

Individual Decisions

The attached reports will be taken as an
Individual Portfolio Member Decisions on:

28th September 2006

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Individual Decision

Title of Report:	Chief Executive's Directorate Plan		
Report to be considered by:	Anthony Stansfeld	on:	28th September
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1042		

Purpose of Report: To seek approval for the Directorate Plan.

Recommended Action: To approve the Plan.

Reason for decision to be taken: To ensure that the objectives for the Directorate for 2006/7 are agreed.

List of other options considered: None

Key background documentation: Individual Service Plans

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Supporting Information

1. Background

1.1 See attached report.

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Implications

Policy:	None
Financial:	The financial implications have already been agreed in setting the budget for 2006/7.
Personnel:	None
Legal:	None
Environmental:	None
Equalities:	None
Property:	These are set out in the report.
Risk Management:	None
Community Safety:	Where appropriate, these are set out in the report.

Consultation Responses

Members:	
Leader of Council:	Graham Jones - consulted by letter 31 st August 2006, no comments received
Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman:	Jeff Brooks - consulted by letter 31 st August 2006, no comments received
Ward Members:	Not applicable
Opposition Spokesperson:	Denise Gaines, Sally Hannon, Roger Hunneman, John Farrin, Phil Barnett - consulted by letter 31 st August 2006, no comments received
Policy Development Commission Chairman:	Not applicable
Local Stakeholders:	Not applicable
Officers Consulted:	Heads of Service within Chief Executive's Directorate - consulted by letter 31 st August 2006, no comments received
Trade Union:	Unison - consulted by letter 31 st August 2006, no comments received



Chief Executive's Directorate Plan

2006 / 2007

Chief Executive's Directorate Plan 2006/07

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1. Introduction by Chief Executive

1.1 This Plan sets the context within which the Directorate will be working during 2006/7. In addition to providing an overview of performance during 2005/6 it highlights the key objectives and targets that the Directorate will be working to during the present year and beyond. Specific detail is not provided since this is the purpose of the individual Service Plans which are prepared by each Service Unit. These are cross referenced where appropriate within this Plan. Copies of the Service Plans along with this Directorate Plan are available on the Intranet.

1.2 The Chief Executive's Directorate comprises the Council's corporate and central support services. In July 2005 many of these Services were returned to the Council from our previous strategic support services partner, Amey. These joined existing Council services and were aligned into two Directorates: Strategy and Resources and Chief Executive. Following my appointment in November 2005 a Senior Management Review was undertaken across the Council which has resulted in a number of changes notably within the 'corporate centre' of the Council. These are;

- i) The Strategy and Resources and Chief Executives' Directorate have been merged. There is now one Directorate entitled Chief Executive's which is led by the Chief Executive. This new single Directorate came into operation on May 1st 2006.
- ii) The number of Heads of Service/Service Head posts within the new Directorate has been reduced from 12 to 8. The new Service Units are;
 - Finance;
 - Human Resources;
 - Policy and Communication;
 - Information and Technology;
 - Legal and Electoral Services;
 - Benefits and Exchequer;
 - Property;
 - Customer Services.

These new Units came into operation on July 1st 2006 and this Directorate Plan has been delayed so as to align it to the new structure. A copy of the new structure is set out in Appendix 1.

1.3 The Directorate provides a range of functions but they can be broadly separated into three groups:

- **Corporate Management** – namely support to the Council as a whole in ensuring strong and effective governance and the delivery of large corporate projects.

- **Provision of support services** – these include a range of support activities provided to the direct or front line services. These Services account for the majority of the Directorate's budget. In some cases these Services are provided to third parties and a significant level of support is provided directly to schools through the Fair Funding regime. Finance, Human Resources, Property and ICT are all significant support services.
- **Direct Services** – these are relatively few since this is the primary function of the Council's other three Directorates but examples include;
 - **Customer Services** – notably the main Contact Centre at Market Street, Community Information Centres and Cash Offices;
 - **Register Service** – which encompasses the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages;
 - **Community Safety Team** that increasingly have direct contact with the local community.

1.4 In many areas individual Service Units will undertake one or more of these activities. Drawing boundaries between the three is difficult and of little practical benefit although it is useful in clarifying the nature and range of activities undertaken.

2. **Achievements in 2005/6**

2.1 Before looking ahead, it seems only appropriate to look back over the previous year to review how we have done – both in terms of what has gone well and where we can learn for the future.

2.2 The return to the Council of those services within the Amey West Berkshire Partnership was perhaps one of the greatest challenges of the past year. Some £2.2m was removed from the cost base of incoming Amey Services so that there was no adverse financial impact on the Council going forward. This was managed through a variety of means including a reduction of over 40 posts from the incoming staffing establishment. The Service Investment Programme which required Amey to make £10m of investment in the Council's capital infrastructure over the life of the contract, largely in ICT, was protected and investment already underway, continued to be implemented. This included the new Agresso financial ledger system, SX3 for Revenues and Benefits, a new e mail system, a range of new ICT hardware and the implementation of a new HR and Payroll system. All of these projects have been managed by the Directorate in addition to the need to transfer the Contract and some 450 staff back to the Council. It is notable that during this period of ongoing capital investment and reorganisation performance levels were maintained and in some areas enhanced.

2.3 Although the transfer was a major element of the Directorate's work during 2005/06 the commitment to continuous improvement has continued and some of the key achievements include;

- **continuing to deliver strong community leadership through;**

- the refresh of both the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan; and a new Medium Term Financial Strategy to support both documents;
- the development of a new Consultation Strategy coupled with an ongoing implementation programme aimed at ensuring our services continue to meet local need;
- the completion of a new Local Area Agreement which was commended by GOSE and the consolidation of the LSP's Governance arrangements;
- continued development of Parish Planning in West Berkshire which saw 18 plans completed in total by the end of March 2006 with 22 of the Parishes in West Berkshire with a completed Plan or with one under construction (8 of which are nearing completion);
- achievement of 'Beacon Status' in recognition of the work we have done on parish planning and enhancing empowerment within the rural community and the enhancement of rural services;

- **enhancing social inclusion through improved engagement with minority communities and the provision of new services and facilities to increase access;**

- the preparation and implementation of Equality Audits;
- improved consultation with key groups notably Black and Minority Ethnic Communities;
- funding for the introduction of the REACT system and new resources to increase Social Enterprise in West Berkshire;

- **Achieving better and fairer outcomes for children and young people by;**
 - providing effective support services to West Berkshire schools witnessed by an increasing level of 'buy back' under the Fair Funding arrangements;
 - supporting the continued development of the Children's Trust through the provision of advice, support and infrastructure;
 - completing as planned, the maintenance programme for schools including the annual Summer Programme;
 - successfully negotiating a difficult School Meals contract.

- **Ensuring the street environment is clean, well maintained and safe by;**
 - continuing to improve our Streetcare service whereby the public can contact the Council to report any matter to the 'Streetscene'.

- **Increasing the provision of affordable homes by;**
 - supporting the development and introduction of a new scheme for Developer contributions which has significantly increased the resources available for affordable housing.

- **Promoting safer communities through;**
 - introducing a new warden scheme in Tilehurst, Calcot and Purley with a further extension planned in Thatcham;
 - improved performance of our Drugs and Alcohol Action Team

- **Enhancing the sustainability of West Berkshire by;**
 - introducing a number of 'cleaner and greener' measures to protect the environment

- **Creating attractive and vibrant town centres through;**
 - Supporting the creation and implementation (by the local community) of Visions which seek to enhance the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their town centre. Specific projects supported in 2005/6 have included in Newbury;
 - a cinema – a planning application has been approved;
 - the Parkway retail development – a planning application has been approved;
 - the Market Street redevelopment which involves the creation of a new urban village. A preferred developer has been selected;
 - the redevelopment of the Wharf – a scheme has been designed and will be the subject of consultation;
 - the delivery of a range of environmental enhancement projects;

- In Thatcham support has been given to promoting retail development in the Town Centre to the point where it is hoped a planning application will soon be submitted.

2.4 As you might expect for a Directorate where major focus is on corporate management and the provision of central support, a significant level of resource is devoted to the Council's four Development Themes. These are focused on enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. Key achievements during 2005/6 are set out below;

- **Performance Improvement has been taken forward by;**
 - improving the transparency and clarity of the way in which the Council reports its performance.
 - Improved performance in meeting our targets across virtually all the Directorate's Service Units (see Service Plans)
- **Capacity has been enhanced through;**
 - completing a new Local Area Agreement with our Partners with the potential for bringing in £4m of reward funding
 - the development of a new Management and Leadership Development Programme and an enhanced Corporate Development Programme
- **Customer focus has been improved through;**
 - extending our Customer Contact Centre facility to include concessionary fares, social care and Children and Young People enquiries;
 - opening two new Community Information Centre facilities in Holybrook and Lambourn;
 - maintaining/improving our already excellent performance in the Contact Centre;
 - continuing to see ongoing increase in our responsiveness to customer enquiries and in the percentage of enquiries being dealt with at the first point of contact;
- **A range of initiatives have successfully been introduced to strengthen the Council's governance;**
 - within our Value for Money Programme we saved £2.2m in bringing the ex Amey services in house;
 - existing services within the Directorate provided a further £xm of savings;
 - taken together, the Directorate more than achieved its Gershon target for the year;
 - a number of Invest to Save projects were successfully initiated, some of which also helped support the Council's "Cleaner and Greener" agenda;
 - successfully achieved a £0.75m rebate for non-domestic rates on Council properties;

- successfully managed the Council's Capital Programme including the delivery of a range of property and ICT related projects including;
- new PABX software
- the completion of the Wide Area Network (WAN)
- a new intranet mapping facility
- a new website and intranet
- an unqualified Audit opinion on the Accounts;
- introduction of a new budget monitoring system based on AGRESSO;
- a new Accounts Payable and Receivable System;
- created a new Audit and Governance Committee that has completed a range of new work including an improved Statement of Control;
- the introduction of new scrutiny arrangements and the creation of three new Policy Development Commissions to support the LAA;
- the creation of a new Area Forum for the Kennet and Pang Valley;
- enhanced procedures for Establishment control;
- improved recruitment procedures;
- improved arrangements for the Council's insurance;
- the development of a new Management and Leadership Development Programme;
- the production of a new enhanced District Profile;
- successfully transferred the Council's debt management from Reading Borough Council;
- introduced major improvements in the Council's health and safety arrangements with the completion of Legionella and Asbestos surveys and the extension of the Health and Safety Service to schools;
- completion of Business Continuity Plans

3. Responding to a Changing World

- 3.1 Given the Directorate's particular focus on corporate management and the provision of Support Services, it could be argued that changes outside the Council within our local community have less of a bearing than on other Council services. However, the key role that the Directorate plays in determining and helping corporate policy necessitates a thorough understanding of how the local community's needs and aspirations are continuing to change.

The National Context

- 3.2 In common with local government nationally the Council needs to balance meeting local needs and aspirations with delivering on a wide range of nationally set targets and new legislation. The Government continues to move forward with its Modernisation agenda with the following key themes for the public sector;

- delivering prompt and responsive services;
- ensuring equal access to services;
- setting and measuring performance targets;
- securing better value;
- achieving better outcomes for service users.

- 3.3 The Corporate Plan Refresh for 2006/7 in looking at the national picture highlighted a number of changes that will have an impact on this Directorate, namely;

- the reorganisation of a number of public bodies notably the Health Service and the Learning and Skills Council;
- changes to local government finance including the publication of a two year Revenue Grant Settlement;
- the continuing 'roll out' of the Gershon Agenda;
- the implementation of Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

- 3.4 These initiatives are in addition to a range of ongoing national priorities including;

- the implementation of Electronic Government (IEG);
- preparatory and supporting work for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and the associated collection and publication of Best Value Performance Indicators;
- implementation of new Licensing regime and a range of imminent measures associated with the Gambling Act;
- preparing for legislative changes in the way that Elections are administered;

- continuing to support an extensive equalities agenda including the need for Equality Impact Assessments;
- legislation around health and safety.

3.5 In addition to this national context it is also important to recognise an important regional agenda. There are a number of areas of activity which are increasingly being developed at either a County, sub regional or regional level. These areas of activity which are most relevant to the Chief Executive's Directorate include;

- Procurement;
- Economic Development;
- Rural Initiatives;
- The development of Shared Services;

3.6 The local context is highlighted within the Corporate Plan Refresh for 2006/7 and is therefore not repeated in detail here. Key points relevant to the Directorate Plan however include;

1. A growing and increasingly elderly population with a resulting increase in demand for Council services and changing needs in terms of access to them.
2. An increasing number of households, in particular, single person households. This will have implications for the Council's tax base.
3. Rising crime and the need to address it in a strong partnership setting.
4. Concerns over a weakening economy with a significant impact on the labour market, the retail sector, local spending and so on.

Other issues relevant to the Directorate include;

5. The need to address the Council's future accommodation requirements.
6. The continued maintenance backlog.
7. Support for an increasingly corporate workload, in particular, major corporate projects.

4. Priorities for the medium and short term

- 4.1 The purpose of this Plan is to set an overall direction for the Chief Executive's Directorate for the period 2006-2009. At the same time it is also geared to providing an annual focus and thereby help set the context for the preparation of the annual service plan for each of the Directorate's eight Service Units. (A description of the performance management framework within the Directorate is set out in Appendix 2).
- 4.2 The Directorate is a collection of services which unlike the Council's other three Directorates are not focused around any particular theme. They all share a common purpose in that together they form the Council's Central Support functions and 'Corporate Centre'.
- 4.3 With regard to the current Corporate Plan, the main areas of activity for the Directorate are;
- S1 – Providing strong community leadership;
 - S2 – Tackling all forms of social exclusion across the District;
 - S7 - Promoting safer communities;
 - S10 – Creating attractive and vibrant town centres;
 - D1 – Performance Improvement;
 - D2 – Building Capacity;
 - D3 – Customer Focus;
 - D4 – Stronger Governance;

Although in some form the Directorate is supporting all 14 Priorities and Themes as set out in Chapter 2. In terms of future priorities it is helpful to delineate between those that will be taken forward collectively across the Directorate and those that will be the specific focus of a particular service.

4.4 Directorate Priorities

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 1. | Strategy | - Development of 'Shared Services' agenda with other local authorities (3 year) |
| 2. | Performance Management | - Ensure Service Plans are fully aligned to the Corporate and Directorate Plan (2006/07)

- Develop clear service standards with Direct service departments and a transparent and fair system of charging (ongoing over 3 years)

- Strengthen management and leadership development (ongoing over 3 year Programme) |

- Greater emphasis on personal development plans and training analysis (2 year)
 - Improve the review and evaluation of current practice and enhance benchmarking (2 year)
 - Gain IIP accreditation (2007/08)
3. Resource Management
- Plan and manage within the financial envelope of the MTFS (ongoing)
 - Roll forward our three year Efficiency Programme (2006/07)
 - Workforce Plans for the Directorate (2006/07)
 - Ensure greater understanding of our cost base and the delivery of value for money (2006/07)
 - Ensure greater use of ICT to improve efficiency and effectiveness (3 year Programme)
4. Quality Management
- Ensure Quality Assessment Framework is used in a timely manner to inform Service Planning (introduce in 2006/07 then ongoing)
 - Develop complimentary Quality systems at service level where a business case can be made (as required).
5. Communication and Recognition
- Improve the mechanism by which the Directorate recognises and celebrates its achievements (2006/07 & 2007/08)
 - Improve the way in which the Directorate communicates both internally and externally (3 year Programme).

