefits, and with our partners to ensure households receive the help they need to find appropriate solutions	WBC Housing Services	WBC Revenues & Benefits	Households identified and offered advice on managing their new circumstances	March 2013	Within existing resources
2c	Mitigating the impact of the changes to the single room rate by maximising the availability of good quality, well managed single rooms for rent for the under 35's	WBC Housing Services	WBC Environmental Health Landlords Forum	Offer advice on standards for shared accommodation and welfare benefits	Ongoing	Within existing resources

3. Make best use of the District's housing stock

3a	Continuing to work with developers and Registered Providers to maximise the delivery of new affordable housing in the district	WBC Housing Services	WBC Planning Services Developers Registered Providers	Implement new affordable housing policy adopted through the Core Strategy	Ongoing	Within existing resources
3b	Continuing to support and work with the Rural Housing Enabler to identify local housing needs and deliver new rural exceptions schemes	WBC Housing Services	WBC Planning Services Registered Providers Parish Councils Landowners	All rural Parish Councils to be offered a LHNS every year Implement new rural exception site policy adopted through the Core Strategy	Ongoing	Within existing resources
3c	Working with private sector landlords and agents, to promote the benefits of working with West Berkshire Council, building relationships which act as an incentive	WBC Housing Services	WBC Environmental Health WBC Revenues & Benefits	Maintain dialogue with private landlords through the landlords Forum	Ongoing	Within existing resources

	and remove the barriers to procuring and accessing private sector accommodation		Landlords Forum			
3d	Continuing to use the Rent Deposit Guarantee and Discretionary Housing Payment schemes to assist households access the private rented sector and support them to sustain their tenancy	WBC Housing Service		RDGS offered to all eligible clients Information available for landlords and tenants on how the scheme works	Ongoing	Within existing resources
3e	Working with colleagues in WBC Housing Benefit, Public Protection and Housing Strategy to provide advice and information to landlords	WBC Housing	WBC Environmental Health WBC Revenues & Benefits	Review literature currently available and revise or add as appropriate, covering welfare benefits, disrepair and tenancy law	March 2014	Within existing resources
3f	Holding a bi-annual Landlord's Forum and developing a Landlord's Accreditation Scheme	WBC Housing	WBC Environmental Health WBC Revenues &	Bi-annual Landlords Forum is held Accreditation scheme is set up.		Some small costs to be identified for the set up the accreditation scheme and to incentivise landlords to join.

			<p>Benefits</p> <p>Landlords Forum</p> <p>National Landlords Association</p>			
3g	Continuing to work with Adult Social Care, through the Supported Living Development Programme, to bring about a co-ordinated approach for the procurement of accommodation for vulnerable people in need of supported housing	WBC Care Commissioning	<p>WBC Housing</p> <p>WBC Adult Social Care</p> <p>WBC Legal</p> <p>Registered Providers</p> <p>Developers</p>	Professional enabling advice is offered in a timely manner	Ongoing	Each project to be subject to a full financial appraisal
3h	Bringing empty homes back in to use through the Empty Homes Strategy and through effective promotion of the financial support that is available to owners of empty homes	WBC Housing	<p>Flexible Homes Improvement Loans Ltd</p> <p>Real Lettings</p> <p>WBC Legal</p>	30 empty homes to be brought back into use every year	Annual	Funding via Flexible Home Improvement Loans Ltd.

3i	Reviewing the supported housing provision for young people to make sure it meets identified needs, including the needs of young women aged under-16 who are pregnant	WBC Care Commissioning	WBC Housing WBC Childrens Services Step-by-Step Nacro	Needs to be identified and review of existing provision to be completed Negotiations with service providers to remodel existing accommodation to meet identified needs through existing contracts	March 2014	Within existing resources
3j	Working with our Registered Providers, and through the review of the Allocations Policy, to tackle under-occupation, freeing up family-sized accommodation and developing a range of incentives and promotional materials to promote and develop this service	WBC Housing	Registered Providers	Allocations review completed to incorporate revised housing needs points for under-occupation of social tenancies Protocol agreed with registered Partners and promotional materials available to raise awareness	March 2015	Identify resources to be able to offer incentives to tenants who are under-occupying to move.

