

Individual Decisions

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

10th December 2009

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Individual Executive Member Decision

Title of Report:	Workforce Strategy 2009 - 2011
Report to be considered by:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date on which Decision is to be taken:	10 th December 2009
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1729(A)

Purpose of Report: To allow the Portfolio Holder to consider amendments made to the Workforce Strategy ('Building Capacity') following its 'call in' after the ID taken in August 2009.

Recommended Action: To approve the changes made to the Workforce Strategy 2009 - 2011 as a result of the 'call in' and subsequent discussions with the OSC.

Reason for decision to be taken: To meet the requirements of 'call in' arrangements as set out in the Council's Constitution.

Statutory: **Non-Statutory:**
Other:

Other options considered: None.

Key background documentation: Council Plan Refresh 2009. South East Employers' Workforce Strategy. National Employers' Workforce Strategy.

Portfolio Member Details	
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Implications

Policy: Actions in the Workforce Strategy may result in new HR policies.

Financial: Activities funded through existing budgets

Personnel: contained in Workforce Strategy

Legal/Procurement: n/a

Environmental: n/a

Partnering: n/a

Property: n/a

Risk Management: n/a

Community Safety: n/a

Equalities: contained in HR Service Plan

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council: at Management Board

Overview & Scrutiny Management

Commission Chairman:

Select Committee Chairman: At Personnel Committee

Ward Members:

Opposition Spokesperson:

Local Stakeholders: HR Staff

Officers Consulted: at Corporate Board

Trade Union: Unison and GMB

NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.

Is this item subject to call-in.	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The original Workforce Strategy for 2009 – 2011 (called “Building Capacity”) is attached as Appendix A to this report. The Workforce Strategy sits alongside the Council Plan and the MTFS. It sets out the main focus for people management targets and activities over the remaining Council Plan timeframe. The Workforce Strategy was formerly called the People Strategy and was adopted by the Executive in 2007 and refreshed by Individual Decision in 2008. It is updated and refreshed annually alongside the Council Plan.
- 1.2 The Workforce Strategy was agreed as an Individual Decision (ID) and subsequent ‘called in’ by the opposition. The Workforce Strategy was discussed at a meeting of the OSC with the Portfolio Holder for HR and the Head of HR. The Head of HR held a further meeting with two members of the OSC to fine tune the suggested changes to the original Workforce Strategy.
- 1.3 The revised version of the Workforce Strategy is attached as Appendix B to this report.
- 1.4 The additional text is shown in blue font on Appendix B for convenience.
- 1.5 The changes to the original Workforce Strategy are as follows:
- (1) The Action Plan has measurable targets attached to each item.
 - (2) There is a new action to monitor progress on the roll out of 360 degree feedback and make recommendations based on the evaluation of progress.
 - (3) There is a new action to seek feedback from a selection of unsuccessful candidates on their ‘candidate experience’ in applying for work with WBC.
 - (4) There is an explicit recognition of the potential role of Newbury College in assisting the Council with its efforts to promote the use of apprenticeships within the council.
 - (5) There is clarification of the ‘women into management’ scheme to explain that selection will always be on merit regardless of gender.
 - (6) There is a commitment to review senior leadership development at the next refresh of the Workforce Strategy.
 - (7) There is more detail on how the Council will attempt to reduce the level of sickness absence to meet the Council Plan target of 8.9 days per employee.
- 1.6 The Workforce Strategy now includes numerous ‘hyperlinks’ which take the reader to various parts of the Council’s intranet site.

- 1.7 The Action Plan only highlights key areas rather than all HR activities undertaken in the Council (the full list of all actions to be taken by the HR Service is set out in the action plan in the HR Service Plan for 2009/10).

Note: the term “building capacity” does not imply an intention to increase the size of the workforce; but rather to increase the productive output of the workforce through improvements in leadership and management; employee engagement; employee motivation; and employee skill levels.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 This report proposes that the changes made to the Workforce Strategy as a result of the ‘call in’, which are set out in blue font in Appendix B, is ratified by the Portfolio Holder.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The revised Workforce Strategy has been improved through the scrutiny and input from the OSC. The Workforce Strategy is called ‘Building Capacity’ because it sets out practical ways in which the Council will seek to be more efficient and effective.

Appendices

The original Workforce Strategy (called “Building Capacity”) is attached as Appendix A to this report.

The revised Workforce Strategy with changes shown in blue font is attached as Appendix B.