4.5 Policy & Communication Priorities

1. Preparing a new Sustainable Communities Strategy (with the LSP) and a new Corporate Plan for 2007-2011 which integrates national and local priorities including the District's locality plans (Parish Plans etc) (2006/07).
2. Overseeing delivery of the LAA and LPSA2 alongside the LSP (3 year).
3. Providing support to the LSP and overseeing the effective implementation of its chosen governance arrangements (2006/07).

4. Ensuring the implementation and ongoing development of Locality Planning across the District (3 year).
5. Implementing the Corporate Equalities Plan and any new legislative requirements (2006/07).
6. Providing support for the corporate CPA Assessment and Joint Area Review (2 year).
7. Implementing the new Communications Strategy (3 year).
8. Overseeing the delivery of the Council's Quality Assessment Framework and Accreditation for IIP (with HR) (2006/07 – 2007/08).
9. Preparing and implementing an Engagement Strategy (2006/07).
10. Alongside our partner agencies, implementing the Community Safety Strategy and its associated targets (ongoing but key emphasis in 2006/07).
11. Deliver the new Member Development Programme (2 year).

4.6 Benefits & Exchequer Priorities

1. Restore performance levels within Benefits to upper quartile (national comparison) and achieve a CPA score of 4 (2006/07).
2. Comply with the DWP Performance Framework (2006/07).
3. Ensure customer standards are improved within the Benefits and Exchequer Service (2006/07).

4.7 Customer Services Priorities

1. Completion and phased implementation of a new Customer Focus Strategy to support the Corporate Plan (2 year).
2. Implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) (2006/07 – 2007/08)
3. Gain Charter Mark accreditation for the Service (2 year).

4.8 Finance Priorities

1. Review of structure to ensure a customer focused Accountancy Service is being provided to all four Directorates and that the Finance function is reflective of the Council's broader corporate needs (2006/07).
2. Maximise the benefits to the Authority of the new AGRESSO financial system (2006/07).
3. Improve succession planning (3 year).
4. Strengthen the current Procurement and Contract Management function including the development of stronger sub regional and regional linkages and the delivery of enhanced procurement savings (2 year).

5. Oversee the Council's CPA Use of Resources block to achieve a rating of 3 (2006/07).
6. Review and implementation of Council's Accommodation Strategy (with Property) (2006/07).

4.9 Human Resources Priorities

1. Restructuring the service to meet the needs of the Council following the cessation of the Amey Partnership (2006/07).
2. Building appropriate strategic and technical capacity within the service to meet the needs of the Council and the organisational requirements set out in the Corporate Plan (2 year).
3. Overseeing the delivery of the Council's Quality Assessment Framework and Accreditation for IIP (with Policy and Communication) (2006/07 – 2007/08).
4. Delivery and implementation of a People Strategy in support of the Corporate Plan (2006/07).
5. Preparation of workforce plans (2006/07).
6. Introduction of Management and Leadership Development Programme (2006/07).

4.10 ICT Priorities

1. Development and implementation of ICT Strategy as the focus for the development of ICT across the Council over the next three years (2006/07).
2. Ensure service standards are met in the area of Customer Services (2 year).
3. Delivery of key ICT projects linked to improving the efficiency of Council Services as set out in the Council's Capital Strategy and Programme (3 year).

4.11 Legal and Electoral Priorities

1. Reshaping the service to meet future demands in particular how future provision is provided to Community Services (2006/07).

4.12 Property Priorities

1. Review of customer care practices including feedback and communication (2006/07).
2. Investment in appropriate ICT to support continuous improvement (2 year).
3. Raise the profile of asset management and review Asset Strategy (2006/07).
4. Review and implementation of Council's Accommodation Strategy (with Finance) (2006/07).

5. Resourcing our Priorities

- 5.1 The revenue budget for the Chief Executive's Directorate for 2006/7 stands at £46.7m (gross). Once income and grants of £31.2m are taken into account then the Directorate's net budget stands at £15.5m. Appendix 3 provides a breakdown by Service Unit).
- 5.2 Comparisons with 2005/6 are not readily available due to the Senior Management Review that was undertaken at the beginning of 2006/7 and which led to a transfer of functions out of the Directorate and a reorganisation of Service Units within the Directorate.
- 5.3 The Council's approach to both its revenue and capital budget is to align resources to the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. Prior to doing this the base budget is increased to take account of contractual inflation, the annual pay award and incremental growth. In 2006/7 an allowance was also made for superinflation which this year was heavily linked to energy costs. Once these 'unavoidable' costs have been factored in, consideration is given to allocating resources to key priorities. These are linked directly to the Corporate Plan and in particular, the annual refresh of the Corporate Plan which sets out in greater detail where investment needs to go, and why. In 2006/7 the Refresh identified the following areas for investment. Those shown in italics relate directly to this Directorate. The figures relate to the new investment that was made. In some cases the investment is not directly financial;

S1 Providing Strong Community Leadership

- *Implementing the Local Area Agreement through a strengthened Local Strategic Partnership;*
- *Enhancing rural services and facilities (Capital)*

S2 Tackling all forms of social exclusion in the District

- *Improving the employment opportunities of socially excluded and disadvantaged groups (£20,000)*

S3 Promoting independence for Older People and People with Disabilities

- Develop preventative measures that limit the need for intensive support and solve people's problems at an early stage.

S4 Achieving better and fairer outcomes for children and young people

- No short term priorities were identified for 2006/7

S5 Ensuring the street environment is clean, well maintained and safe

- Increase investment in road maintenance.

S6 Increasing the provision of affordable homes

- No short term priorities were identified.

S7 Promoting safer communities

- *Expanding the network of Community Wardens and Police Community Support Officers £50,000*

S8 Improving transportation

- Develop joined up transport solutions to improve service delivery

S9 Enhancing the sustainability of West Berkshire

- *Launch a 'Cleaner and Greener' agenda £30,000*

S10 Creating attractive and vibrant town centres

- No short term priorities were identified for 2006/7.

D1 Performance Improvement

- *Develop a new and improved performance management framework.*

D2 Building capacity

- *Take forward our Member and Management Development Programme*
- *Development of specific initiatives to enhance recruitment and retention £50,000*

D3 Customer Focus

- No short term priorities were identified for 2006/7

D4 Stronger Governance

- *Progress and embed the Council's Value for Money agenda.*

- 5.4 The inherent constraints that exist within the Council's budget means that new resources can only be released if there is disinvestment from lower priority areas or through the realisation of efficiency savings or additional income. In some years merely 'standing still' requires savings to be found to enable growth to be accommodated within other parts of the Council's budget or alternatively to support an unexpected reduction in Government Grant or income. For 2006/7 the Directorate has continued to take forward its three year Efficiency Programme and for this year, the following savings have been delivered;

Chief Executive's Directorate - Savings Options Summary

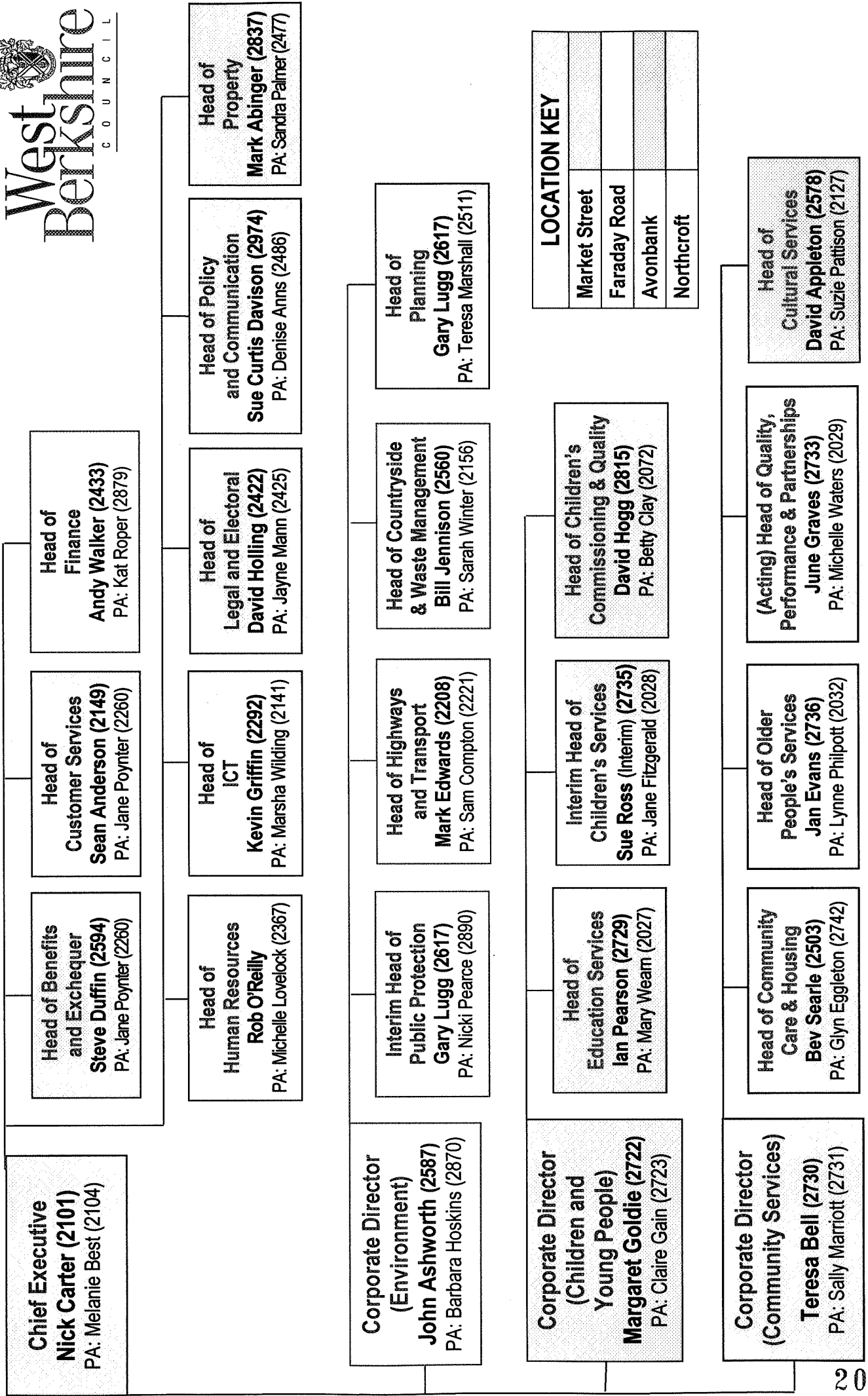
Base Budget Savings	£,000
Chief Executive - General Expenses	14
Corporate Director (Strategy & Resources)	137
Deletion of post and support	
Other	
Legal & Electoral	90
Information & Communication	40
Property	30
Ex Amey Savings	122
Reduced early retirement costs	23
District Audit Fee	20
Service Access - cashflow savings	40
Additional procurement savings	30
Corporate Savings	110
Professional fees	60
Conference expenses	6
Recruitment advertising	50
Invest to Save	
Storage Bins	10
Shredders	14
General Efficiencies	
Accountancy	20
Assurance	15
Exchequer	10
ICT	50
Human Resources	15
Finance - Policy & Planning	10

5.5 A total of £727,000 of Gershon savings are planned to be delivered during the course of 2006/07.

5.6 The Council continues to support a funded Capital Programme of around £14m. In addition there are a range of externally funded projects which in 2006/7 bring the total value of the Capital Programme to around £25m. Once again, capital projects are aligned to corporate priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and the 2006/7 Refresh. Appendix 4b sets out a list of those that are relevant to the Chief Executive's Directorate.

West Berkshire Council Management Structure – July 2006

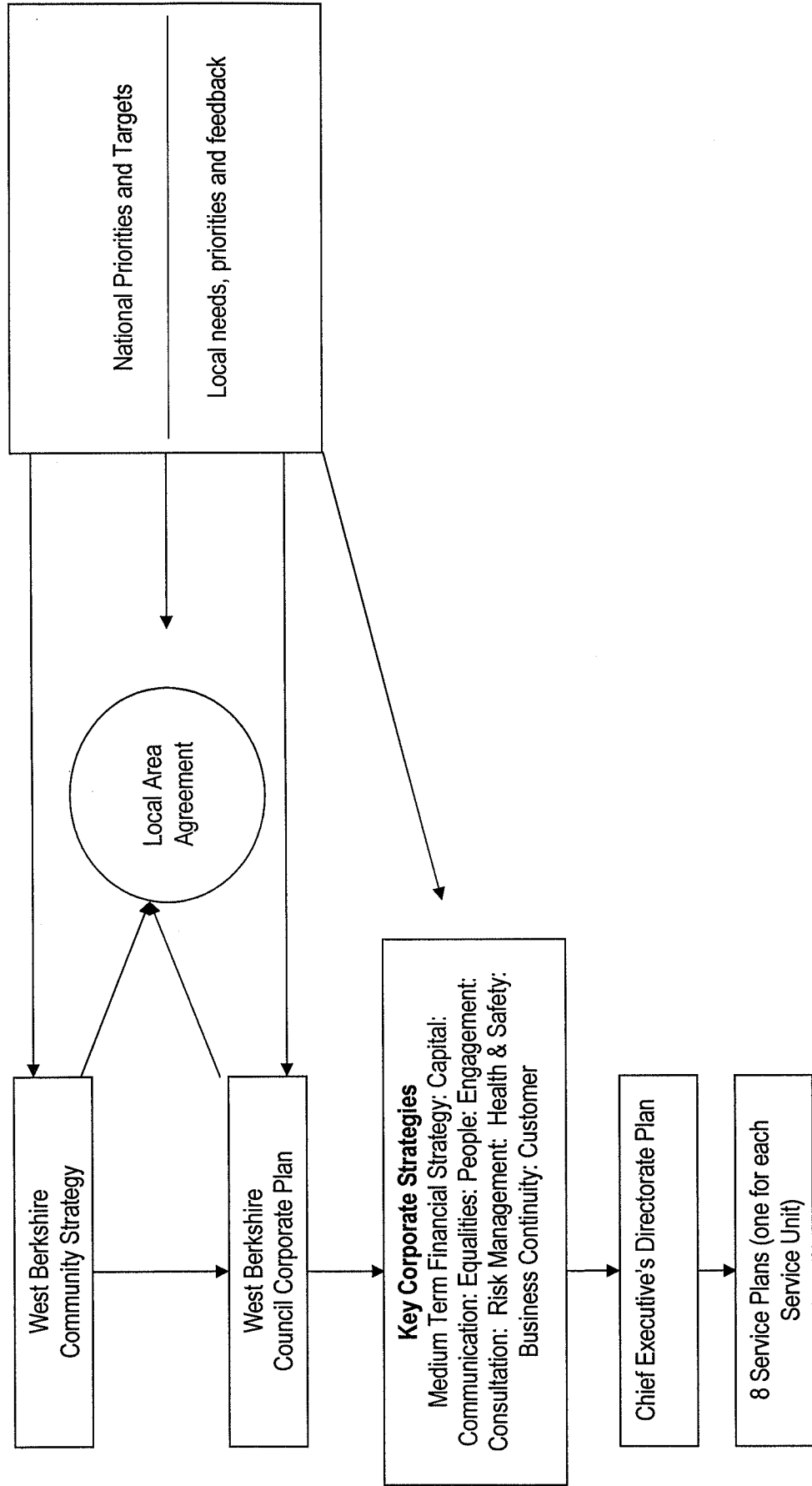
Appendix 1



LOCATION KEY	
Market Street	
Faraday Road	
Avonbank	
Northcroft	

APPENDIX 2

POLICY FRAMEWORK – CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S DIRECTORATE