3k	Consulting with partners and the public to develop and implement a Tenancy Strategy in line with the Localism Act	WBC Housing	Registered Providers	Consultation completed Tenancy Strategy adopted	January 2013	Within existing resources
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4. Improving the life chances of homeless people

4a	Encouraging saving and enabling access to low cost finance by promoting the Community Savings & Loans (Berkshire Credit Union) scheme i) Arrange awareness raising sessions for staff who regularly come into contact with homeless households ii) Identify agencies whose service users may benefit from access to the credit union e.g. supported housing providers, housing managers iii) Ensure leaflets are distributed.	Community Savings & loans	WBC Housing Registered Providers Homelessness Forum	Session delivered Agencies identified Leaflets distributed Information posted on Web site	March 2014	Within existing resources
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	iv) Publicise credit union on the Council's Housing web pages					
4b	Working closely with the educational welfare service to minimise the disruption that may occur when families move to new accommodation i) Work closely with the educational welfare service to ensure moves are facilitated in a way that minimises the potential effects on educational achievement ii) Reduction in days out of school for children in TA	WBC Housing Services	WBC Educational Welfare		March 2015	Within existing resources
4c	Maintaining the number of people attaining and maintaining independent living through Housing Related Support Services	WBC Care Commissioning	Support Providers	TARGET?	Annual	Within existing resources
4d	Working with Real Lettings to facilitate	Real Lettings	WBC Housing	To deliver 20 units a year	Annual	Grant funding has been received to set up and

	procurement of good quality private rented accommodation suitable for people who are ready to move on from supported living into independent living		Homelessness Forum			administer the real lettings scheme
4e	Ensuring that vulnerable adults and children retain their support networks, by working with Children's and Adult Services, ensuring they are notified of housing decisions that affect vulnerable families	WBC Housing	WBC Childrens Services WBC Adult Social care	Referral procedures to be in place	Ongoing	Within existing resources
4f	Reviewing the data we collect so that have a clearer understanding of the health needs of households in temporary accommodation	WBC Housing	Health & Wellbeing Board	Review existing data and identify whether additional health data should be collected Identify trends and areas of concern that need to be addressed	March 2014	Within existing resources

				Liaise with health Services to address identified needs		
4g	Ensuring that the health inequalities faced by homeless households are addressed through the forthcoming Health and Wellbeing Strategy	WBC Housing	Health & Wellbeing Board	Health & Wellbeing Strategy to reflect and address identified needs	DATE?	
4h	Ensuring staff have received training and are aware of safeguarding issues and referral Mechanisms	WBC Housing	Social Care Training	All staff to receive safeguarding training; All training to be refreshed every 3 years	Ongoing	Within existing resources
5. Proactively work with partners to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness						
5a	Continuing to support, and be active participants in, multi-agency forums, including but not exclusively: MARAC, MAPPA, Offender	WBC Housing		All multi-agency forums to be assigned a Housing contact within the Operations team	Ongoing	Within existing resources

	Management Group, West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Forum, child protection conferences, Youth Housing Panel, Mental Health Panel and safeguarding conferences			Where the names contact cannot attend, a substitute to be sent if resources allow		
5b	Maintaining the Homelessness Forum for partners to exchange information and best practice, to ensure that services are co-ordinated, inclusive and have a multi-disciplinary approach to meeting need	WBC Housing	Homelessness Forum members	Hold at least 4 meetings a year.	Ongoing	Within existing resources
5c	Through the Homelessness Forum, seeking opportunities to pool resources, co-locate and avoid duplication to make the best use of our resources; ensuring services are delivered in the most effective way	WBC Housing	Homelessness Forum members	Include joint working as a standing agenda item at the homelessness forum, showcasing good examples of joint working and service delivery and enabling partners to make links that can	Ongoing	Within existing resources

	that gives value for money			lead to efficiencies		
5d	Through the Homelessness Forum, adopting a co-ordinated approach to grant bidding, working collaboratively to identify and share information on funding opportunities to secure additional resources and promote innovation	WBC Housing	Homelessness Forum members	<p>Identify a lead officer to maintain a register of grant bids and bidding activity and be the point of contact for agencies</p> <p>Lead officer identified April 2013</p> <p>Publicise co-ordination of grant bidding through the homelessness forum</p> <p>Ensure the register is kept up to date through quarterly forum bulletins</p> <p>Register established and updated</p>	Ongoing	Within existing resources
5e	Through the Homelessness Forum, working together to	WBC Housing	Homelessness Forum members	Include policy updates as standing agenda	Ongoing	Within existing resources