“BUILDING CAPACITY”

Workforce Strategy 2009-11

Document Control

Document Ref:	HRWFS01	Date Created:	March 2009
Version:	2.0	Date Modified:	12 th June 2009
Revision due			
Author:	Robert O'Reilly	Sign & Date:	
Owning Service	Human Resources		

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
0.1			
0.2			
0.3	01/05/09	Update in light of sickness out-turn for 08/09	
0.4	18/05/09	Update in light of CB views on 12 th May 2009.	ROR
0.5	12/06/09	Update in light of CB views on 9 th June 2009.	ROR
0.6	26/06/09	Update in light of MB views on 25 th June 2009	ROR

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
0.7	03/07/09	Update (minor) prior to going to Personnel Committee for discussion	ROR
0.8	29/07/09	Minor update re headteacher vacancies arising from discussion at Personnel Committee	ROR

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DRAFT

1. Foreword

- 1.1. "Building Capacity" (the name for the Workforce Strategy previously known as the "People Strategy") is designed to assist the staff at West Berkshire Council (WBC) to deliver the objectives in the Sustainable Community Strategy (themes: Prosperous, Stronger, Greener, Safer, Healthy) and the Council Plan, with its sixteen outcomes, by building the capacity of the Council to deliver a more efficient and effective service to customers and clients. The term "building capacity" does not imply an intention to increase the size of the workforce; but rather to increase the productive output of the workforce through improvements in leadership and management, employee engagement, employee motivation, and employee skill levels.
- 1.2. The Workforce Strategy sits alongside the *Children's Workforce Strategy* which addresses issues in schools and organisations working with children. The emerging *Adult Workforce Strategy* will also sit alongside this document. The need for a separate workforce strategy for the Children's and Adult's workforce is driven by national government policy.
- 1.3. In West Berkshire Council an exercise was undertaken by all Heads of Service in November 2008 to explore strategic workforce planning issues from the "bottom up". Using a toolkit developed by HR, Heads of Service were asked to consider eleven workforce planning issues and indicate which needed to be addressed now (or in the next few years) to avoid potential problems with service delivery.
- 1.4. This exercise identified three issues which were rated as the most important. Two of the issues can be described as "organisational development", namely the increase in mobile and flexible working (M&FW) and the need to focus on increasing efficiency with regard to staffing costs. The third most urgent issue was "skills development".

2. Introduction

2.1. Purpose

- 2.1.1. The aim of this Workforce Strategy is to describe how the Council will build capacity across the organisation and, working with partners, deliver the changes required to meet the expectations in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council Plan.
- 2.1.2. The Workforce Strategy will help managers and employees to work at their best. This means removing obstacles to high performance and allowing best practice to thrive.

2.2. Vision

- 2.2.1. The Workforce Strategy is about delivering the Council's objectives in a way which shows commitment to the Council's values (Respect, Integrity and Ambition). Respect underpins our commitment to promoting equality of

opportunity and diversity in the workplace. Integrity underpins our commitment to open and transparent governance arrangements internally and with our partners. Ambition underpins our commitment to high quality, value for money services for our citizens.

2.2.2. The vision is to build capacity to deliver a value for money service in way which is aligned to the Council's values.

2.3. Partnership

2.3.1. There may be opportunities to work with the Local Strategic Partnership or neighbouring authorities to explore shared workforce challenges (e.g. the development of shared services).

2.3.2. The Workforce Strategy will be used as an agenda with which to engage with partner organisations to draw upon the range of skills and expertise available.

3. Drivers for the Workforce Strategy

Background

- 3.1. West Berkshire Council is a medium sized unitary authority created in 1998 which has continued to improve and achieve successful outcomes for its citizens over the past eleven years, finishing the last Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating as a three star authority, improving strongly. The most recent Management Letter from the Audit Commission commended its strong leadership and management, and its clear vision which is shared with staff, citizens and partners. The Council has forged good relationships with parish councils across the district.
- 3.2. West Berkshire is a prosperous, largely rural authority. Until the recent recession its main challenges were coping with the fruits of economic success: the pressure for more housing; better transport; high house prices; inward economic migration; and staff shortages in some key skill areas. Some of these challenges will change as the Council tackles the effects of the recession which started in the autumn of 2008.
- 3.3. The Council Plan has sixteen outcomes and four themes: Economic well being; Environmental well being; Social well being and Organisational effectiveness. The Workforce Strategy by "Building Capacity" will help to achieve progress across all four themes. However its primary focus will be on Organisational effectiveness where the Council plan outcomes are "Putting Customers First"; "Effective People"; "Value for Money" and "Including Everyone".

National issues facing local government

Local government is facing many challenges which include:

- The need to personalise services and provide more choice to service users;
- The need to reinvigorate local democracy;
- The need to tackle climate change;

- A growing elderly population;
- Greater diversity and the need to promote social cohesion;
- The need to overcome barriers which exclude some people from access to services;
- A new threat of poverty from growing unemployment;
- Growing disparity between socio-economic groups in society;
- Migration;
- Social inclusion;
- Health issues (obesity, drugs, alcohol, tobacco);
- Crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Poor basic skills for a proportion of adults;
- The need to improve school performance;
- The need to promote entrepreneurship;
- The need to be ready to tackle emergencies including a terrorist threat;
- and the need to protect the environment.