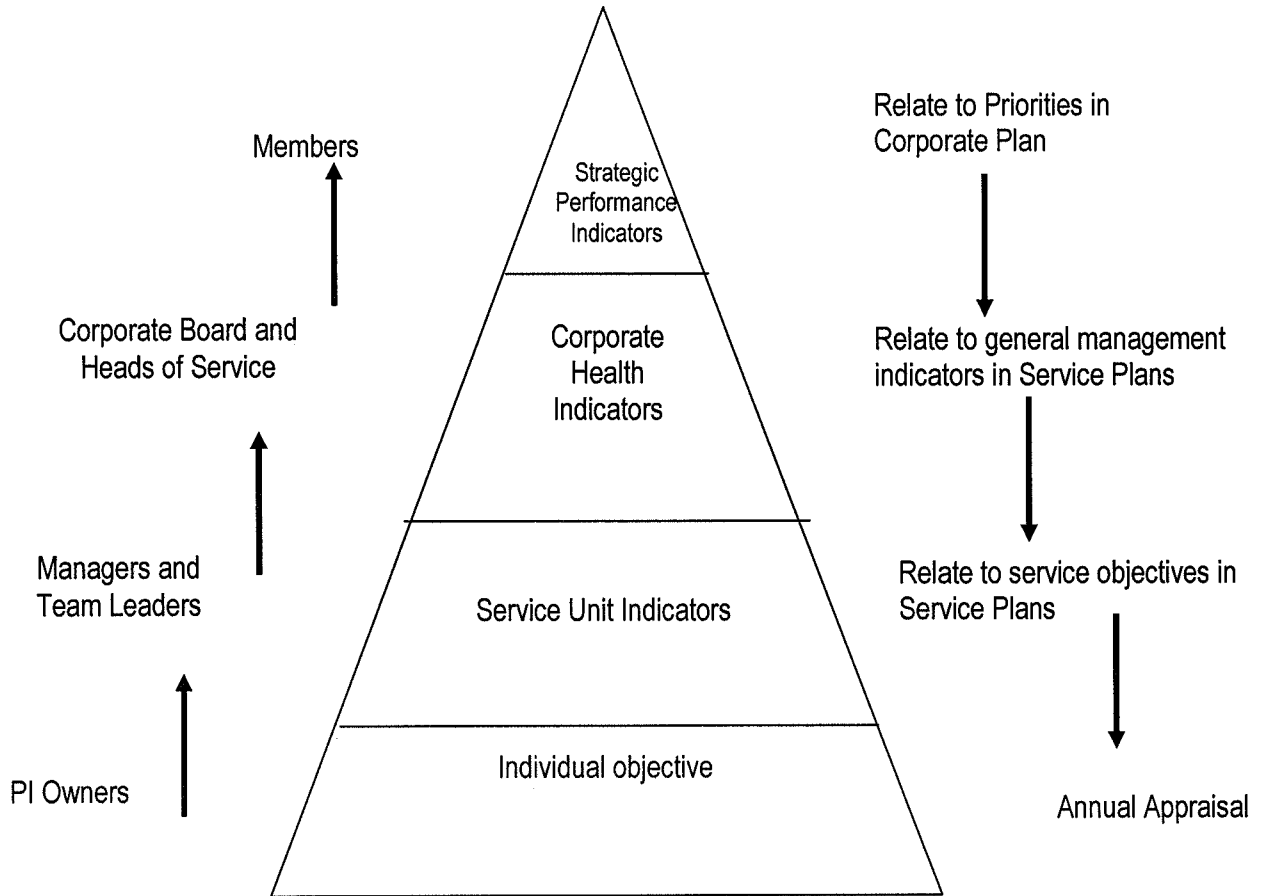


Performance Management Framework within the Chief Executive's Directorate

1. The Directorate's performance management framework mirrors that of the rest of the Council. There is however less of an emphasis on meeting national targets and priorities compared to addressing local needs, the corporate requirements of the Authority and providing effective support services.
2. Most national requirements are driven by the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate and the Audit Commission through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. These largely impact on Benefits and Exchequer (with regard to Benefits indicators), Policy and Communication (for Corporate Health indicators), Human Resources (for Corporate Health indicators) and Finance and to a lesser extent Property (for Use of Resources indicators). The Directorate works closely with District Audit particularly with regard to the latter. A range of more specific measures are also agreed with Government Departments with regard to functions such as the Register Service, Coroners etc.
3. Whilst national targets play an important role, greater emphasis is placed on developed local targets that link directly to Community/Corporate Plan objectives, the Local Area Agreement or related strategies. Other targets reflect the provision of Support Service functions and these can be strategic, operational or transactional in nature, but in any event reflect the key activities that the support functions need to undertake to provide an efficient and effective service to the Council's Direct Services, including schools. These indicators often include satisfaction ratings derived from internal surveys.
4. Performance reporting around these indicators is undertaken quarterly and reported through the "Yellow Book". These then inform the Council's formal performance reporting which is undertaken through the Executive and Scrutiny. The performance indicators are generally shown graphically under three main headings;
 1. Strategic indicators which link directly to the Corporate Plan. These include the indicators for which the Chief Executive is sponsor.
 2. Corporate Health indicators. These cover a number of management themes such as resource management, assurance, equalities etc. This information is collected for each of the eight service units.
 3. Service Unit indicators. These again relate to the eight service units and relate to the operational performance indicators set out in their Service Plans.
5. Regular performance reporting highlights the overall position of the Directorate in respect of its agreed targets. A traffic light system is used to summarise overall performance levels and where necessary, remedial action is taken to bring performance back on track. The annual Service Planning process which is linked to the Corporate Plan provides the opportunity to review budgets and resource allocation where appropriate. This process is in turn linked to the Employee Appraisal process.

6. The latter involves the setting of individual objectives for each member of staff in April each year. The objectives are derived directly from the Service Plan which is agreed in March. Each member of staff then receives a regular supervision session (generally once every two or three weeks) and a half yearly review where a more in depth review is undertaken.
7. The appraisal process is directly linked to the Directorate's Development Programme. A Training Plan is produced following the completion of the appraisal process which seeks to ensure that training and development needs identified through the appraisal process are properly reviewed. This is done alongside a Corporate Training and Development Programme which seeks to meet the more generic development needs.
8. Whilst the performance management framework is now well established across the Directorate, a number of improvements will be introduced during 2006/7;
 1. Performance reporting will be simplified through the publication of a quarterly 'Yellow Book' which prioritises indicators and helps clarify performance through the use of graphical presentation.
 2. Utilising the enhanced reporting process to address areas of concern and ensure that there is a stronger link with the service planning process. This year service planning will look more critically at how performance issues are addressed and engage more actively in reviewing targets both against best practice as identified through national benchmarking and against changing local priorities and needs.
9. A diagrammatic representation of the performance management framework is set out overleaf.

Performance Management Framework



Monitored through "Yellow Book" quarterly and through Employee Performance Management (half yearly reviews and supervisions)

Appendix 4a

Revenue Budget

Description	Employees	Non Employee	Income & Grants	Total Net Budget	Establishment*
Chief Executive	568,190	79,200		647,390	2.00
Human Resources	1,583,350	-31,210	-248,550	1,303,590	34.01
ICT	1,855,760	1,651,820	-518,650	2,988,930	51.21
Legal & Electoral	1,108,390	649,500	-847,420	910,470	30.30
Policy & Communication	2,080,670	2,244,640	-1,288,390	3,036,920	43.24
Property	639,380	1,538,470	-865,400	1,312,450	36.00
Benefits & Exchequer	2,081,410	25,601,570	-26,516,300	1,166,680	77.48
Customer Services	846,120	25,580	-9,020	862,680	38.03
Finance	2,707,700	1,480,600	-929,250	3,259,050	67.92
Chief Executive's Department	13,470,970	33,240,170	-31,222,980	15,488,160	380.19

* - as at July 31st 2006

Appendix 4b

Chief Executive's Capital Programme 2006/07

Service Unit - ICT	Budget for 2006/7
<i>Project Title</i>	
Geographic Info System	£250,470
Corporate IT Replacement	£243,750
Wan Upgrade	£941,840
Upgrade Network Conect	£0
E mail System Upgrade	£95,880
SX3	£10,900
HR/Payroll System	£435,790
Voicemail Upgrade	£70,000
Switchboard Upgrade	£35,000
Business System Development	£150,000
Call Management Software	£20,000
Application Firewall	£40,000
Implementing Elec Government	£83,380
Customer Access Website	£9,370
Information Security	£38,010
Server and Storage Consolidation	£58,050
EDRMS - Phase 1 (Scoping)	£482,970
Internet Security Enhancements	£50,000
Cash Management - E Payments	£6,410
Cash Management - Citizen Web	£16,960
E -Trading Standards	£50,000
Government Gateway	£30,000
Secure E-mail	£5,430
Security Firewall	£2,720
SIP (Amey) Projects not yet allocated	£811,650
SIP (Windows File & Print)	£79,280
ICT Capital Salaries	£170,000
SIP Contingency	£283,180
Members ICT project	£7,000
Consultation Calendar	£31,700
Sub Total	£4,509,740

Service Unit - Policy & Communication	Budget for 2006/7
<i>Project Title</i>	
Shop Mobility	£7,000
All Offices Health & Safety	£60,000
Security Review	£5,000
Town Centre Development	£140,730
Parish Planning	£60,000
Business Continuity	£45,000
Market Street PABX	
Kennet Valley Free Church	£60,000
Vibrant Villages	£35,000
Sub Total	£412,730

Service Unit - Finance	Budget for 2006/7
<i>Project Title</i>	
Capital Salaries Capital Acct	£22,800
Invest to save Projects	£234,400
Sub Total	£257,200

Service Unit - Property	Budget for 2006/7
<i>Project Title</i>	
Bidg Mtce Total	£55,100
Feasibility Studies	£255,000
Corp Minor Works	£0
Cap Sal Property	£695,000
Cond/Asb/Meas Surveys	£54,000
Asset Disposal Prog	£170,000
Access Works/Disabled	£116,490
Asbestos	£51,250
Social Services Pmp	£39,950
Culture & Youth Pmp	£145,350
Libraries Pmp	£9,140
Countryside & Environment Pmp	£9,510
Flexible Working - Phase 3ac	£40,270
Housing Pmp	£810
Avonbank Lease	£342,670
Unit K - Surrender	£60,000
Accommodation Moves	
Market Street Facilities	
Fire Risk Assessment	£135,000
Control of Legionnaires Disease	£243,000
Recycling Review/Confidential Waste	£28,600
Property Services - CAD system	£48,300
Capital Maintenance Programme	£3,700
Sub Total	£2,503,140

Chief Executive's Services
Training Plan Summary 2006/07

Service	Training Budget awarded
Chief Executive and Support	£900
Customer Access	£12000
Exchequer Revs & Bens	£17000
Finance	£19000
HR	£18000
ICT	£19000
Legal and Electoral	£9000
Policy and Information	£16000
Property	£11000
Libraries (moving to Cultural Services)	£9000
Total	£130,900

The training plan summary shows the allocation of the Directorate training plan to the various service units. This allocation is based on training requirements identified through the annual appraisals process. The allocation excludes corporate Training and Development which is corporately funded. This includes a range of corporate courses and the Council's Management and Leadership Development Programme.

Individual Decision

Title of Report:	Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy		
Report to be considered by:	Councillor Marcus Franks, Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Culture	on:	28th September 2006
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1051		

Purpose of Report: To adopt the new Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.

Recommended Action: That the draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy be adopted with effect from 1st October 2006.

Reason for decision to be taken: The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 requires that Local Authorities wishing to make use of private sector renewal powers adopt and publish a policy setting out how it intends to use these powers.

List of other options considered: N/A

Key background documentation: Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England & Wales) Order 2002
ODPM Circular 05/2003 Housing Renewal

Portfolio Member:	Councillor Marcus Franks
Tel. No.:	01635 841552
E-mail Address:	mfranks@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details

Name:	Melanie Brain
Job Title:	Housing Strategy Manager
Tel. No.:	01635 519403
E-mail Address:	mbrain@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 came into force on 18 July 2002. It repeals much of the previous prescriptive legislation governing housing renewal and introduced flexible wide-ranging powers for private sector renewal.
- 1.2 Local authorities wishing to make use of the powers under the Regulatory Reform Order must adopt and publish a policy stating how they intend to make use of these powers.
- 1.3 The Council's current policy in respect of private sector renewal was adopted in 2000, pre-dating the Regulatory Reform Order. A new policy must therefore be adopted and published to meet the requirements of the Order.
- 1.4 The draft policy, which is attached at Appendix 1, has been prepared in accordance with the guidance published in ODPM Circular 05/2003.
- 1.5 The major changes between the old and new policies are as follows:
 - Introduction of a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) where it is more economical for an applicant to move home than to adapt the existing accommodation
 - Removal of the test of resources for DFG applications in respect of children and young people under 18, in accordance with national requirements
 - Increase in the level of Discretionary Home Repair Assistance (HRA) grant from £2000 to £3000, but a reduction in the number of applications that can be made to 2 applications in any 3 year period
 - Introduction of a discretionary Empty Property Grant for up to 50% of the cost of works, subject to a grant maximum of £20,000 and an agreement by the owner to let the property to a nominee from the Council's Common Housing Register, at an affordable rent, for a period of 5 years.
 - A requirement for all grant applicants to complete a Home Energy Check as part of their application, to allow targeted and appropriate advice on energy saving measures to be offered.
- 1.6 The policy contains detailed of the Council's eligibility requirements and procedures in respect of all grants applications.
- 1.7 There is currently no funding for the new Empty Property Grant. It is proposed that this is funded from the existing Renovation and Home Repair Assistance grant budgets for 06/07 and that a Capital Bid is made for future years in the next bid round.

implementation from 1st October 2006.

Appendices

Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

Implications

Policy:	The implications for policy are as contained within the report.
Financial:	The proposals can be accommodated within existing budgets for 05/06. All other implications are as detailed within the report.
Personnel:	None
Legal:	The Council needs to adopt a policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 in order to exercise discretionary powers in respect of private sector renewal.
Environmental:	The proposed policy contains actions which contribute towards the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act Strategy
Equalities:	None
Partnering:	The policy is offered in partnership with Sovereign Housing Association in respect of DFGs. The Council is exploring opportunities for a new Home Improvement Agency within the district which would impact on this policy.
Property:	None
Risk Management:	The Council will not be able to offer discretionary grants which assist older and disabled people if the policy is not approved. This may impact on community safety and hospital discharge targets.
Community Safety:	The policy contributes towards community safety by offering small grants for security measures to vulnerable people and those on specified means tested benefits.

Consultation Responses

Members:	
Leader of Council:	Councillor Graham Jones - no comments received
Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman:	Councillor Jeff Brooks - no comments received
Ward Members:	None – policy has district-wide applicability
Opposition Spokesperson:	Councillor Phil Barnett - no comments received
Policy Development Commission Chairman:	Councillor Quentin Webb - is broadly supportive of the policy Councillor Barbara Alexander - no comments received

Local Stakeholders:

See Policy, Section 5 for full list of stakeholders consulted

WBDA comments:

Disagreed with the comment in 2.4 which states "older people are now fitter and healthier than previously and disability among older people is declining rapidly". A comment has been added to this paragraph to clarify what the prevalence rate is actually showing.

Section 3.2 – felt that maximising income should be at the top of the list for advice that may be offered. However, this list is not in priority order and all advice would be available to all applicants.