	address the impacts of national and local changes and their implications for service delivery			<p>item at the Homelessness Forum to generate discussion and collaboration</p> <p>Policy updates delivered</p>		
5f	Ensuring a multi-agency approach to delivering the priorities of this Strategy through the Homelessness Forum	WBC Housing	Homelessness Forum members	<p>Include Action Plan updates as standing agenda item at the Homelessness Forum to generate discussion and collaboration</p> <p>Action Plan delivered</p>	Ongoing	Within existing resources

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Eligibility A person is not eligible for housing assistance if he/she..

- Is not a British citizen and/or does not have full rights to live here because of immigration status
- Is not considered to be habitually resident in the UK

Homelessness / threatened with homelessness A person is homeless if s/he..

- Has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere that is available for his/her occupation and that s/he has a legal right to occupy
- Has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it
- Has accommodation but is a moveable structure, for example, a caravan or houseboat
- Has accommodation but it would not be reasonable for her/him to occupy it

A person is threatened with homelessness if s/he..

- Is likely to become homeless within the next 28 days

Housing authorities must not wait until homelessness is imminent before providing assistance

Priority Need A person is in priority need if..

- She is pregnant or if dependent children live, or might reasonably be expected to live with her/him
- S/he has become homeless or is threatened with homelessness as a result of a flood, fire or other disaster
- S/he is aged 16 or 17 and is not a 'relevant child' or a child in need who would be covered by the Children Act 1989 (except a person who is in full time education and whos term time accommodation is not available during a vacation – 'a relevant student')
- S/he is aged under 21 and was looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18 (except a 'relevant student')
- S/he is aged 21 or over and is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18 (except 'a relevant student')
- S/he is vulnerable due to 'old age, mental illness, handicap, physical disability or other special reason'
- S/he is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular Navy, Military or Armed Forces
- S/he is vulnerable as a result of having served a custodial sentence, being committed for contempt of court or other offence or being remanded in custody
- S/he is vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence or harassment from another person that are likely to be carried out

The duty generally extends to other members of the person's household

Intentionality A person is considered intentionally homeless if s/he..

- Deliberately did or did not do something
- Which caused her/him to leave housing which s/he could otherwise have stayed in
- And it would have been reasonable to stay there