There is a need to make local government an attractive place to work which is met more from flexible terms and conditions than high salaries compared to the private sector.

The Council's workforce is 40% part time and 75% female which reflects the more flexible terms and conditions in local government which are more "family friendly" than the private sector. Turnover has decreased from 12.04% in 07/08 to 10.41% in 08/09.

National assessment framework

- 3.4. Local government has to meet the challenges above in a new context as a result of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) regulatory framework from 1st April 2009. The CAA recognises that resources in local government are limited and the Council Tax payer must be protected (in West Berkshire nearly 70% of the non-schools budget comes from Council Tax payers). The CAA also recognises that the needs of local citizens must be heard and that the response may come from a number of public sector partners working together.
- 3.5. It follows that the challenges cannot be met by spending more money or working in isolation. The two key drivers for the workforce strategies of all local authorities will be working in partnership and achieving high quality, value for money services. Value for money is a key theme for the Council and will be part of the CAA assessment.

- 3.6. The priorities set together with our partners are set out in the West Berkshire Partnership Strategy (*A Breath of Fresh Air*) which seeks to address national and local performance indicators through its sub-partnerships.

Local challenges and priorities

- 3.7. West Berkshire Council has local challenges which also drive the Workforce Strategy.
- 3.7.1. The last CPA inspection report commended good progress on diversity and equalities. This focus has been expanded in 2009 with the drafting of an “Including Everyone” strategy which sets the ambitious objective of linking work on equalities and diversity with social inclusion and community cohesion.
- 3.7.2. WBC has set itself a goal of reducing its carbon footprint and leading the work needed on climate change in the district. The Council will reduce its own property footprint and reduce the need for staff to commute to the office by the widespread introduction of mobile and flexible working through the ‘Timelord’ programme.
- 3.7.3. WBC is facing up to challenge of a growing elderly population and the need for personalised services by transforming its service for older persons under the ‘Putting People First’ programme.
- 3.7.4. WBC has gained external funding for large capital projects and is rebuilding two secondary schools. There are a number of smaller capital projects funded by the Council which reflect the priorities of transport; schools; disabled people; crime; safety; activities for youth; and vibrant towns and villages.
- 3.7.5. The Council set itself a target of 8.9 days sickness absence in 08/09. This is benchmarked against a national average for all local authorities of 9.3 days. However the out-turn figures for 08/09 show that the average level of sickness in WBC (excluding schools) was 9.95 days for 08/09. Therefore the need to reduce the level of sickness absence at the Council is a further local challenge.
- 3.8. West Berkshire Council is part of a sub regional area which includes the county of Berkshire with its six unitary authorities. WBC is part of the newly formed Berkshire Economic Strategy Board which sees its context as “economy, environment and society” and its strategic objectives as: enterprise and skills; transport infrastructure; global competitiveness; and sustainable prosperity.
- 3.9. WBC falls under the GOSE (Government Office for the South East) and SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) areas and is influenced by their priorities which include a focus on essential skills and community cohesion.

4. The five national themes for workforce strategy

- 4.1.1. The National Workforce Strategy for local government, and the South East Employers’ Workforce Strategy, both focus on the following five themes:

- **Organisational Development;**
- **Leadership and Management Development;**

- **Skills Development;**
- **Recruitment and Retention;**
- **Pay and Rewards.**

4.1.2. The five themes can be regarded as the “top down” priorities for a Workforce Strategy. The “top down” priorities may be augmented by elected members to reflect emerging local issues of importance.

4.1.3. The WBC Workforce Strategy takes the national themes and uses these to address issues that are relevant to the West Berkshire Council workforce.

5. Priorities (*extracts from the National Workforce Strategy in italics*)

5.1. Organisational development

Effectively building workforce support for new structures and new ways of working to deliver citizen-focused and efficient services, in partnership.

5.1.1. There are two strands to the organisational development theme in the Workforce Strategy; implementing the Timelord Programme and efficient use of staff resources.

Timelord Programme

5.1.2. The first organisational development strand is implementing the Timelord programme to increase mobile and flexible working (M&FW) in the Council. The Timelord Programme will change organisational culture and practices. The programme will require excellent organisational development and change management skills to positively engage staff in M&FW and create new ways of working in teams.

5.1.3. The aims of the Timelord Programme are to increase the use of M&FW across the Council resulting in a “triple win” for the Council, its customers and its staff.

5.1.4. The Timelord programme will affect all Council staff (excluding schools). Phase One has applied to staff moving into the new office at Turnham’s Green in March 2009. Phase Two, in autumn 2009, will apply to staff currently based in the Avonbank and Northcroft buildings.