Loans & Equity Release – should always be choices, different ages will have different priorities. Need to explore other options.

Disliked definitions of high, medium & low priority and would prefer to see 3,6 or 9 week lists. Following further discussion with the OTs, it has been decided to keep priority definitions as previously stated as this has been working well and the weeks are targets only.

Appendix – Means test – The appendix did contain brief details of the factors that are taken into account for the means test. WBDA commented that it was difficult for an individual to work out if they would have to contribute from the details that were provided. The nationally-set means test is complex and consequently this appendix has been removed and the reader directed to the DCLG website for further information.

WBNA comments:

Disagreed with the same comment in 2.4, as WBDA. A further explanatory note has been added to this paragraph.

Felt that proposals for equity release and loans should be "fought and resisted as it is effectively a 'tax on disability'".

TVEC comments:

Pleased to see energy efficiency referred to as being eligible within the 4 main grant types.

Would recommend that high efficiency heating (condensing boiler and appropriate controls or fuel/cost efficient fixed room heaters) are provided where applicable.

Would recommend that, where possible, all grants include measures to reach minimum energy efficiency standards e.g. minimum levels of loft insulation.

Would recommend that any grant applicant also completes a Home Energy Survey to allow appropriate advice to be offered.

Crime Reduction Advisor comments:

Encouraged to note the increase in Discretionary HRA grant.

Commented on crucial aspects of safety and security which should be included within the HRA grant.

SHA comments:

The current holding of medium and low priority DFGs to manage the budgets has a knock-on effect for contractors who are trying to schedule work 1-2 months in advance. They know the work is there but don't know when. OTs also need to be involved to review priority (2 OTs sit on the monthly DFG Panel).

Thinks that budgeting the DFG funds over 12 months is reasonable and keeps on top of individual cases.

Schedule of Rates system worked well. Should try to standardise across all agencies.

KM Cattermoule comments:

Year on year lack of funding for DFGs means that DFG cases are filtered and held up. This is against an increasing population of older people. If works dries up because of a lack of funding, will find private work elsewhere. This means that contractors may not be available when the budget is available.

Policy is fit for the task.

Officers Consulted:

For a full list of internal consultees, please see the policy, section 5.

Beverly Searle, Head of Community Services

Bob Watson, Group Accountant

OT comments:

Concern that means-testing all discretionary DFG applications, including applications on behalf of children and young people under 18, may lead to increased cost for the Council (i.e. more costly adaptations rather than a house move with a capped grant. After consideration, the means-test to be applied will be the same as for mandatory DFG and will therefore not be applicable to young people under the age of 18.

Concern that families with disabled children are less likely to have equity in their homes and lower disposable income, thus making equity release and private loans less feasible options.

Trade Union:

N/A

West Berkshire Council
Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy
DRAFT

Last Updated 17th July 2006

Policy Commencement Date: October 2006

Ownership: Housing Strategy, Enabling & Grants Team

Links to other relevant documents

Community Plan

Housing Strategy

Supporting People Strategy

Homelessness Strategy

Community Safety Strategy

Purpose

This procedure sets out the types of assistance available from West Berkshire Council to households living in the private sector, the eligibility criteria and the procedures for accessing this assistance.

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1 Introduction

1.1 National Context

The Government believes that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home. Poor quality housing can have an impact on the health of the occupants and on the quality of life in an area. The Government's view is that it is primarily the responsibility of private sector owners to maintain their own property, but it recognises that some owners, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable, do not have the necessary resources to repair or improve their homes. Local authorities therefore have an important role to play in providing assistance in these cases.

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) on Housing Renewal came into force on 18 July 2002. This Order has important implications for local housing authorities. It repeals much of the existing prescriptive legislation governing the provision of renewal grants to homeowners and replaces it with a new wide-ranging power to provide assistance for housing renewal. The Order provides authorities with a much greater degree of flexibility in devising a policy to deal with poor condition housing, both in terms of the policy tools available to them, and in terms of their ability to work in partnership with others. It therefore provides a major opportunity for local authorities to contribute further towards the Government's overall strategies towards tackling poverty and social exclusion, health inequalities and neighbourhood decline. If a local authority wishes to use the powers under the RRO it must adopt and publish a policy setting out how it will use these powers. Guidance on the preparation of such a Housing Renewal policy is given in Circular 05/2003 and has been followed in the preparation of this policy.

In January 2005 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister ((ODPM) now the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)) produced its five year plan entitled, 'Sustainable Communities: People Places and Prosperity'. This plan together with its partner strategy, 'Sustainable Communities: Homes for All', sets out the Government's program for the next five years. 'People Places and Prosperity' is wider than housing, and includes plans to revitalise neighbourhoods, strengthen local leadership, and increase regional prosperity. The aim is to create places in which people want to live and work by helping them shape their own communities to provide safe, clean and green environments and offer security, opportunity and choice for all. It builds on two key principles; putting people in control, and giving them the tools to shape their future.

The partner strategy, 'Homes for All', puts people first and is aimed at offering everyone the opportunity of a decent home at a price they can afford. It includes measures to deliver new homes while protecting the environment. There is help for 80,000 first time buyers and key workers to own a home. These measures include:

- Homebuy, which could enable up to 300,000 social tenants to buy a share in their home

- moveUK, a new system bringing together information about jobs and homes; extending choice-based lettings nationwide
- action to halve numbers living in temporary accommodation by 2010.

1.1.1 Public Service Agreement (PSA) Target

As part of the 2002 Spending Review, the Public Service Agreement 7 (PSA) target to make all homes in the social sector decent by 2010 was extended to include private sector homes. The target for private sector homes is for 70% to be decent by 2010.

The definition of a decent home applies equally to the social and private sectors. A decent home is one that:

- meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing ie does not contain a Category 1 Hazard (see 1.1.2 below)
- is in a reasonable state of repair
- has reasonably modern facilities and services
- provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

PSA 7 requires two measures for a given district:

- the number of vulnerable households living in private sector housing
- the number of such households living in non-decent homes

The target for West Berkshire is discussed in more detail in Section 3.5.1 and Appendix 5.

1.1.2 The Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The Government has replaced the housing fitness standard with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This is a new approach to the evaluation of potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings including houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). It is based on threats to health and safety from twenty-nine specified hazards. The HHSRS does not provide a single rating for the whole dwelling. Each hazard is given a Rating Score and this identifies the hazard band for that risk. Hazards are rated in bands from A to J with Category 1 hazards being in bands A, B or C and Category 2 hazards in bands B to D or lower. There is therefore an overlap between Category 1 and 2 hazards.

Recent government draft guidance on the enforcement of the HHSRS scheme states that a decent home is considered to be one which does not have any Category 1 hazards. The draft guidance also says that local authorities should have regard to the decent homes standard when considering financial assistance.

1.1.3 National Fuel Poverty Action Plan

Fuel poverty results from a combination of low income and poor energy efficiency in homes. The Government's Plan for Action sets out how the government aims to eradicate fuel poverty in vulnerable households (those with children, elderly, people, disabled people, or people with a long-term illness) by 2010. The government's main tool to combat fuel poverty is the Warm Front scheme which provides insulation and improvements to heating, and in some cases, central heating to vulnerable households.

1.2 Regional Context

The 'Sustainable Communities: 'Building For The Future' programme announced new arrangements for giving greater discretion at the regional level to determine priorities for housing expenditure and ensuring a stronger integration of housing and other policies within each region. Regional Housing Boards have been established and are required to submit Regional Housing Strategies to the Government which will advise on spending priorities over the current spending review period. These strategies will set the overall context for private sector housing renewal policies at the local authority level. A specific recommendation for local authorities is 'to develop innovative private sector renewal schemes with registered social landlords and other partners to help vulnerable people to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes'.

In 2006 The South East Regional Housing Board published its 'South East Regional Housing Strategy'. This sets out the priorities for investment in the south east from 2006 to 2008.

The main priority is the supply of affordable homes. The strategy also identifies the need to improve the condition of the region's existing housing stock, in view of the large numbers of unfit and non-decent properties across all sectors. The government has set a target that all socially rented homes are made decent by 2010. Unfit homes in the private sector are of particular concern because they often house the most vulnerable groups of people and the priority is to ensure 70% of these are decent by 2010.

In the context of private sector renewal in West Berkshire, the number of unfit properties in the private sector is 2200 (Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, 2001). The South East Regional Housing Board expects authorities, such as West Berkshire Council, to use their own resources to meet the decent homes standard. The report also recognises that poor low cost housing is often meeting a local housing need. Housing renewal therefore needs to be integrated with other services, including public health to ensure that those displaced by renewal do not fall through the net. Private landlords need to be encouraged to invest in their properties and provide accommodation that meets at least minimum standards. Owner-occupiers need guidance and support to encourage them to use loans and equity release to carry out necessary repairs.

Empty properties are also identified as a wasted resource. Although the numbers of empty properties in the region are low, 96% of these are in the private sector. It is therefore important to identify these and bring them back into use, together with other potential homes such as flats over shops.

1.3 Local Context

1.3.1 Local Strategic Partnership

West Berkshire has established a Local Strategic Partnership of key service deliverers who contribute to the development of an overarching strategy for the district in the Community Strategy 2003-2006. This states the Council's vision to 'ensure that people in West Berkshire are able to enjoy a high quality of life by having equal access to services, a safe and healthy environment to live in and prosperity through a range of meaningful work opportunities'. Five key priorities are identified:

- affordable housing
- transport
- rural issues
- lifelong learning
- sustainable development.

1.3.2 The Council's Corporate Plan 2003-2008

The Council's Corporate Plan 2003-2008 identifies ten priorities. Four of these are directly relevant to the Private Sector Renewal Policy. These are

- providing strong community leadership,
- increased participation of all socially excluded in the planning and delivery of council services
- promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities
- increasing the provision of homes that are affordable to those on low incomes.

These priorities are endorsed within the Best Value Performance Plan which states that the Council wishes to ensure that all residents have access to a decent home in a quality environment.

1.3.3 Housing Strategy 2005-2010

These strategic local priorities inform the Housing Strategy 2005-2010 which analyses and addresses key issues across all tenures. The six primary housing aims are:

- to address the immediate and urgent need for more affordable housing
- to address the housing needs of rural communities
- to prevent homelessness

- to facilitate the provision of decent homes for tenants in both the affordable and private sectors and ensure all tenants receive excellent service from their landlord
- to improve housing conditions for vulnerable people across all tenures and ensure that they receive required support to live as independently as possible
- to ensure that all our communities are sustainable and have a clean, safe and attractive environment.

1.3.4 Home Energy Conservation Act 1995

The domestic sector is estimated to be responsible for over 25% of CO₂ emissions and improving the energy efficiency in the housing stock is critical to achieving overall reductions. Each year West Berkshire Council must submit an energy conservation report to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), detailing its performance with respect to energy conservation. GOSE has advised that West Berkshire Council needs to secure a 3% improvement each year to reach its target of 30% reduction in CO₂ levels by 2008.

Thames Valley Energy Centre acts as an agent for West Berkshire Council and undertakes the council's duties under the Homes Energy Conservation Act 1995. The Thames Valley Energy Centre is the point of contact for West Berkshire residents and gives advice, promotes grants and any other assistance available to householders. This will enable continuous improvements to be made to levels of energy efficiency generally, thus resulting in reductions in CO₂ levels. The main grants and schemes on offer are as follows;

- Big Green Insulation Scheme
- Warm Front
- Solar savers

These Schemes are explained in more detail in Section 3.1 and Appendix 1.

1.3.5 The Housing Act 2004

The Council's Environmental Health Officers in the Public Protection Department receive complaints about poor housing conditions in the private rented sector from tenants and also receive referrals from other agencies. These referrals result in an inspection being carried out in the form of an HHSRS assessment. Formal statutory action will be taken for Category 1 hazards with the discretion to take formal action for Category 2 hazards.

The HHSRS assessment applies to houses in both single and multiple occupation. Existing arrangements for dealing with overcrowding, lack of amenities and poor management of HMOs will remain unchanged, and formal statutory action under the relevant Housing Acts will be taken where standards are not met. The Housing Act

2004 has also introduced a mandatory licensing scheme for all HMOs over three storeys. The objective of this is to raise standards of some of the highest risk properties, housing some of the most vulnerable people, whilst maintaining an adequate supply of rented accommodation.

1.3.6 The Supporting People Strategy

The fundamental aim of the West Berkshire Supporting People Strategy 2005-10 is to ensure high quality, cost effective, housing related support services are available and delivered to the people who most need them. Six key strategic objectives underpin this vision:

- Promoting independence
- Social inclusion
- Sustainable communities
- Investment based on evidence of success
- Working in partnership
- Value for money

The strategy contains a detailed analysis of current and future needs for a range of special need groups, including older people and disabled people, as well as mapping existing supply. Some of the housing needs data has been used to inform Section 2 of this policy.

Consultation with service users during the preparation of the Supporting People Strategy, which has been taken into account in the preparation of this policy, identified that in general, older people wanted, among other things:

- Accommodation planned for people with disabilities e.g. walk-in showers, more space to manoeuvre wheelchairs, lifts or chair lifts etc
- To stay in their own homes rather than moving to sheltered accommodation.

1.3.7 The Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008

The Community Safety Strategy focuses on five key areas identified from the West Berkshire Crime, Disorder and Drugs Audit 2001-2004. Domestic burglary is one of the key areas of concern and numbers for these crimes increased between 2001 and 2004. Recent figures, for 2004/5 show a continuing increase of 22% for creeper burglaries, where burglary is committed overnight, whilst the house is occupied. The strategy recommends, amongst other measures, working in partnership to promote the HandyVan scheme and 'home safety checks' on dwellings occupied by vulnerable people. Further details of these schemes are given in Appendix 1.

1.3.8 Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008

The aim of this policy is to make a better future for homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless by:

- ensuring that sufficient accommodation is available
- people do not become homeless repeatedly
- homelessness is prevented wherever possible.

2 Assessment of Housing Needs

Accommodation costs in West Berkshire are amongst the highest in the country and the provision of affordable housing continues to be the key strategic concern. This policy document is based on data obtained from the West Berkshire Private Sector Housing Condition Survey 2001, The Housing Needs Survey 2002, the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) return for 2005, Census Data, and a Profile of Fuel Poverty in the Thames Valley LSP Region and Member Districts March 2003.

2.1 Stock Condition

The 2001 Private Sector House Condition Survey was carried out by taking a sample from the West Berkshire Council tax list and carrying out 646 inspections. The fitness standard, as defined by the Housing Act 1985 was used in this survey, although this has been replaced by HHSRS in accordance with the Housing Act 2004. It should be noted that HHSRS is less prescriptive. Guidance on its interpretation in relation to the decent homes standard is contained in a recent draft circular.

The survey identified that in the year 2000 there were:

- 59,500 private sector dwellings including housing association dwellings
- 79% were owner occupied, 14% housing association and 7% privately rented
- 2,200 dwellings were estimated to be unfit (4% of the housing stock)
- Lowest income groups were more likely to live in unfit properties
- 11% of dwellings had one disabled resident
- Disabled residents were more likely to live in unfit properties and to have a lower incomes compared to West Berkshire as a whole
- The age profile of the housing stock in West Berkshire Council is as follows: 13% pre 1919, 11% pre 1944, 22% pre 1964 and 54% post 1964
- Less than 1% of dwellings had been vacant for more than six months

- Housing association dwellings had a much higher proportion of dwellings occupied by lone older and single parent households
- Means tested benefit was received by 15% of dwellings surveyed
- Of those receiving means tested benefit, 46% were in Housing Association dwellings, 9% were owner occupiers and 27% in privately rented dwellings

The key findings of the private sector condition survey of relevance to this renewal policy are as follows:

The housing stock in West Berkshire is more modern than the national profile. There is an expectation of lower rates of unfitness and disrepair in more modern housing stock. In addition the private rented sector, which is normally associated with poorer conditions, is present in lower proportions than the national average. This was confirmed by the survey, which found a generally high standard of housing stock across the district, and low levels of unfitness.