All these points must apply

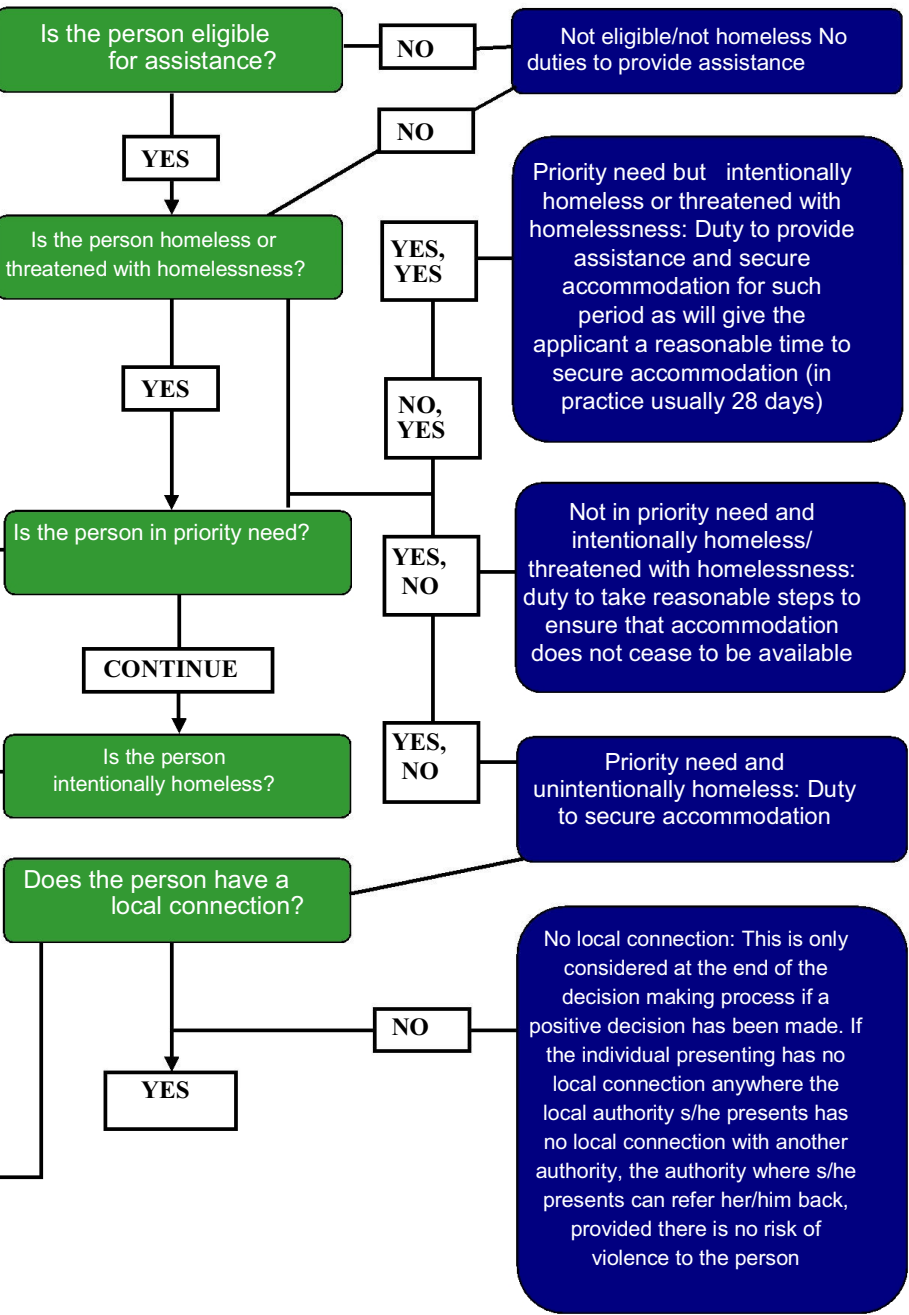
Local Connection A person has a local connection if s/he..

- Has lived in the area by choice for a certain time (usually for six of the last twelve months or three of the last five years)
- Has a family connection in the area
- Works in the area
- Has a connection with the area for 'another special reason'

If any of these applies then a person has a local connection

Application Criteria

Duties



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Equality Impact Assessment

Name of item being assessed:	Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018
Version and release date of item (if applicable):	Version 1.1
Owner of item being assessed:	Mel Brain
Name of assessor:	Mel Brain
Date of assessment:	18 th March 2013

1. What are the main aims of the item? (What does the item try to achieve?)

In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, West Berkshire Council carried out a review of homelessness in the district and have produced a Strategy arising from the findings. The Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 sets out the Council's long-term strategic approach to tackling, managing and preventing homelessness in west Berkshire.

2. What are the results of your research?

Note which groups may be affected by the item. Consider how they may be affected and what sources of information have been used to determine this. (Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	<p>Age alone is not a determinant of whether or not a household will be deemed to be in priority need for homelessness assessments, It may, however, be a consideration in determining whether someone is vulnerable and thus in priority need. This can equally apply to households who are particularly young e.g. 16 or 17 years old, as well as to older people. In particular, the Homelessness Review has highlighted that younger (aged 25 and under) families are disproportionately likely to be made homeless as a consequence of being asked to leave home by family and friends. The Homelessness Strategy therefore proposes a number of actions that seek to mitigate against this, providing education and support for young people and additional placements for 16 and 17-year old girls who are pregnant.</p> <p>The Homelessness Review indicates that older people (aged 60+) are less likely to</p>	<p>Homelessness Review P1E Returns Case Files</p>