5.1.5. The emphasis will be on creating high trust and high performing teams where output and outcomes are the focus of employee performance management. There will be a continuing need to engage and support staff in this major change programme. This will involve communication with staff and managers and training on how to make better use of technology and how to drive business process gains from the move to “smarter working”.

5.1.6. The potential benefits of a successful move to greater M&FW are huge. The Council will see reduced property costs and a reduced carbon footprint. The customers will see a more responsive and accessible workforce. The staff will appreciate an employer who trusts them and enables them to work flexibly.

This will lead to greater “employee engagement” with a reduction in turnover, reduced absence and greater job satisfaction.

Efficient use of staffing resources

- 5.1.7. The second organisational development strand arising from the work undertaken by Heads of Service is about making the most of the staffing resources available. Wasteful processes need to be removed. Job roles may need to be redesigned. Technology must be used effectively. Existing management structures may need to be challenged to achieve potential efficiency savings, which will include a review of the senior management tiers of the organisation. Spending on overtime, agency staff, casual staff and consultants needs to be justifiable. HR will provide expertise on organisational design principles; up to date management information; and commission training opportunities on making best use of technology and business processes where needed.
- 5.1.8. Heads of Service indicated that there was a mismatch between the staffing available and workload demands. The emphasis in the Workforce Strategy is on efficiency and effectiveness. The strategic work of the Transformation and Efficiency Board was already led to some decisions on achieving efficiency and disinvestments. The Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the need to make £9m in savings over the next four years.
- 5.1.9. The introduction of the Budget Monitoring Panel (which includes the Leader and Chief Executive) to scrutinise all new posts, and the expenditure on overtime and agency staff, is an example of how staffing costs have moved to the top of the organisational agenda. This will be a major area of work for HR over the next two years. HR has produced a new Organisational Change Policy and Procedure to deal with reductions in staffing levels.
- 5.1.10. Efficient use of staffing resources can be supported by reducing staff sickness absence. Heads of Service have been working towards achieving service level targets for sickness absence that will achieve the overall target for the Council of 8.9 days (compared to 9.3 days average for all local authorities). However the out-turn figure for 08/09 gave a Council actual sickness level of 9.95 days. The focus for 2009/10 is likely to be on directorate targets (rather than service level targets) to track a reversal in the trend on sickness absence.
- 5.1.11. There is a range of HR tools available to managers to tackle sickness absence. These include a comprehensive Managing Sickness Absence policy and procedure on the HR intranet; an employee relations advice line for advice on ill health cases; workshops for managers on how to use the Managing Sickness procedure; quarterly information for all Heads of Service on progress against sickness targets; quarterly information for managers showing number and duration of sickness absence for each employee; access to a professional Occupational Health service for advice; counselling for employees suffering from stress and depression; and support from HR Contacts.
- 5.1.12. The Workforce Strategy does not propose to extend the range of HR tools available as they cover all that is recommended in best practice guidance from the government. However HR will work with Heads of Service with high levels of comparative absence to ensure that an action plan for managing

sickness absence is included in their workforce planning action plan. This may focus on long term or short term absence depending on the needs of the service. A Task Group of elected members will review the approach to reducing sickness absence and may add to the range of tools described above to reduce the level of sickness absence.

5.2. Leadership development

Building visionary and ambitious leadership which makes the best use of both the political and managerial role, operating in a partnership context.

- 5.2.1. At national and regional level there is an expectation that local authority Workforce Strategies will address the need for visionary and ambitious political and managerial leaders. However this was not identified as a priority by Heads of Service in the “bottom up” strategic workforce planning exercise in November 2008. The Workforce Strategy therefore has a relatively modest scope when it comes to leadership development in 2009/10. However from 2010 onwards the demands of the CAA framework will demand greater strategic skills from senior managers and elected members. To build capacity senior managers and elected members will need to know what partners are doing and could do, and to see and articulate how synergies can be identified to work together in an effective way. The Effective People Group (EPG) has identified the Common Purpose leadership programme as particularly relevant as it focuses on networking with partner organisations and achieving results for citizens beyond the formal authority structures in the public, private and voluntary sector. Four senior managers have attended the Common Purpose leadership programme which lasts for five months and involves visits to organisations across Berkshire to discuss how they can improve their services. One senior manager per year will attend the Common Purpose programme leading to a critical mass of senior leaders able to grasp the challenges of the partnership agenda in future years.
- 5.2.2. HR is organising a one day “Learning about Leadership” course for all Heads of Service in July 2009 with an experienced external facilitator. Subject to the evaluation of this day, it is envisaged that the Council will hold an annual “Learning about Leadership” event for all Heads of Service. Some Heads of Service are receiving feedback on their performance through facilitated meetings with a selection of their staff, which will help to develop leadership skills, and this is set to expand in 2010/11. There may be more demand for external coaching support from some Heads of Service as a result of this feedback.
- 5.2.3. Funding for expert external consultancy for a programme to develop future political and managerial leaders, to include greater understanding of the issues surrounding succession planning, will be the subject of discussion and a possible budget bid request for 2010/2011. This bid, if supported, would focus on working with the Leadership Centre of Local Government to support leadership development for members and senior officers to “create the future through building effective and efficient partnerships, improving the lives of local people” (quote from LGA).
- 5.2.4. Leadership development below Head of Service level is well established with the successful Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) training