The low levels of unfitness made sample sizes too small to analyse meaningfully, although there was evidence of concentration in Housing Association Stock (8% compared with a national average of 5%). In addition the lowest income groups and the disabled were more likely to live in unfit properties.

West Berkshire has more than 50 conservation areas and approximately 1,900 listed buildings. However, they are distributed throughout the district and are not considered to be significant in influencing this policy.

2.2 Local Housing Market Conditions

House prices are significantly above the UK average, but typical of the Thames Valley. Recent price rises have been twice that of the rest of the south-east.

Average property values across the district have risen by over 90% between 1998 and 2004. The average price of a dwelling in West Berkshire, from the Land Registry, April-June 2005 is now £237,564.

Most long-term owner-occupiers in the district therefore have a significant amount of equity tied up in their property.

The percentage of empty properties in the West Berkshire area has been estimated as less than 1% i.e. 715 properties.

2.3 Local Housing Needs

West Berkshire has significant levels of housing need. These include a growing pool of middle-income households who would previously have expected to be able to purchase a property on the open market, but who, due to the buoyant housing market, are increasingly priced out.

The most recent housing needs survey was carried out in 2002 using postal questionnaires and interviews. The survey estimated a need for between 252 and 276 additional affordable dwellings each year, to meet housing needs. These were in addition to the district's current housing programme of 130 dwellings per annum. Given the increase in house prices, it is likely that this need has further increased.

The most recent evidence of housing need is contained in the Common Housing Register (CHR) figures from the Council's housing register. These indicate as at 20 January 2006, 2836 households were in need of social rented housing in the district. This compares with a district wide figure of 1008 households in 2002 which helps to indicate the extent of the problem. In addition, as at 20 January 2006, 843 households already in social rented housing require a move to more suitable accommodation. A further 781 households are seeking shared ownership.

Another indicator of housing needs is the number of homeless households. In 2004/05 the Council accepted 221 households as homeless and in priority need, and at the 31st March 2005 the council was accommodating 198 households in temporary accommodation. The main causes of homelessness reflect the national trend and include eviction by family and friends, loss of privately rented accommodation, non-violent relationship breakdown and domestic violence.

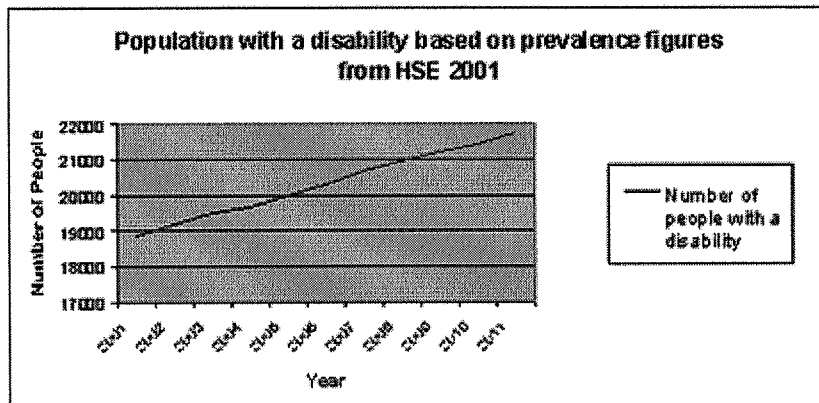
2.4 Age Profile, Health and Deprivation

The Housing Strategy 2005-2010 identified pockets of deprivation across the district, but on the whole West Berkshire is an affluent area. In 2002, 13% of the population was aged between 65 and 84 and 2% was aged over 85. Trends for England have been predicted by the Health Survey of England 2001 and projections made for West Berkshire in 2002 for 2006 were that the population over 75 years would increase by 23%, by 22% for the 85-89 age groups and by 103% for over 90s. The percentage of over 65s would remain around 15%. These projected increases in older persons in the district are likely to result in an increase in those with a long term illness, health problems or disability.

In 1991, 1.6% of the population of West Berkshire aged 16 – 74 was permanently sick or disabled, rising to 2.3% in 2001. This represents a rise of 38.3% and is significantly larger than the increase for England and Wales (31.9%), South East (32.7%) and Berkshire (29.7%) (Source: 1991 and 2001 Census Key Statistics table KS08). However, this measure only takes into account the population of working age.

Another measure is the number of people suffering from a limiting long term illness (LLTI), health problem or disability which limited their daily activities or the work they could do, including problems with old age. Using this measure, there was an increase of 62% from 8.1% in 1991 to 12.4% in 2001, but is still higher than the increases for England and Wales (45.6%), the South East (49.3%) and Berkshire (52.7%). This means the number of households with significant caring responsibilities for a family member is likely to increase.

The Housing Needs Survey 2002 identified 18.7% of households containing at least one household member with a LLTI, health problem or disability and demonstrated that there was a concentration in the numbers of people with special needs aged 60 and over. There was also an implication that up to 8.7% households have occupants with mobility problems.



The Health Survey of England (2001) was investigated in acknowledgement of the fact that older people are now fitter and healthier than previously and disability among older people is declining rapidly. Healthy life is also lengthening whilst the average period of disability before death is shortening. A prevalence rate has been predicted from the Health Survey of England 2001 and indicates that there is likely to be a steady increase in the number of people with a disability (see above graph). Another indicator of potential need is the numbers of households in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. Figures are only available for 3 years from 1999 to 2002, and show a rise from 15.98 per 1000 population in 1999 to 17.38 per 1000 population in 2002.

All of these health indicators have implications for the demand for private sector renewal grants and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), as well as providing an indicator of potential future care and support needs.

The district has a small black and ethnic minority population of just 2.6%

2.5 Energy Efficiency of the Housing Stock

The main cause of fuel poverty in the UK is a combination of poor energy efficiency in homes and low incomes. Where a household experiences fuel poverty and cannot afford to keep warm it may result in damage to health. Living in cold homes also affects quality of life. Elderly people, children, those who are disabled and/or have a long-term illness are especially vulnerable.

A Profile on Fuel Poverty in the Thames Valley LSP Region and Member Districts in March 2003 identified West Berkshire as having a below average incidence of fuel poverty compared to both the Thames Valley and England. However, there are pockets of fuel poverty in the rural parish of Compton and also Newbury. Fuel poverty is caused by a combination of poor energy efficiency and low incomes.

3 Principles and Policy

The Private Sector House Condition Survey 2001 generally demonstrates a good standard of housing within West Berkshire. There are no identified geographical areas or types of property that present a serious problem. The council has therefore decided to adopt a policy approach that will be client based and focused on vulnerable people.

- The key priority will therefore be the authority's policy to provide financial assistance for home renovations to vulnerable people; that is the elderly and those with disabilities
- The Council will also make limited provision of grants to enable empty homes to be brought back into use for people on the Common Housing Register
- The Council will also work with private sector landlords, by making limited grant provision to landlords. It will be targeted to bringing empty properties back into use and securing the improvement of housing conditions in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)s. The Grants team will work with Public Protection in forming an enforcement policy that ensures that vulnerable persons are not displaced by taking action under the Housing Acts
- The Council will continue to use TVEC to carry out its duties under Homes Conservation Act 1995 and to actively promote energy efficiency. This will include the requirement for all grant applicants to complete a Home Energy Survey as part of their application, allowing tailored advice on energy efficiency measures to be offered to the householder
- The council will work in partnership to improve the security and safety of vulnerable people by promoting the following schemes: 'HandyVan' and 'Small Repairs Service'
- The Council will work in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations to deliver these services. It will work across all council departments, in particular Community Services, Planning and Environment, Public Protection and with the Crime Prevention Officer to promote the financial assistance outlined in this policy and assistance offered by other organisations.

The first priority will contribute to the policies in the Housing Strategy by assisting in the provision of decent homes and in improving homes for vulnerable people. It will also promote independence for older people and access to a decent home, both of which are priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy supports the needs older people identified in the Supporting People Strategy through the provision of grant assistance. Supporting People has been funding Anchor Staying Put, who provided a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) function within the district. This service ended on 30th September 2006 and it is the Council's intention to work with neighbouring authorities of Reading and

Wokingham to explore the potential for a sub-regional HIA. Until this work has been completed, the in-house team will provide assistance to clients seeking grant funding.

The assistance for empty properties will promote the provision of affordable housing, a common theme in the LSP, Corporate Plan, and the Housing Strategy.

Assistance to landlords, especially those who own HMOs will also assist in the provision of affordable housing and focus on some of the most vulnerable households, who often live in this type of accommodation. This accommodation is likely to present the most hazards and is more likely to require enforcement action under the Housing Acts. However, it is important to ensure that persons do not become displaced or that the accommodation becomes unaffordable.

Improving energy efficiency will assist in achieving the decent homes standard and in achieving the sustainability themes of the LSP and the Housing Strategies and also the wider government agenda of preventing fuel poverty.

Providing and promoting financial assistance for security will assist in preventing home burglaries in homes occupied by vulnerable people and supports the Community Safety Strategy. It will also support vulnerable people and will help create safer communities, part the government's wider Sustainable Communities agenda.

3.1 Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available to owner occupiers, tenants and landlords. All discretionary grants are means tested and grants for disabled facilities are given only where it is mandatory, with the one exception detailed in 3.2 below. The financial assistance offered will include:

- **Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants** (mDFG)s are means tested except in the case of children and young persons under the age of 18,
- **Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants** (dDFG)s are means tested for all applicants, except in the case of children and young people under the age of 18,
- **Discretionary Home Repair Assistance Grants** (HRAG) (means tested),
- **Discretionary Renovation Grants** (RG) (means tested),
- **Empty Property Grants** (EPG),
- The **Small Repairs Service**.

The council's eligibility for grants is outlined in Appendix 1: The Grant Eligibility Criteria.

In addition targeted campaigns will be carried out to promote the achievement of specific objectives, for example the importance of maintenance, encouraging home energy conservation, and the promotion of home safety and home security schemes.

3.2 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

The RRO gives the council the power to offer discretionary DFGs. However, after careful consideration the Council has decided that it is unable to award discretionary DFGs because the current demand for mandatory DFGs exceeds the budget available.

The only exception to this policy is where it is more economic to provide assistance to enable a disabled person to move into more suitable accommodation, than to make the necessary adaptations to their current home. In this instance, discretionary assistance may be awarded, dependent upon available budget provision, to cover removal expenses (estate agents fees, solicitors fees, survey fees and removal costs) only, up to the value of £10,000. All applications for discretionary DFG, except those on behalf of children or young people under the age of 18, will be means tested. Where there are pressures upon the DFG budget, mandatory DFGs will be given priority over discretionary applications.

The move may be inside or outside the district. Where the move is within the district, the Council would not expect to offer DFG towards major adaptations once the move has been completed, although minor adaptations will be considered. If the move is outside the District, the Private Sector Renewal Team will need written confirmation from Social Services that future funding liability has been resolved, and will require written confirmation from the receiving local authority that they will address future adaptation requirements via their own private sector renewal policy. Costs that are incurred before receipt of a full grant application will not be covered.

Individuals affected by the decision to limit discretionary DFG assistance will be offered advice and support regarding other options which may be available. These may include :

- Funding from Social Services under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. Assistance may be available via direct provision of equipment, loan, or a grant in cases where assistance is needed in excess of the DFG provision, or where a disabled person cannot raise their assessed contribution.
- Assistance in applying for charitable sources of funding. If funding, is available, it is very small (£00's rather than £000's).

If no further financial assistance is available advice will be given to home owners, tenants and landlords and will include:

- Advice from the occupational therapist regarding alternative options, e.g. a through-floor lift rather than an extension,
- Moving to a more suitable property,
- Reviewing the proposed plans to see if a cheaper solution is possible,
- Advice to seek independent financial advice on equity release,

- Other financial advice regarding maximising a person's income. This may increase the person's ability to find the additional funding, for example, by giving access to a private loan facility.

3.3 Applications Outside the Policy

The Council acknowledges its general duty to consider the condition of the private sector housing stock and wishes to be flexible in exercising its discretionary powers.

All initial enquiries for assistance will be considered on a fair and equal basis. Enquiries which fall outside the eligibility criteria for assistance, outlined in Appendix 1, can be considered in exceptional circumstances. Where the applicant is able to justify that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant special attention, these will be considered individually by the Head of Community Services as a special case which falls outside the normal policy.

In the event of the Head of Community Services determining assistance is not warranted then this will be conveyed in writing with the opportunity of appealing the decision to the Director of Community Services. The Director's decision will be considered final in the instance of discretionary grants.

The Council has a complaints procedure if you consider that your application has been mistreated. Please see section 4.3 for further information.

3.4 Scope of this Policy

The procedures for administering Disabled Facilities Grant are outlined in Appendices 2 and 3. Procedures for administering all other financial assistance and grants are outlined in Appendix 4 of this policy. The test of resources (means test) used by the Council is as set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and further information can be found on their website at www.communities.gov.uk. The procedures apply to:

- Staff working in the Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team (part of Community Services),
- Social Services Staff involved with assessing need and eligibility for support,
- Any organisation or individual acting as an agent on behalf of a grant applicant,
- Private sector residents of West Berkshire applying for assistance,
- Environmental Health Officers and other enforcement officers in Public Protection.

3.5 Future Policy Implementation and Review

There is now a wider range of financial assistance available for housing renewal. The Council recognises that more work needs to be done, within the time span of this Policy to further promote and encourage residents to use all financial resources available to them to improve and maintain their own homes. The Council wishes in particular to encourage the use of equity release and loans, rather than housing renewal grants. Thus the Council intends to develop financial partnerships with lenders and specialist intermediaries, with a view to providing alternative financial packages which will enable residents to maintain their own homes.

Other options that are being explored include the Council offering its own low cost loans and using the interest to fund further loans for other applicants. Opportunities for equity release are also being explored.

The Council also recognises that further work needs to be undertaken to develop closer relationships with private landlords, for example, through provision of advice on issues such as tenancy agreements, ending of tenancies, HMO standards and through the establishment of a Private Landlord Forum. This work will be reviewed in future policy updates.

The policy will be kept under review and unforeseen budget restrictions might necessitate the re-prioritisation of grant aid and use of waiting lists.

The policy will be reviewed following the next Stock Condition and Housing Needs Surveys.

Customer satisfaction will be monitored via customer satisfaction surveys which are sent to every applicant.

3.5.1 National Performance Indicators

The Council is obliged to monitor national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) with respect to housing. These are as follows:

- BVPI64 The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished during 2003/04 as a direct result of action by the local authority
- BVPI62 The proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority.

West Berkshire Council has not signed up to performance indicator PSA7, the number of vulnerable households living in non decent homes. This therefore does not form part of the Council's CPA assessment, but the Council retains a mandatory obligation to deliver this service. The ODPM has produced a ready reckoner for estimating the number of vulnerable households living in non decent homes, which provides a useful figure for measuring performance of this policy.