	<p>become homeless than households of other ages. However, where an older person is threatened with homelessness, the Housing service is usually able to ensure that homelessness is prevented or that alternative settled accommodation is provided, without the need for the households to make a homelessness application. This is because there is a good supply of older persons accommodation in West Berkshire.</p>	
Disability	<p>Disability, whether physical disability, learning disability or mental ill health is a consideration when assessing priority need for accommodation. There is no evidence that households with a disabled member are adversely affected by homelessness: however, many households who experience homelessness or are threatened with homelessness do have experience of mental ill health. The Strategy recognises this and proposes measures to ensure that such households continue to receive housing-related support services, that there is access to appropriate supported housing provision and that we better understand the health needs of households placed in temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Homelessness Review P1E Returns Case Files</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>There is no evidence that this group is adversely affected by homelessness.</p>	<p>Homelessness Review P1E Returns Case Files</p>
Marriage & Civil partnership	<p>There is no evidence that this group is adversely affected by homelessness.</p>	<p>Homelessness Review P1E Returns Case Files</p>
Pregnancy & Maternity	<p>98% of households who are homeless include a child or pregnant woman. The Homelessness Strategy proposes a number of actions designed to increase supply of family-sized accommodation, offer housing-related support and training and to work more closely with other professionals who may be engaged with such families to ensure that we provide better and more effective services.</p>	<p>Homelessness Review P1E Returns Case Files</p>
Race	<p>The profile of accepted homeless applicants shows a slightly higher</p>	<p>Homelessness Review</p>

	percentage of households who define themselves as coming from a BME background. However, the census data is out-of-date and the percentage is reflective of England and Wales overall. On this basis, it does not currently appear that this group is adversely affected by homelessness. This is an area that will continue to be monitored and will be reviewed once 2011 census releases are available.	P1E Returns Case Files Census
Religion & Belief	There is no evidence that this group is adversely affected by homelessness.	Homelessness Review P1E Returns Case Files
Gender	<p>Statistics show that women are over-represented amongst homelessness acceptances. Women will also be over-represented in the number of households who approach West Berkshire fleeing domestic abuse.</p> <p>The majority of the actions proposed within the Strategy will benefit women who are homeless, including tenancy support and training, closer working between professionals to ensure more effective service delivery, and increased access to accommodation. Domestic Abuse Services have recently been remodelled, providing both refuge accommodation and improved outreach services (including outreach services for men). The Strategy also stresses the importance of continuing to work with MARAC and the West Berkshire Domestic Abuse Forum to ensure that appropriate services are delivered across the district, including services for men.</p> <p>Men tend to be under-represented in homelessness acceptances but are more likely to be represented in single person groups such as rough sleepers, ex-service personnel and ex-offenders.</p> <p>The Strategy works within the statutory framework which identifies which groups are to be given priority, However, West</p>	

	<p>Berkshire continues to commission services, including the Two Saints hostel, for non-priority groups which are more likely to be male. The Strategy seeks to continue to offer these services as well as seeking to improve wider homeless services that will benefit non-priority groups as well as priority groups.</p>	
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Further comments relating to the item:

From the EIA it has been concluded that there are a number of positive impacts alongside a few negative impacts.

A positive impact would be applied to women and young people, both of whom are over-represented in homeless households. The Strategy has a number of actions focused on strengthening support and increasing access to suitable accommodation which should benefit households falling within these groups. Those applicants who are aged over 60 years may also have additional options available to them that can prevent or relieve their homelessness without the need for them to make a homelessness application.

Similarly, disabled people, particularly those with mental health issues, should be able to access appropriate housing-related support and, where appropriate, supported housing provision. The Strategy seeks to better understand the health inequalities experienced by homeless households and will aim to build services around this understanding to ensure that people receive services appropriate to their needs.

Applicants for social housing have a choice of the type and location of homes.

The policy recognises and supports households with vulnerability due to health and other factors. There is specific provision to consider special needs through panel arrangements.

Some limited negative impacts may occur. These include gender. Men are more likely to be under-represented in priority need groups who receive statutory services. However, the Strategy operates within a statutory framework and is not discriminatory. The Strategy seeks to continue offering services to non-priority groups, including the provision of direct-access hostel provision and housing-related support and overall, this group of households should benefit from improved housing options services arising from the Strategy.

It is predicted that no impact will be apparent within the equality streams of faith, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership.

Overall, the Homelessness Strategy seeks to strengthen and develop existing homelessness services for the benefit of both priority and non-priority need groups, ensuring that all households are able to benefit from high-quality housing and homelessness advice services.

3. What actions will be taken to address any negative effects?			
Action	Owner	By When	Outcome
Race monitoring to be reviewed upon 2011 census release	Mel Brain	When release is available	Consideration to be given to whether further consultation with BME groups is needed or

			whether there is a need for specialist services
Continue to monitor trends for faith, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership groups	Mel Brain	Ongoing	To ensure that homelessness services are accessible to and to identify if trends are changing such that specialist services may be required.