programme for middle managers; and the new management induction programme introduced by HR. Managers will have an increasing obligation to help produce a skilled and productive workforce by embedding a learning culture and taking steps to encourage employee engagement. The 2009 Employee Attitude Survey (“Have Your Say”) will provide valuable comparative information to allow managers to put in place action plans to make this happen.

5.2.5. HR continues to find ways to deepen the understanding of managers in using the National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership (West Berkshire Council’s management competency framework). This will be assessed as part of the Investors in People re-accreditation process in March 2010.

5.2.6. The 2009 and 2011 biennial Employee Attitude Surveys (EAS) will provide a measure of leadership development. In the Council Plan there is a target of a 5% increase in the score for employee engagement (a composite measure taken from three questions: job satisfaction; proud of working for WBC; and would recommend WBC as a place to work). The EAS will produce an action plan which will demonstrate leadership skills across the Council.

5.2.7. HR Contacts will work with Heads of Service in services which have a higher than average turnover and seek ways to improve retention of staff so that the Council’s overall turnover figure is at or below the average for all local authorities.

5.3. Skills development

With partners, developing employees’ skills and knowledge, in an innovative, high performance, multi-agency context

5.3.1. West Berkshire Council has signed the Government’s ‘Skills Pledge’ to support all staff in developing basic literacy and numeracy skills to achieve a “level two” qualification where appropriate. The Council has decided to support this government initiative because it recognises that a proportion of its own staff may have difficulties with literacy, numeracy and IT skills. One important way to build capacity is to increase the skills and productive capacity of our own workforce. A more skilled workforce will still require excellent leadership to help it to stay motivated and engaged whilst delivering high quality, value for money services.

5.3.2. HR is currently commissioning a survey of skill levels amongst the workforce (with the help of a government grant). This work will involve working with partner organisations. West Berkshire Council, by signing the Skills Pledge, can gain support in developing the skills of staff, as well as setting a positive example to other local employers. This is linked to the Local Strategic Partnership’s action to develop the skills of the whole community. It also supports the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board priorities which note that *“the lack of skills (particularly the basic skills) is a major contributing factor to the cause of poverty and deprivation within local communities”* (BESB Strategy, December 2008)

5.3.3. The Timelord Programme has an associated training programme which will increase the skill levels of all staff in the use of IT and telecommunications. The

Timelord Programme will also address the people management issues of managing a “virtual” team through specially designed course run by an external trainer

- 5.3.4. In addition to essential skills development, Heads of Service have identified skills development as a critical success factor. HR will assist services to plan their learning and development with a new template for L&D plans and support from the HR Contacts.
- 5.3.5. The skills of managers in dealing with people management issues is being increased through the use of short workshops run by HR. These workshops cover subjects like discipline; grievance; capability; and sickness absence.
- 5.3.6. HR will seek more detailed information from services on their learning and development plans to map the investment in skill development across the Council and evaluate its effectiveness.
- 5.3.7. There are proposals to roll out of 360° feedback for managers across the Council (this currently only happens in social care areas). If this proposal is implemented it will highlight areas for skill development for managers (linked to the National Occupational Standards for Leadership and Management).
- 5.3.8. Skills development will be made more accessible through the expansion of “on-line” learning through the Council’s subscription to “Learning Pool” (a national organisation linked to the IDeA). The take up of all training will be monitored against a range of equalities criteria (age, race, disability, part time hours, and sex) to ensure equality of access and identify any barriers to accessibility.
- 5.3.9. The Council has its own Performance Management Methodology (based on PRINCE2) which is supported by a dedicated training course. An increasing number of employees are now trained and this improves the Council’s management of major capital and other projects.
- 5.3.10. As part of its commitment to positive action to improve equality of opportunity the Council will target a specific training scheme on “women in management”. This will seek to change the gender profile of the Head of Service level of the Council which does not currently reflect the gender composition of the whole Council (excluding schools).
- 5.3.11. The Council’s approach to skills development will be tested by seeking re-accreditation for the national Investors in People (IiP) standard in March 2010. If successful the accreditation will last until 2013.

5.4. Recruitment and Retention

With partners, taking action to address key future occupational skill shortages; promote jobs and careers; identify, develop and motivate talent and address diversity issues.

- 5.4.1. The economic downturn has had an impact on recruitment. There are now ample applications for posts which recently attracted none or very few, especially in all occupations connected to the construction industry.