The ready reckoner establishes a baseline position for assessing the impact of the private sector policies from the age profile of the private sector stock for the district. The calculation for West Berkshire is shown in Appendix 5. Using this calculation, the number of vulnerable households living in private sector housing in West Berkshire is estimated to be 3,968 and the number of such households living in non-decent homes is estimated to be 1,420.

For the purpose of PSA 7, the Government set a baseline for 2001 for 57% of vulnerable people in the private sector to live in decent accommodation. The target is to increase this to 63% for 2005, 70% by 2010 and 75% by 2015/20. Currently, 64.3% of vulnerable households living in private sector accommodation in West Berkshire live in decent accommodation. The Council is therefore meeting the 2005 target. In order to achieve the targets for 2010 and 2015/20, the Council will need to assist in improving 230 private sector homes occupied by vulnerable people between 2006-2010 and a further 198 between 2010 and 2015/20.

3.5.2 Local Performance Indicators

The following performance indicators will be set to monitor progress in achieving the progress of this policy.

Indicator	Target
Adaptation of dwellings with grant assistance for DFGs	90 dwellings per annum
Repair and improvement of dwellings with grant assistance (RGs and HRAGs)	40 dwellings per annum
Empty dwellings bought back into use with grant assistance	2 dwellings per annum
DFG completion of all Preliminary Test of Resources	80% within 10 days of initial enquiry
DFG approval or formal response to high priority applications	95% within 9 weeks of receipt of full grant application
DFG approval or formal response to medium priority applications	90% within 9 weeks of receipt of full grant application
DFG approval or formal response to low priority applications	85% within 14 weeks of receipt of full grant application

Indicator	Target
Approval or formal response to HRAG, RG and Empty Property Grant applications	90% within 12 weeks of receipt of full grant application
Response times for complaints	20 working days for Stage 1 and up to 3 months for Stage 2 for Social Care complaints and 10 working days for Stage 1 and 20 working days for Stage 2 for all other complaints

3.6 Policy Monitoring

The monitoring information that will be required for the above is as follows:

- Total number grants by type,
- Average cost per grant by type and by Agency,
- Number of discretionary DFGs,
- Number of grants by client group (over 55s, children, private tenants, RSL tenants, owner occupiers),
- Number of grants by type and by Agency,
- Length of time taken from receipt of full grant application to determination of application,
- Length of time taken from initial enquiry to preliminary test of resources.

Policy implementation and progress towards targets will be reported to Council and publicised within the Annual Housing Strategy update.

3.7 Changes to policy

Any significant changes made to the published policy for housing renewal are required to be reported to the Council. The appropriate amendments to relevant policy documents will be made by the Housing Strategy Manager and requirements in relation to publication and dissemination will be fulfilled.

Significant changes will include those for eligibility and scope as well as any new forms of assistance which might be introduced, or changes to or removal of current assistance.

4 Grant Applications and Procedures

The procedures for grant applications are set out in the flowchart and text in Appendices 2, 3 and 4. The terms and conditions applicable to financial assistance are outlined in Appendix 6.

4.1 Record Management

Record management will be in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy. Records will be kept by staff working in the Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team.

Records will also be maintained by Social Services and agents acting on behalf of applicants.

4.2 Resources

The amount of capital resources that will be committed to implementing the policy, including resources provided by partner organisations is outlined in Appendix 7 and projected until 2010/11.

Given the high demand for DFGs, it is necessary to manage the budget carefully. Consequently, the DFG resources for each year will be divided into twelve units and allocated for each month of the year. All applications received in any one month will be allocated a high, medium or low priority and the timescales for approval will be adjusted as outlined in Appendix 2.

4.3 Complaints and Redress

If an applicant has a complaint about any aspect of the service, initial contact should be made with the Private Sector Renewal Officer and the matter will be discussed informally.

If the applicant's concerns cannot be resolved informally, they will be invited to make a formal complaint. If the matter involves Social Care Services through either the Council's Community Care Service or the Children's and Young People's Service the applicant should contact the Public Liaison Officer who manages complaints about social services. Social Care Services have a statutory complaints procedure laid down by government. There is a leaflet explaining the process which can be used to make a complaint.

For all other complaints the applicant should follow the Corporate West Berkshire Customer Complaints and Comments Procedure and contact should be made with the complaints officer. Again there is a leaflet explaining the process and which can be used to make a complaint.

Where service users remain unhappy with the outcome of the formal complaint they may wish to contact the Local Government Ombudsman. Contact details are given in Appendix 9.

If the complaint is about an organisation acting as an agent on behalf of the applicant, then the applicant should go through the organisation's respective complaints procedure.

5 Consultation

A copy of this report was sent to the following organisations and departments and their views and comments sought:

External Organisations

A & B Builders; A & C A Slattery; Ability Housing Association; Age Concern (Berkshire); Airways Housing Society; Anchor Housing Association; Anchor Staying Put (West Berkshire); Assured Roofing Services; B J Elliott; Brand Windows; C A Cooper & Sons; C H Flooring; Chiltern Invadex; C R Miles Building & Groundworks; D J Taylor Services Ltd; D K Gibbs Electrical; English Churches Housing Group; English Rural Housing Association; Faulkner's; Freelift Services; Greenham Construction; Haines Building Contractors; Hanover Housing Association; Help the Aged; James Butcher Housing Association; Jephson Housing Association; Jeremy Scaplehorn; J P H Builders Ltd; K M Cattermoule; L & Q Beacon; Lifiable; Liftability; MC Plumbing & Heating; M W Sutton (Roofing); Newbury & Community Primary Care Trust; North British Housing Limited; Oakfern Housing Association; PME; Paramount Housing Association; Pollock (Through Floor Lifts); Public Protection; Reading Primary Care Trust; Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service; Rural Housing Trust; SCM (Southern Construction & Maintenance); SEC Electric; SKB Kitchen & Bathroom Ltd; Sanctuary Housing Association; Sovereign Housing Association; Stannah Stairlifts; Stonham Housing Association; Test Valley Mobility; Thames Valley Energy Centre; TLC Stairlifts; The Abbeyfield Newbury Society; The Bran Partnership; Toynbee Housing Association; Warden Housing Association; Wessex Medical Company; West Berkshire Disability Alliance; West Berkshire Neurological Alliance; 24/Seven Contracts

Internal Departments

Building Control; Care Management Team – East; Care Management Team – West; Children & Young People Services; Community Safety Team; Housing Operations; Legal Services; Older Peoples Services; Policy & Performance; Public Protection; Revenues & Benefits; Supporting People

All comments have been received and considered, and where appropriate, incorporated into this document.

Once the council have formally adopted this policy the public will be informed as follows:

- Public notice in two local newspapers and parish magazines,
- Publishing the policy on the council's website

- Producing posters and leaflets. These will be available at libraries, in Citizens Advice Bureaux and Council offices, and through all our partner agencies. Occupational Therapists and the Private Sector Renewal Officers will also have copies to distribute at visits.

A full copy of the policy will be available for inspection, free of charge, at the Council's offices. A summary document will also be made available for members of the public on request.

Appendix 1 Grant Eligibility Criteria

Type of grant	Eligibility Criteria	Eligible works	Non-eligible works	Conditions
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (Max £25,000)	<p>Means tested for over 18 years old. Not means tested for those under 18 years.</p> <p>Must be registered or eligible to be registered as disabled under the Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970. Usually receiving an allowance or benefit for disability.</p> <p>Can be owner, tenant (with at least 5 years of tenancy left to run) or a landlord (applying on behalf of disabled tenant). Any type or age of property. A relative who fits this criteria may apply on behalf of someone who lives in their home as part of their household.</p>	<p>Works recommended by Occupational Therapist (OT) and agreed by Private Sector Renewal Officer (PSRO).</p> <p>Works required, because of the disabled person's condition, for facilitating access, making building or dwelling safe, facilitating adequate bedroom, bathroom and or kitchen facilities. Providing suitable heating installations.</p> <p>Facilitating and enabling a disabled person to care for dependant residents.</p>	<p>Works not supported by an OT and PSRO.</p> <p>Works that do not relate to the disabled person's medical and or independence needs.</p> <p>Major adaptations (extensions) where the existing property can be adapted to meet identified needs.</p> <p>Works that have already been started or completed.</p>	<p>Works must be agreed and signed off as 'necessary and appropriate, by an OT and as 'reasonable and practicable' by the Private Sector Renewal Officer.</p> <p>Works must be carried out within 12 months of approval.</p> <p>Applicants must intend to continue to occupy the property for 5 years after the grant is awarded.</p>
Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (Max £10,000)	<p>Must be registered or eligible to be registered as disabled. Usually receiving an allowance or benefit for disability.</p> <p>Means tested for all applicants, except those on behalf of children</p>	<p>Fees (estate agent, solicitors, removals, surveys) for moving to more suitable property and minor works to new home.</p> <p>Move and works required, because of the disabled person's condition, for facilitating access, making building or dwelling safe,</p>	<p>Move and works not supported by an OT and PSRO.</p> <p>Move where alternative adaptations to the existing home could be</p>	<p>Move and works must be agreed and signed off as 'necessary and appropriate' by an OT and as 'reasonable and practicable' by the Private Sector Renewal Officer.</p>

Type of grant	Eligibility Criteria	Eligible works	Non-eligible works	Conditions
	under 18	<p>facilitating adequate bedroom, bathroom and or kitchen facilities. Providing suitable heating installations.</p> <p>Facilitating and enabling a disabled person to care for dependant residents</p>	<p>provided more cost-effectively to meet identified needs.</p> <p>Moving costs or expenses that have already been paid prior to submission of the grant application.</p> <p>Stamp Duty</p>	<p>Works must be carried out within 12 months of approval</p> <p>Written confirmation required from Social services confirming that future funding liability is resolved.</p> <p>Written confirmation required from receiving local authority that they will address future adaptation requirements via their own private sector renewal policy.</p>
<p>Discretionary Home Repair Assistance Grant</p> <p>(Max £ 3,000 per application, £6,000 in any 3 year period)</p>	<p>Available to residents aged 65 or over subject to a capital limit of £16k or anyone who is in receipt of at least one of the principal means-tested or disability related benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income support • Housing Benefit • Council Tax benefit • Disabled persons tax credit • Income based Job Seekers Allowance 	<p>Works of essential repair to a dwelling to enable a person to remain living at home or to return to their home from hospital, including overbath showers, essential stairlift repairs and essential equipment.</p> <p>Works to secure the basic fabric of the property from the entry of wind or rain or to protect the occupants from immediate exposure to dangerous and or insecure buildings or foul drainage.</p> <p>Boiler replacement, electrical works, roof repairs, provision of heating in main living rooms and bathroom and associated energy efficiency works.</p> <p>Security works and home safety including door and window locks, spy holes, door</p>	<p>Maintenance works.</p> <p>Extensive repairs.</p> <p>Replacing windows (unless in a very bad state of repair).</p> <p>Installing full heating systems.</p> <p>Stair lifts.</p> <p>Decorating.</p> <p>Minor adaptations covered by social services.</p> <p>Energy efficiency works</p>	<p>Not available to landlords.</p> <p>Not available to RSL tenants.</p> <p>Works must be carried out within 12 months of approval.</p> <p>A report from the crime reduction Officer is required to support security and home safety works.</p>

Type of grant	Eligibility Criteria	Eligible works	Non-eligible works	Conditions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Families Tax credit • Attendance Allowance • Disability Living Allowance • Industrial Injuries disablement benefit • War Disablement benefit • War Disablement Pension • Child tax credit • Working tax credit • Pension credit 	<p>chains, five lever mortice locks on external doors and replacement of insecure doors or windows (upon recommendation of the Crime Reduction Advisor).</p>	<p>in isolation.</p>	
<p>Discretionary Renovation Grant (Max £20,000)</p>	<p>Means tested. If owner occupier, must have lived in and owned property for at least 3 years. Tenants must have been in occupation for 3 years and have a repairing obligation and the</p>	<p>Renovation works to reduce any of the 29 hazards set out in Housing Health and Safety Rating System, Housing Act 2004. In all circumstances an HHSRS assessment of the property must result in a Hazard Score which places the property in a Category 1 or Category 2 Hazard Band and which could result in the service of an</p>	<p>Works covered by insurance. Decorating. Upgrading non defective installations. Energy efficiency works</p>	<p>Work must be carried out within 12 months of approval. Post-grant occupancy conditions apply otherwise grant re-payable as follows: between 0-5 years, the full grant is repayable; between 5 and 10 years of occupation the grant is repayable on a sliding</p>

Type of grant	Eligibility Criteria	Eligible works	Non-eligible works	Conditions
	<p>tenancy must have not less than 5 years to run. NB someone living in a house owned by a family member, is not a tenant. Owner must make application.</p> <p>Property must be over 10 years old.</p> <p>Must remain in property for 10 years after grant completion, otherwise some or all of grant repayable.</p>	<p>Improvement Notice.</p> <p>Energy efficiency works can be included in conjunction with above.</p>	<p>in isolation.</p> <p>Replacing installations that are not defective.</p> <p>Repairs due to rectify poor DIY.</p> <p>Servicing of boilers and other installations and equipment.</p> <p>Energy efficiency works that a Warm Front scheme could cover, unless one has been refused.</p>	<p>scale of 20% per year, unless occupier goes into full-time residential care.</p> <p>Entry on the Land Charges Register will be made.</p> <p>Works must as a minimum ensure the property is no longer in a Category 1 or Category 2 Hazard Band.</p>
<p>Discretionary Empty Property Grants (Max £20,000).</p>	<p>Up to 50% of cost of eligible works, subject to the grant maximum.</p> <p>Must own property. Must rent property for 5 years to a nominee from the Council's Common Housing Register at an affordable rent after grant completion,</p>	<p>Same as those required for a Renovation Grant.</p> <p>HMO works: including fire precautions, means of escape and the provision of adequate facilities and amenities for the number of people and or households.</p>	<p>Same as Renovation Grant.</p> <p>HMO: any non structural works required under s372 of Housing Act 1985, Management Regulations for eg cleaning communal</p>	<p>Property must be rented at an affordable rent to a nominee by the Council from the Common Housing register for a period of 5 years from completion of the work.</p>

Type of grant	Eligibility Criteria	Eligible works	Non-eligible works	Conditions
	<p>otherwise repayable.</p> <p>Property must be over 10 Years old and have been empty for at least six months.</p>		<p>areas, rubbish removal, decoration, servicing of gas and electrical installations.</p>	<p>Entry on the Land Charges Register will be made.</p>
Small Repairs Scheme	<p>Over 65 and/or disabled.</p> <p>Private tenant or homeowner</p>	<p>Small repairs including: Doors/window repair and adjustment, minor joinery work, minor plumbing repairs, fitting locks/security chains/smoke alarms, half steps, garden rails, glazing, minor electrical work (e.g. wiring plugs), re-fix loose carpeting/floor boards.</p>	<p>Decorating, gardening, work above first floor level, gas or electrical work, jobs taking longer than half a day.</p>	
<p>Energy Efficiency</p> <p>Big Green Insulation Scheme (TVEC act as agents for this scheme)</p> <p>Solar Savers (TVEC act as agents for this scheme)</p>	<p>Open to all</p> <p>Open to all home owners</p>	<p>Discounted prices for loft and cavity wall insulation.</p> <p>Information and advice on solar power. Will refer to accredited installers, obtain preferential quotes. Clear skies grant of</p>		

Type of grant	Eligibility Criteria	Eligible works	Non-eligible works	Conditions
<p>Warm Front (Government funded scheme run by eaga partnership). Up to £1,500 grant or £2,500 if you are over 60.</p>	<p>For private tenants and owner occupiers who are claiming one or more of the following: working tax credit, child tax credit, attendance allowance, disability living allowance, income support (including disability premium), housing/council tax benefit (including disability premium), war disablement pension (including mobility supplement or constant attendance allowance) or industrial injuries disablement benefit (must include constant attendance allowance). If you have a child under 16 or are pregnant and receiving income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit or income-based Jobseekers allowance, you may also be eligible.</p>	<p>£400 available.</p> <p>Improvements include: Loft insulation, draught proofing, cavity wall insulation, hot water tank insulation. Help with controls for heating systems and converting solid fuel open fires. For people over 60 years old all the above plus gas or electric central heating.</p>		<p>Not available to RSL tenants</p>

Notes: 1. Where heating is being installed, the Council will seek to install high efficiency heating i.e. a condensing boiler plus appropriate controls or, in the case of fixed room heaters, the most fuel or cost efficient type.