4. What was the final outcome and why was this agreed?
 (Was the item adjusted, rewritten or unchanged? Refer to page 15 of *Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision Making* for more information.)
 Unchanged – the Strategy is a high-level strategic approach with a number of actions that will benefit all strands should they require housing advice or homelessness services.

5. What arrangements have you put in place to monitor the impact of this decision?
 Ongoing monitoring via P1E returns

6. What date is the Equality Impact Assessment due for Review?
 18th March 2014

Name: Mel Brain

Date: 18th March 2013

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Agenda Item 10.

Title of Report:	Fire Service
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	2 July 2013

Purpose of Report: To inform the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission of the processes in place to ensure that adequate fire service coverage is provided within the West Berkshire area.

Recommended Action: To note the report and carry out scrutiny on the item.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Brian Bedwell – Tel (0118) 942 0196
E-mail Address:	bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Elaine Walker
Job Title:	Principal Policy Officer
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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 26 February 2013 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission resolved to undertake a review of the approach taken by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to provide appropriate cover to the West Berkshire area.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 26 February 2013

- 2.1 The minutes of the OSMC meeting of 26 February 2013 record that:

Proposed review - Fire Service Response Times

(Councillors Webster, Brooks and Holtby declared a personal interest in Agenda item 12 by virtue of the fact that they were appointed to the Fire Authority by the Council. As their interest was personal and not prejudicial they determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

The Commission received a report proposing a review of the Fire Service following local news reports that 40% of fires were not being attended within target times but that measures had been put in place to address this.

Councillor Brooks advised the Commission that he had been involved with the Fire Authority and Fire Service since 1994, and stated that targets were being met in 75% of cases. Councillor Brooks suggested that the scope of the review be widened to include consideration of where fire stations were situated, particularly in light of current discussions regarding a new fire station at Theale. Councillor Brooks suggested that a more appropriate line of questioning would be to ask the Fire Service how they intended to ensure cover for West Berkshire. Councillor Brooks further suggested that the Commission should not develop recommendations for the Fire Service as this implied a level of knowledge that might be lacking, instead, constructive comment should result from the review.

Councillor Webster suggested that it would be informative to invite the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to provide a strategic overview for the Berkshire area, and also link Officers from local fire stations to provide an insight to the West Berkshire area in particular. Councillor Brooks believed this might prove counter productive, but assured the Commission that in their roles as members of the Fire Authority, they would ensure the correct people attended.

Councillor Rendel expressed his view that appliances might not be deployed appropriately in all cases, and this might have an impact on whether response targets could be met.

Councillor Vickers asked whether those members of the Commission who were also members of the Fire Authority might be considered to have a conflict of interest in respect of this review, and asked for clarification.

Councillor Franks requested that sufficient information be made available prior to the review to ensure that lines of questioning were appropriate and focussed, for example mapping information and the number of retained fire fighters.

The Commission agreed that the review be undertaken at a full Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission meeting, and agreed to widen the scope of the review as proposed by Councillor Brooks.

The Commission discussed the merits of holding the review meeting at a fire station, but it was decided not to do so, as this might distract from the purpose of the review.

RESOLVED that:

- David Lowe clarify whether members of the Commission who were also members of the Fire Authority might be considered to have a conflict of interest in respect of this review;
- The terms of reference for the review be amended to encompass how the Fire Service intended to ensure cover for West Berkshire.

3. Terms of Reference for the review

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission will therefore undertake a full in-meeting review to:

- (1) Establish the reasons why the target for attending dwelling fires was not being met;
- (2) Ascertain whether the current fire service provision is sufficient to give appropriate coverage across the West Berkshire area, with particular consideration for the rural nature of the district;
- (3) Consider the effect of the forthcoming restructure of the fire service in West Berkshire on the ability to provide coverage across the area;
- (4) Suggest recommendations for improvement as appropriate.

3.2 A representative from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service will be present to provide the Commission with relevant information.

4. Recommendation

4.1 It is recommended that Members of the Commission carry out scrutiny of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's performance and coverage in West Berkshire.

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: None

Officers Consulted: None

Trade Union: N/A

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