- 5.4.2. Adherence to equal opportunities in recruitment will be monitored, using the management information system Resourcelink.
- 5.4.3. HR will focus on achieving reductions in advertising expenditure across the Council in response to the downturn.
- 5.4.4. Individual services will receive bespoke help from HR where shortages continue to exist. It is still proving difficult to attract enough applicants for head teacher positions, especially at primary level. The main support for school governing bodies on this issue is provided by colleagues in Education with additional support from HR as required.
- 5.4.5. The HR service works with local employers in the district by holding an annual Recruitment and Skills Fair at the Corn Exchange in Newbury. This is one example of how jobs in WBC are being made available to a diverse potential workforce.
- 5.4.6. Retention of staff is likely to be less of an issue as the recession continues. However as the country comes out of recession our commitment to support diversity and good people management practice and policies will help WBC retain its staff. The Council's commitment to staff well-being will also help with retention. One example of this is the commitment to run at least three in-house smoking cessation schemes in 2009/10.

5.5. Pay and Rewards

Modernising pay systems to reflect new structures, new priorities and new ways of working and to reinforce high performance, including encouraging a total rewards approach

- 5.5.1. In the SE Region 34 (46%) of councils have left the national pay bargaining structure (known as the "Green Book") and operate local pay arrangements. West Berkshire Council operates a version of local pay that always shadows the national pay award, but allows for flexibility on other terms and conditions of employment.
- 5.5.2. Reward systems like overtime and honoraria payments are being monitored to ensure effectiveness and fairness.
- 5.5.3. The use of generic "job families" is being phased out to protect the Council from equal pay challenges and to provide a career structure for administrative employees.
- 5.5.4. The national exhortations to introduce performance related pay (PRP), which have been ignored by most local authorities, are likely to subside in light of the adverse effect of PRP ("the bonus culture") on the banking sector.

6. Actions

- 6.1. An action plan to support the Workforce Strategy is attached at Appendix A.

7. Longer term workforce planning

- 7.1. This section of the Workforce Strategy considers possible issues for longer term workforce planning. The following paragraphs set out some of the issues which may be included in future versions of the Workforce Strategy.
- 7.2. The need for the Council to listen to its citizens and work with its partners will call for an increasing number of staff to be out of the office meeting people and using technology on the move. The concept of “leading beyond authority” which is a core principle of the Common Purpose organisation will become increasingly important. The challenges for local areas increasingly involve partners sharing ideas and expertise to achieve positive outcomes for local people. The recession is a good example of an issue that needs partnership working to secure the knowledge and skills needed to “weather the storm”. For example the themes in *A Breath of Fresh Air* of providing support on skills for the rural communities in West Berkshire can be informed by the Council’s experience of mobile and flexible working through the Timelord Programme. For example small businesses could be started in the rural community using modern technology to work from home. Partnership working will become more “distributed” through the Council rather than resting solely with the LSP.
- 7.3. The workforce of the future will need to be creative and innovative to seek and secure opportunities to be more efficient. However this will be tempered with a need to avoid becoming so risk averse that new ideas are always stillborn. The vilification of public servants in the media when things go wrong will increase the tendency for employees to always cover their backs and avoid risk. However the increased use of partnership working will help to introduce new ideas into the Council, as has happened as a result of the successful work with Vodafone on the Timelord Programme.
- 7.4. The workforce of the future will be highly skilled and highly educated. The concept of leadership is likely to change and become more distributed throughout the organisation as multi disciplinary projects become more common. Employees will exercise leadership outside the traditional hierarchies to get things done in partnership with other organisations in the public, private and voluntary sector.
- 7.5. The role of elected members may change as the Government seek to revitalise interest in local democracy and push choice down to a local level. This may produce difficult ethical issues which cannot be covered by “standing orders” and we may see the emergence of an ethics committee (such as is seen in the NHS) to advise on thorny issues.
- 7.6. The non statutory parts of local government may be passed to the private or third sector to increase choice. At the same time a final push to separate schools from local authority influence may be made by central government. This would reduce the size of the local government workforce.
- 7.7. The trend for larger local government entities which has witnessed nine new unitary authorities being born on 1 April 2009 will continue, as will the call for more shared services and joint working. This will be resisted by some who see this trend as weakening local democratic accountability. However it is possible that the workforce of the future may be employed across boundaries with other local authorities or other partner organisations. This will require additional people

management skills to keep such workers engaged and productive. The national trend is to encourage local authorities to positively examine whether sharing services can produce cashable savings and this pressure is likely to increase.

7.8. The challenges to society from a disenfranchised minority of the population who have never worked may lead to calls for local government to find work for those on the margins of society. This would build on the work of the LSP which is already looking to partner organisations to provide work experience and apprenticeships for the young unemployed.