2. Where an applicant is receiving a Discretionary Renovation Home Repair Assistance or Empty Property Grant, the Council will seek to include minimum energy efficiency standards including minimum levels of insulation (250mm loft insulation and cavity wall installation) within the grant award. Where applicable, applicants will be directed to other appropriate grants for installation of these features e.g. Warm Front.

3. All grant applicants will be expected to complete a Home Energy Survey as part of their grant application with appropriate advice on energy efficiency measures offered in response. This may be undertaken by Thames Valley Energy centre on behalf of the Council.

Appendix 2 The Disabled Facilities Grant Application Process

Both the Council and their appropriate agent or partner will base the assessments they carry out on this policy. The Council's Housing Service will work together with agents and partners to ensure the service for applicants is as straight forward and consistent as possible.

Stage 1: Making a preliminary application and assessment

The first stage of the process starts when a potential applicant makes enquiries regarding possible assistance. The initial 'contact' via a Social Services or private OT (Occupational Therapist), a Care Manager or a direct self referral is made to the Council's Housing Strategy, Enabling & Grants Team. The Council will deal with initial enquiries and preliminary assessments.

An immediate assessment will be made to determine whether the work required qualifies for financial assistance, by carrying out a Preliminary Test of Resources (PTOR) i.e. a means test. Applications for young people and children under the age of 18 years are not subject to the PTOR for Mandatory or Discretionary DFGs. The test of resources is set out in Annex J2 of the circular 17/96 entitled 'Private Sector Renewal: a Strategic Approach 1996' and Appendix 4 outlines the application of the test. The definition of 'eligible works' for each category of grant type is set out in Appendix 2 of this policy.

Once the PTOR has been carried out, applicants will be notified by the Council if they are considered eligible for a grant application. Positive applications will be referred to the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Sovereign Housing Association (SHA) or West Berkshire Council's Housing Strategy, Enabling & Grants Team, as appropriate. Applicants who are not financially entitled to a grant will be offered advice on making a nil grant application, as the contribution may be used to offset future grant applications.

The following fees can be included within the grant application:
agents fees (up to 12% of the overall cost of the works), fees for making a planning application, fees for building regulation approval and architects fees.

Any other fees will be considered on a case by case basis. The council will not unreasonably withhold fees that are deemed necessary for the grant works to go ahead.

Stage 2: Disabled Facilities Grant (See Flow Chart)

Those applicants for a DFG, who satisfy the PTOR for grant eligibility, will be referred to the relevant OT. The OT will specify the works considered necessary and appropriate, using guidance from The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. Applications for young people and children under the age of 18 years are not required to satisfy the PTOR. Works costing under £500 are funded and

dealt with by social services or by the Registered Social Landlord (RSL), if applicable.

The OT will advise the Private Sector Renewal Officer (PSRO) of all recommended work, and the priority rating. All DFG applications, except those for Sovereign tenants, will be dealt with in-house and a detailed specification drawn up. Sovereign will draw up a detailed specification for their tenants. The Council is in discussion with neighbouring authorities regarding a sub-regional HIA service and therefore the agency dealing with the application may be subject to change. Details of any changes will be made available to grant applicants.

The outcome of the second stage of the process will be conveyed to applicants in writing, with a copy of the specification, and copied to the applicant's OT.

The specification will be priced and a full grant application will be completed by the applicant, with assistance from SHA or the PSRO, if being dealt with in-house. The applicant will also be required to complete a Home Energy Survey as part of their application.

Where the application is incomplete, the applicant will be advised in writing and requested to provide the missing information.

The Council will approve mandatory DFG grants if all the conditions are met, based on the tender quote provided, normally the lowest of two competitive tenders, or according to the schedule of rates where used.

The level of any grant approved may be the total cost of the agreed works (and agent's fees etc.) up to a maximum of £25,000, or where the applicant is able to raise funding of their own, the difference between the value of the applicant's funding and the total cost of the agreed works.

Subject to availability of funding, the council will aim to determine all DFG applications within the following timescales:

- High Priority Within 6 weeks of receipt of full grant application
- Medium Priority Within 9 weeks of receipt of full grant application
- Low Priority Within 14 weeks of receipt of full grant application

The DFG budget will be divided into monthly instalments. All high priority grants will be determined within that month. Where budget provision is available at the end of the month, medium and then low priority applications will be determined. Where insufficient monthly budget provision has been made available, medium priority applications will be reviewed on an 8 weekly basis and low priority applications on a 12 weekly basis to assess whether priority should be increased.

In all cases, the council will seek to determine grant applications within 6 months of receipt of full application.

The council have produced a leaflet entitled 'Disabled Facilities Grant' to inform the public about DFGs.

Stage 3: Payment of Grant

All grant payments will be made direct to the relevant contractor, upon satisfactory completion of the work, unless otherwise agreed with the PSRO. Contractors who wish to seek interim payments should make this known at the time of quotation and should indicate at which stages they would expect the payments to be made.

The Council has a responsibility to ensure that all funding is in place before works are commenced. Therefore, where an applicant contribution is payable, the applicant will be expected to lodge the contribution with the Council, who will place it in a holding fund. No works should be commenced until the client contribution has been paid to the Council. Upon satisfactory completion of the work, subject to the conditions stated below, the Council will pay the contribution directly to the contractor.

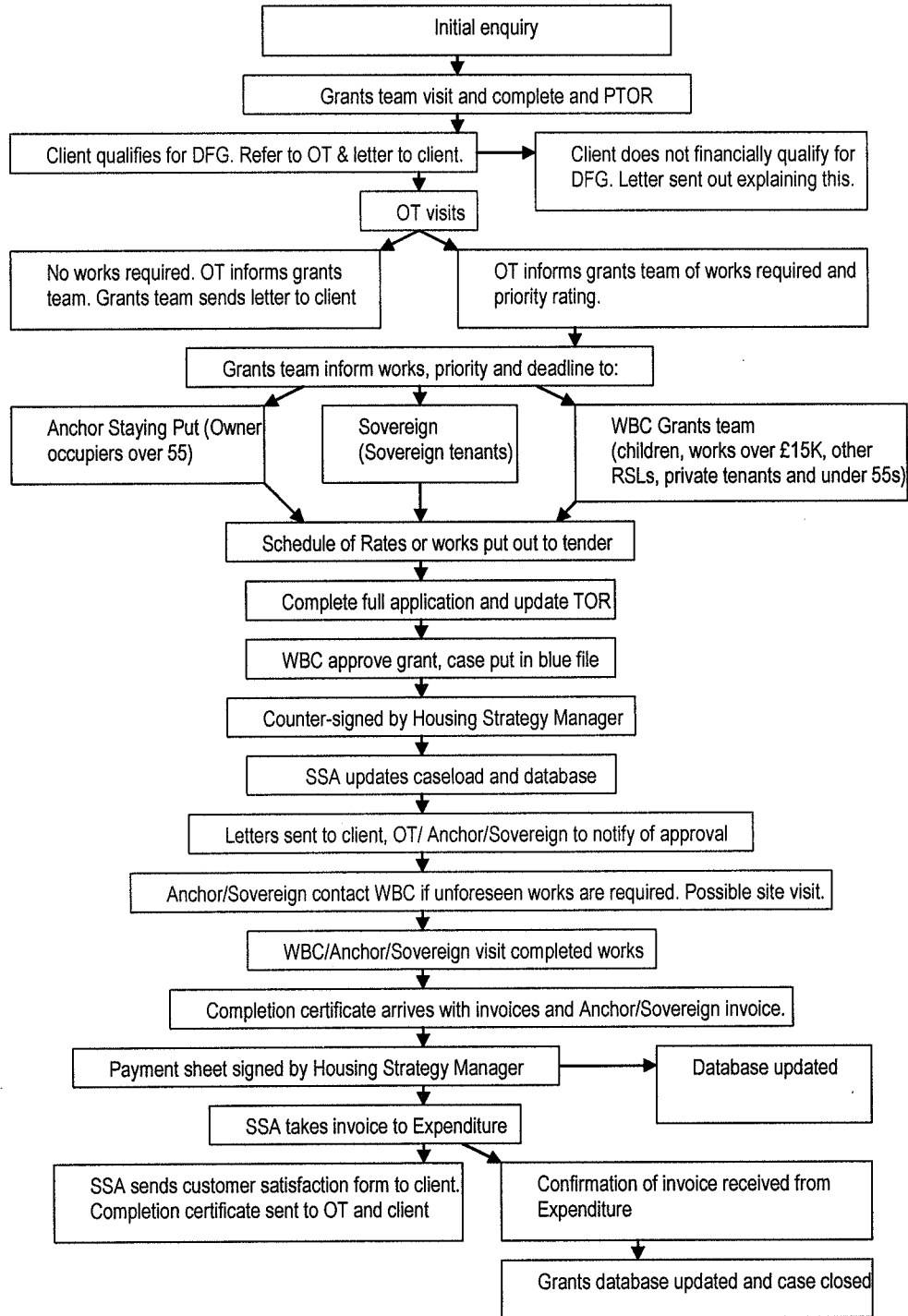
All applicants will be expected to sign a form stating that they are satisfied with the work before payments are made. Where an agent is overseeing the application on behalf of an applicant, the Inspecting Officer must certify that they are satisfied with the quality of the completed work. This is in addition to the applicant's certification.

Any additional or unforeseen works, arising after approval of the grant should only be carried out after authorisation has been given by the PSRO. Additional or unforeseen works that are carried out without such authorisation will not be paid.

Payments will only be made on receipt of acceptable bone fide invoices, stating the name and address of the company, the property at which the works were carried out, the detail of the works that were carried out and the cost of those works.

Where appropriate, electrical or gas safety certificates, warranty certificates and any other relevant certification relating to works completed, must be provided before payment can be made.

Appendix 3 Disabled Facilities Flow Chart



Appendix 4 Grant Application Process For all Discretionary Grants (Excluding DFG)

Both the Council and their appropriate agent or partner will base the assessments they carry out on this policy. The Council's Housing Service will work together with agents and partners to ensure the service for applicants is as straight forward and consistent as possible.

Stage 1: Making a preliminary application and assessment

The first stage of the process starts when a potential applicant makes enquiries regarding possible assistance. The initial 'contact' is made to the Council's Housing Strategy, Enabling & Grants Team. The Council will deal with initial enquiries and preliminary assessments.

An immediate assessment will be made to determine whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria and if work required qualifies for financial assistance. Where applicable, the Private Sector Renewal Officer (PSRO) will carry out a Preliminary Test of Resources (PTOR) i.e. a means test. The test of resources is set out in Annex J2 of the circular 17/96 entitled 'Private Sector Renewal: a Strategic Approach 1996' and Appendix 4 outlines the application of the test. The definition of 'eligible works' for each category of grant type is set out in Appendix 2 of this policy.

Once the initial assessment and/or PTOR has been carried out, applicants will be notified by the Council if they are considered eligible for a grant application. The applicant will also be required to complete a Home Energy Survey as part of their application. Financial details will be requested from all applicants for all discretionary grants as part of their application, regardless of whether a means test is applicable. This is to assist the Council with the completion of Government returns.

All grant applications will be dealt with in-house and a detailed specification drawn up. The Council is in discussion with neighbouring authorities regarding a sub-regional HIA service and therefore the agency dealing with the application may be subject to change. Details of any changes will be made available to grant applicants.

The specification will be priced and a full grant application will be completed by the applicant, with assistance from the PSRO.

Where the application is incomplete, the applicant will be advised in writing and requested to provide the missing information.

Applicants who are not financially entitled to a grant will be offered advice on making a nil grant application, as the contribution may be used to offset future grant applications.

The following fees can be included within the grant application:

agents fees (up to 12% of the overall cost of the works), fees for making a planning application, fees for building regulation approval and architects fees.

Any other fees will be considered on a case by case basis. The council will not unreasonably withhold fees that are deemed necessary for the grant works to go ahead.

The outcome of the second stage of the process will be conveyed to applicants in writing, with a copy of the specification.

The Council will approve discretionary grants, subject to available funding, if all the conditions are met, based on the tender quote provided, normally the lowest of two competitive tenders, or according to the schedule of rates where used.

The level of any grant approved may be the total cost of the agreed works (and agent's fees etc.), or where the applicant is able to raise funding of their own, the difference between the value of the applicant's funding and the total cost of the agreed works.

The council will aim to determine all discretionary grant applications within 12 weeks of receipt of the full grant application.

Stage 3: Payment of Grant

All grant payments will be made direct to the relevant contractor, upon satisfactory completion of the work, unless otherwise agreed with the PSRO. Contractors who wish to seek interim payments should make this known at the time of quotation and should indicate at which stages they would expect the payments to be made.

The Council has a responsibility to ensure that all funding is in place before works are commenced. Therefore, where an applicant contribution is payable, the applicant will be expected to lodge the contribution with the Council, who will place it in a holding fund. No works should be commenced until the client contribution has been paid to the Council. Upon satisfactory completion of the work, subject to the conditions stated below, the Council or the HIA will pay the contribution directly to the contractor.

All applicants will be expected to sign a form stating that they are satisfied with the work before payments are made. Where an agent is overseeing the application on behalf of an applicant, the Inspecting Officer must certify that they are satisfied with the quality of the completed work. This is in addition to the applicant's certification.

Any additional or unforeseen works, arising after approval of the grant should only be carried out after authorisation has been given by the PSRO. Additional or unforeseen works that are carried out without such authorisation will not be paid.

Payments will only be made on receipt of acceptable bone fide invoices, stating the name and address of the company, the property at which the works were

carried out, the detail of the works that were carried out and the cost of those works.

Where appropriate, electrical or gas safety certificates, warranty certificates and any other relevant certification relating to works completed, must be provided before payment can be made.