8. Implementation

8.1. The Workforce Strategy will be delivered through the HR Service Plan and work programme for 2009/10 and 2010/11. There will be contributions from Heads of Service as recorded in their service plans.

8.2. Progress against SMART targets will be monitored through the appraisal process for the Head of HR.

8.3. In addition, progress will be monitored by the Effective People Group

8.4. The results of the Employee Attitude Survey in 2009 and the Investors in People assessment in 2010 will provide important feedback on progress against the Workforce Strategy 2009-2011.

8.5. The Timelord programme will be evaluated using the Council's Project Performance Management framework.

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change?	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
1. Mobile and Flexible Working					
Increase the level of mobile and flexible working (numbers of employees working flexibly).	Timelord Programme; changes to buildings, technology and employee working styles	Timelord Programme Board and Timelord Programme Co-ordinator	Commitment from elected members, trade unions and senior managers	Phase 2 will be completed By December 2009 Subject to Executive decision Phase 3 will be completed by March 2011	Potential staff work patterns; costs of technology and accommodation – to be gathered as part of programme workshops etc.
2. More efficient use of staff resources					
Move from asking for more staffing resources to finding ways to achieve more with existing levels of staffing and	Service plans to address this issue (as Heads of Service identified it as important), with help from HR Contacts.	Heads of Service	HR to increase expertise in organisational	Senior management review summer	Elected members and senior managers need information from

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
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technology.	Business process re-engineering may be appropriate in some areas Staff suggestions The Systems Transformation Programme on Community Services.	Heads of Service HR Head of System Transformation	design to advise HoS on restructures.	2009. Further structural changes may be needed in 2010 and 2011.	HR on how money is spent on staffing (overtime, agency etc) and analysis of management structures to get best use of resources.
Reduce staff absence levels	Targets for directorates HR advice and support to managers on actions to reduce staff absence, including application of existing procedures	Heads of Service and Corporate Directors. HR	Elected Member Task Group	March 2010	Accurate and targeted management information for managers on staff absence
3. Skills Development					
Improve access to the corporate training programme for all employees	Expand provisions of on-line learning through West Berkshire Council's link with "Learning Pool". Monitor training take up against age, race, disability, part time hours, and sex	HR	Funding for Learning Pool contract	Formal launch of on-line training September 2010	Accurate employee information on Resourcelink

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change?	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
3. Leadership skills					
Improve the leadership skills of senior managers.	Organise a “Learning about Leadership” day for all Heads of Service.	HR	External facilitator on the day Costs to be funded from Corporate Training Budget	July 2009 And annual event thereafter	Input on content and design of event from CMT volunteers
Improve people management skills for all managers	Expand range of HR procedures workshops available to managers	HR		Ongoing	Feedback from managers on effectiveness
	Improve the Workforce Planning Toolkit for use in the 2010 service planning process	HR	Support from Heads of Service	Jan 2010	
Promote opportunities for women to aspire to senior management positions	Identify a group of aspiring female managers and develop a programme to support them achieving their goals	HR	Commitment from Heads of Service	March 2010	Information on career aspirations arising from annual appraisals
4. Public Sector Skills Challenge					

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change?	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
Improve the skill levels of employees who are not at “Level Two”.	Offer training and support for all staff not already at Level 2 (five good GCSEs or equivalent) to achieve qualification	HR	LSC grant to be spent on consultancy from external training providers	Survey complete by autumn 2009, training on-going.	Information from staff on current skill levels.
5. Effective recruitment					
Reduce the amount spent on recruitment advertising	Provide management information to persuade service managers not to waste money on ineffective advertising	HR	Commitment from Corporate Directors to support this work as over half the spend is from service budgets	Monitor quarterly and report at end of quarter 4 (March 2010)	Information on spend outside HR budget provided by advertising agency
Raise our profile as an employer of choice and ensure that we appeal to a diverse range of potential employees	Run an annual Recruitment and Skills Fair Improve web recruitment	HR HR	Income to be raised from selling stands to local employers	Annual Event April 2010	Evaluation from first Recruitment and Skills Fair in April 2009.