Appendix 5 District Level Ready Reckoner for Private Sector Households

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	number of households in private sector	IMD district deprivation group	probability of household being vulnerable and dwelling non decent in stock type	number of vulnerable households in non decent homes	probability of household being vulnerable	number of vulnerable households	proportion of vulnerable households in non decent homes
pre 1919	8,006	-	0.05	393			
1919-1944	4,442	-	0.04	188			
1945-1964	11,674	-	0.04	424			
1965-1980	13,430	-	0.03	415			
post 1980	14,102	-	0.00	0			
total	51,655	10		1,420	0.08	3,968	35.8

Figures Used for West Berkshire Council: IMD: Group 10. Total number of dwellings 51,655 (2004 census data) Age profile of District (Housing Needs Survey 2002) as follows:

Pre 1919	Pre 1944	Pre 1964	Pre 1980	Post 1980
8006	4442	11674	13,430	14,102

Appendix 6 Terms and Conditions

1. These terms and conditions form part of the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy and will be applicable to all elements of it, except where otherwise stated. The terms and conditions applicable to Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants are set by statute determined by central government; therefore these terms and conditions are not applicable to Mandatory DFG's unless otherwise stated.
2. The terms, conditions and eligibility criteria for discretionary grants detailed within this Policy will be set down in writing for all grant applicants.
3. In making an application for assistance, when applicants sign the application form they are agreeing to all the terms and conditions as detailed by the Council.
4. Information provided to the Council by applicants as part of the application process will be checked thoroughly and may be shared with other departments of the Council and other organisations involved in any aspect of handling public funds to prevent and detect fraud or in investigation of other possible criminal activities.
5. Applications or enquiries will only be accepted on West Berkshire Council official application forms available from the Council.
6. Applicants must be 18 years of age or older at the date of application and in the case of joint applications one must be over 18 at the date of application. The only exception to this is an application for a discretionary DFG on behalf of a child or young person under the age of 18.
7. All applications for assistance must be accompanied by an owner/occupation certificate or a certificate of intended letting, which state the applicant has or proposes to acquire a qualifying interest in the property subject to the application for assistance. In addition specific requirements are to be met in connection with the following certificates:
 - a) an Owner Occupation Certificate is a certificate that states that throughout a period of 10 years from the completion date she/he or a member of the family intends to live in the dwelling as their only or main residence.
 - b) an Intended Letting Certificate is a certificate that states that throughout a period of 10 years from the completion date, the property will be let or available for letting as a residence, not a holiday home, to

a person/s not related or connected with the owner of the dwelling for which assistance is being received.

8. In every case, it is the applicant who employs the builder to undertake agreed works and the Council have no contractual liabilities in that relationship as their role is only to administer the grant process.
9. For the protection of vulnerable applicants, the Council expects that contractors will have undertaken CRB checks for all of their staff who carry out work in the home of a grant recipient. Further information on CRB can be obtained by contacting the Council's Housing Strategy, Enabling & Grants Team.
10. The applicant is ultimately responsible for ensuring the quality of the completed works. The responsibility can be passed on to an agent of the applicant, e.g. an architect or a Home Improvement Agency.
11. If an applicant submits an estimate/quote from a member of their family who then carries out the agreed works the grant will only be paid on the basis of the cost of materials and not labour.
12. In the case of applications initiated by a qualifying tenant, they must be accompanied by a tenant's certificate stating that the applicant is a qualifying tenant of the dwelling and that she/he or a member of the family intends to live in the dwelling as their only or main residence. A tenant's application must also be supported by the landlord's completion of a certificate of intended letting. This may be waived if the works are required to remove risk to the tenant's health and safety. In all other circumstances work to a property will require the owner's written authority and that of the mortgagee.
13. An application for a Disabled Facilities Grant, whether mandatory or discretionary, must be accompanied by an Occupational Therapist report recommending the necessary works.
14. In all cases, an application for assistance towards works that have already been completed will not be processed. Any part of works not commenced, which would otherwise have been considered for assistance will be processed for possible grant assistance as long as work is not commenced prior to formal approval.
15. The details of the means testing required as a condition of a grant approval shall be provided together with a certificate of owner occupation, or evidence of tenancy.
16. All payments shall be conditional upon receipt of an acceptable invoice and made direct to the appropriate contractor following agreement with the applicant that works to the appropriate stage have been

satisfactorily completed. In a situation of dispute between the applicant and contractor, which is not resolved in a reasonable time period the grant, or part thereof, may be paid to the applicant at the discretion of the Council. Where works are incomplete as a result of a dispute the Council will withhold a proportion of the grant awarded equivalent to the value of work outstanding.

17. The Council will include the cost of preliminary or ancillary services fees and charges within the calculation of assistance, each submission of fees will be individually considered for reasonableness. The payment of any such fees is conditional on a grant being approved and the completion of all specified works, otherwise the Council will not be held responsible for any fees incurred before or after approval.
18. The Council will consider requests for interim payments such that no interim payment will be for more than 90% of the cost of completed work and in aggregate no more than 90% of the total approved amount before final completion.
19. The Council will determine on each approval document the time period allowed for works to be completed, which will not normally exceed 12 months and may be significantly shorter for small items of work.
20. The grant works must be carried out by one of the contractors whose estimates/quotes were submitted as part of the application process, the grant having been calculated using the lowest priced estimate/quote or by a contractor who is participating as part of the schedule of rates process.
21. At least two estimates/quotes as part of a competitive tendering process, or one quoted job in accordance with an approved schedule of rates, shall accompany an application for assistance for works costing in excess of £1,000. For works costing less than £1,000 at least one estimate/quote shall be provided. The Council reserve the right to ask for more estimates/quotes if they are not satisfied with those submitted or to accept a single quote where two would normally be required for work from specialist contractors.
22. If an applicant is required to make a contribution towards the cost of works, the Council has a responsibility to ensure all funding is in place before works commence. To assist this, the Council will expect the applicant to pay the contribution amount to the Council upon approval and before commencement of work. The contribution will be placed in a holding account and will be paid directly to the contractor upon satisfactory completion of the work.

23. Where an applicant's circumstances change or are confirmed as different from originally stated, after approval is issued, such that approval would no longer be given, then the grant approval will be cancelled and no payments made, or no further payments made where interim payments have already been paid, except in exceptional circumstances when the Head Community Services may give authority to provide further funding so as to conclude work at a suitable and appropriate stage. Where payments have been made, the local authority may demand repayment, together with compound interest, from the date on which payment was made until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the Council may determine.
24. In any case where financial circumstances at the time of application are later confirmed as different to those submitted by the applicant/s such that after approval a new processing of information would lead to reduced assistance or denial of assistance then the original approval will be amended/cancelled and the Council may demand repayment together with compound interest from the date on which payment was made until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the Council may determine, to recover any over payment. In such circumstances the local authority may choose to cancel the whole approval or demand repayment of all monies paid, plus compound interest, despite the fact that a reduced level of assistance would have been approved, where it is felt the degree of error in the applicant completing the original means test forms is such to suggest a deliberate attempt to deceive.
25. In certain circumstances where the Council believe that actions of applicants may have been taken to deliberately defraud the Council a file will be passed to the Police for investigation.
26. A condition for repayment of assistance in the event of sale within the ten years after final payment is made shall only apply to Discretionary Grants for which a charge against the property has been recorded in the Land Charges Register.
27. In the event of a recipient of assistance pursuing a successful insurance claim, and or action for legal damages which covers the cost of works for which grant, including mandatory and discretionary DFG, was previously paid the applicant will, on demand, repay the total value of grant paid relating to such works or the value of the insurance payment and or legal damages if lower.
28. The Council or their agents will hold final authority to determine what works are included on grant schedules although it is acceptable for owners, tenants or their agents etc to draw up initial schedules of work which may be reduced or added to by the Council in terms of work qualifying for possible assistance.

29. The payment of any grant approved will only be considered after any applicant's contribution has been accounted for in the value of invoices submitted.
30. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary approvals for the works to be undertaken. Such approvals may include Planning Permission and or Building Regulation Approval or any other items required as a condition of grant assistance.
31. Grant assistance will only be approved for the benefit of applicants who are able to provide evidence of a valid National Insurance Number.
32. The award of discretionary grants by the Council is dependent on the levels of funding in each financial year and as such the Council reserve the right to defer approval, or even consideration, of applications for periods of time of its own choosing in order to properly manage its budgets.
33. In considering applications for the benefit of people with disabilities the Council may choose not to grant aid adaptations for which Social Services have responsibility under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.
34. The Council may specify in grant approvals, involving the installation of specialised equipment for the benefit of people with disabilities, that the equipment is to be returned to the Council, if within 5 years it is no longer needed. The grant recipient, or a representative, shall notify the Council as soon as the equipment is no longer needed. The Council or their agent may choose to remove it for re-use elsewhere, making good any damage caused by its removal. However, there is no obligation on the Council to carry out removal of equipment.
35. Where the grant was approved and an additional contribution from the applicant was made for the cost of any specialist equipment, by accepting a grant the applicant waives their right to recover their contribution on removal or re-use of any equipment.
36. The Council may refer enquiries for assistance to the externally managed Warm Front Scheme as appropriate, or to the Home Improvement Agency or other agent if appropriate.
37. The Council may from time to time utilise special funding from central government, or other sources, aimed at specific subjects to target issues of local and national concern in accordance with any special conditions, eg replacement of inefficient boilers. Any special terms and conditions applicable to such initiatives will be appended to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy as they will not significantly alter the Council's primary approach to the subject.

38. The Council may not consider applications from persons, organisations etc where there is a possible alternative source of funding for maintaining properties, eg the NHS.
39. The Council reserves the right to re-consider any individual application against any of these terms and conditions subject to the approval of the Head of Community Services.
40. No applicant shall be accepted for a Discretionary Grant where the property is by construction or conversion less than ten years old, with the exception of discretionary DFG. This does not apply to HRA applications for minor repair or adaptation to facilitate the return home of an individual from hospital.
41. Proof of title will be required to enable property ownership to be confirmed where an application for a Discretionary Renovation Grant or Discretionary Empty Property Grant is made. The consent of any mortgagee will be needed.

Appendix 7 Budget Projections 2006/07 to 2010/11

	2006/07			2007/08			2008/09			2009/10			2010/11		
	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total
Disabled Facilities Grant	550,000	324,000	874,000	556,200	333,000	889,200	572,890	343,000	915,890	590,080	354,000	944,080	607,780	364,000	971,780
Home Repair Assistance Grant	50,000		50,000	53,000		53,000	56,090		56,090	59,270		59,270	62,550		62,550
Discretionary Renovation Grant	95,000		95,000	108,450		108,450	112,000		112,000	115,660		115,660	119,430		119,430
Empty Property Grant	60,000		60,000	60,000		60,000	60,000		60,000	60,000		60,000	60,000		60,000

Occupational Therapist Equipment budget – in addition to the grants budget specified above, Social Services hold an annual budget that is used to fund adaptations up to the value of £500.

	2006/07			2007/08			2008/09			2009/10			2010/11		
	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total
Occupational Therapist Equipment	18,700		18,700	84,870		84,870	85,420		85,420	85,420		85,420	85,420		85,420

Sovereign Housing Association have an annual budget of £220,000 to pay towards adaptations, up to the value of £2500, for their tenants.

Appendix 8 Acronyms

DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
GOSE	Government Office for the South East
HECA	Homes Conservation Act
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
LLTI	Limiting Long Term Illness
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OT	Occupational Therapists
PSA	Public Service Agreement
PSRO	Private Sector Renewal Officers
PTOR	Preliminary Test of Resources
RRO	Regulatory Reform Order 2002
RSL	Registered Social Landlord

Appendix 9 Contacts

West Berkshire Council

Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5LD, United Kingdom

Tel: 01635 42400 Email: info@westberks.gov.uk Fax: 01635 519479

Housing Strategy, Enabling & Grants Team

Housing Strategy Manager: Melanie Brain 01635 519403

Anne Paice 01635 519381

Alison Davis 01635 519363

Trudi Malone 01635 503027

Diana Hyde 01635 519629

Social Services

Council Offices, Avonbank House, West Street, Newbury, RG14 1BZ

Adult services 0845 6014726

Children & Families 01635 503090

Anchor Staying Put-West Berkshire

Unit 8, Ringway House East, Kelvin Road, Newbury, RG14 2DB

Tel: 01635 528 274

Email: stayingput.westberkshire@anchor.org.uk www.stayingput.org.uk

Sovereign Housing

Berkshire House, 17-24 Bartholomew Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5LL

Tel: 01635 5502 22

Email: enquires@sovereign.org.uk www.sovereign.org.uk

Help the Aged

207-221 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9UZ

Tel: 020 7278 1114

Email: info@helptheaged.org.uk www.helptheaged.org.uk

Disability

Disability Access Officer: Valerie Whitton 01635 5191489

E-mail: vwhitton@westberks.gov.uk

Crime Prevention:

Community Safety Manager: Rachel Craggs 01635 519235

E-mail: rcraggs@westberks.gov.uk

Handy Van Scheme 01255 473999 (run by Help the Aged)

Energy Efficiency

Thames Valley Energy Centre 0800 512 012

Tel: 019993 709 688

Email: energy.advice@tvec.or.uk www.tvec.org.uk

The Big Green Insulation Scheme

Free phone advice line 0800 107 00 47 www.big.green-insulation.co.uk

Warm Front Free phone advice line: 0800 3166011

Solar Savers Free phone advice line: 0800 1070044

Enquires about planning permission, building regulations, listed building consent and conservation areas

Planning Applications: planapps@westberks.gov.uk Tel: 01635 519111

Building Control: buildingcontrol@westberks.gov.uk Tel: 01635 519356

Enquires about poor housing conditions in the private rented sector

Public Protection 01636 519192

Email: ehadvice@westberks.gov.uk

Complaints

Corporate Complaints West Berkshire Council

Tel: 01635 42400 E-mail: comments@westberks.gov.uk

Social Care Services Public Liaison Officer

Tel: 01635 519024 E-mail: yjones@westberks.gov.uk

Local Government Ombudsman Tony Redmond

Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Tel: 020 7217 4620

Email: enquiries.london@lgo.org.uk

Appendix 10 Documents Referred to in the Policy

West Berkshire Council Documents	
Community Plan	Mark Harris, Partnership & Resource Development Manager Tel: (01635) 519185 E-mail: westberkshirepartnership@westberks.gov.uk Available to download at: www.westberks.gov.uk
Community Safety Strategy	Rachel Craggs, Community Safety Manager Tel: (01635) 519235 E-mail: rcraggs@westberks.gov.uk Available to download at: www.westberks.gov.uk
Corporate Plan	David Baker, Policy Manager Tel: (01635) 519083 E-mail: dbaker@westberks.gov.uk Available to download at: www.westberks.gov.uk
Homelessness Review & Strategy	Amanda Castellino, Senior Housing Officer Tel: (01635) 519506 E-mail: acastellino@westberks.gov.uk Available to download at: www.westberks.gov.uk
Housing Needs Survey 2002	Maureen Sheridan, Technical Support Officer Tel: (01635) 519680 E-mail: msheridan@westberks.gov.uk
Local Plan/Local Development Framework	Planning & Transport Strategy Tel: (01635) 519111 E-mail: planning@westberks.gov.uk Available to download at: www.westberks.gov.uk
Private Sector House Condition Survey 2001	Melanie Brain, Housing Strategy Manager Tel: (01635) 519403 E-mail: mbrain@westberks.gov.uk
Supplementary Planning Guidance	Planning & Transport Strategy Tel: (01635) 519111 E-mail: planning@westberks.gov.uk Available to download at: www.westberks.gov.uk
Supporting People Strategy	Supporting People Manager Tel: (01635) 519248 E-mail: supportingpeople@westberks.gov.uk Available to download at: www.westberks.gov.uk
External Documents	
Annual Report of the South East Regional Director for Public Health	South East Public Health Observatory Tel: (01865) 334714 Available to download at: www.sepho.org.uk

Health Survey for England, 2001	Department of Health Tel: (08701) 555455 Available to download at: www.official-documents.co.uk
South East Regional Housing Strategy	Government Office for the South East (GOSE) Tel: (01483) 882255 Available to download at: www.go-se.gov.uk
Sustainable Communities Plan: 'Sustainable Communities: Building For the Future'	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Tel: 020 7944 4400 E-mail: enquiryodpm@odpm.gsi.gov.uk Available to download at: www.odpm.gov.uk
Census	www.statistics.gov.uk/census
Land Registry	www.landregistry.gov.uk