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change?	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
Introduce “safer recruitment” practices that meet new government demands.	Implement the demands of the statutory Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)	HR		Jan 2010	
6. ‘Support staff’					
Integrate traditional administrative roles into service structures to provide clear career structures and improve recruitment	Removal of ‘job families’ project	HR	Commitment from Heads of Service	All services engaged in project by December 2009	Need information on case law affecting job families to judge urgency of project



“BUILDING CAPACITY”

Workforce Strategy 2009-11

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DRAFT

1. Foreword

- 1.1. “Building Capacity” (the name for the Workforce Strategy previously known as the “People Strategy”) is designed to assist the staff at West Berkshire Council (WBC) to deliver the objectives in the Sustainable Community Strategy (themes: Prosperous, Stronger, Greener, Safer, Healthy) and the [Council Plan](#), with its sixteen outcomes, by building the capacity of the Council to deliver a more efficient and effective service to customers and clients. The term “building capacity” does not imply an intention to increase the size of the workforce; but rather to increase the productive output of the workforce through improvements in leadership and management, employee engagement, employee motivation, and employee skill levels.
- 1.2. The Workforce Strategy sits alongside the [Children’s Workforce Strategy](#) which addresses issues in schools and organisations working with children. The emerging Adult Workforce Strategy will also sit alongside this document. The need for a separate workforce strategy for the Children’s and Adult’s workforce is driven by national government policy.
- 1.3. In West Berkshire Council an exercise was undertaken by all Heads of Service in November 2008 to explore strategic workforce planning issues from the “bottom up”. Using a toolkit developed by HR, Heads of Service were asked to consider eleven workforce planning issues and indicate which needed to be addressed now (or in the next few years) to avoid potential problems with service delivery. (This toolkit can be downloaded from the [Managing People](#) intranet page)
- 1.4. This exercise identified three issues which were rated as the most important. Two of the issues can be described as “organisational development”, namely the increase in mobile and flexible working (M&FW) and the need to focus on increasing efficiency with regard to staffing costs. The third most urgent issue was “skills development”.

2. Introduction

2.1. Purpose

- 2.1.1. The aim of this Workforce Strategy is to describe how the Council will build capacity across the organisation and, working with partners, deliver the changes required to meet the expectations in the [Sustainable Community Strategy](#) and the [Council Plan](#).
- 2.1.2. The Workforce Strategy will help managers and employees to work at their best. This means removing obstacles to high performance and allowing best practice to thrive.

2.2. Vision

- 2.2.1. The Workforce Strategy is about delivering the Council’s objectives in a way which shows commitment to the Council’s values (Respect, Integrity and Ambition). Respect underpins our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in the workplace. Integrity underpins our commitment to open and transparent governance arrangements internally and with our

partners. Ambition underpins our commitment to high quality, value for money services for our citizens.

2.2.2. The vision is to build capacity to deliver a value for money service in way which is aligned to the Council's values.

2.3. Partnership

2.3.1. There may be opportunities to work with the Local Strategic Partnership or neighbouring authorities to explore shared workforce challenges (e.g. the development of shared services).

2.3.2. The Workforce Strategy will be used as an agenda with which to engage with partner organisations to draw upon the range of skills and expertise available.

3. Drivers for the Workforce Strategy

Background

- 3.1. West Berkshire Council is a medium sized unitary authority created in 1998 which has continued to improve and achieve successful outcomes for its citizens over the past eleven years, finishing the last Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating as a three star authority, improving strongly. The most recent Management Letter from the Audit Commission commended its strong leadership and management, and its clear vision which is shared with staff, citizens and partners. The Council has forged good relationships with parish councils across the district.
- 3.2. West Berkshire is a prosperous, largely rural authority. Until the recent recession its main challenges were coping with the fruits of economic success: the pressure for more housing; better transport; high house prices; inward economic migration; and staff shortages in some key skill areas. Some of these challenges will change as the Council tackles the effects of the recession which started in the autumn of 2008.
- 3.3. The [Council Plan](#) has sixteen outcomes and four themes: Economic well being; Environmental well being; Social well being and Organisational effectiveness. The Workforce Strategy by "Building Capacity" will help to achieve progress across all four themes. However its primary focus will be on Organisational effectiveness where the Council plan outcomes are "Putting Customers First"; "Effective People"; Value for Money" and "Including Everyone".

National issues facing local government

- 3.4. Local government is facing many challenges which include:
- The need to personalise services and provide more choice to service users;
 - The need to reinvigorate local democracy;
 - The need to tackle climate change;
 - A growing elderly population;
 - Greater diversity and the need to promote social cohesion;

- The need to overcome barriers which exclude some people from access to services;
- A new threat of poverty from growing unemployment;
- Growing disparity between socio-economic groups in society;
- Migration;
- Social inclusion;
- Health issues (obesity, drugs, alcohol, tobacco);
- Crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Poor basic skills for a proportion of adults;
- The need to improve school performance;
- The need to promote entrepreneurship;
- The need to be ready to tackle emergencies including a terrorist threat; and
- The need to protect the environment.

- 3.5. There is a need to make local government an attractive place to work which is met more by flexible terms and conditions than high salaries compared to the private sector.
- 3.6. The Council's workforce is 40% part time and 75% female which reflects the more flexible terms and conditions in local government which are more "family friendly" than the private sector. Turnover has decreased from 12.04% in 07/08 to 10.41% in 08/09.

National assessment framework

- 3.7. Local government has to meet the challenges above in a new context as a result of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) regulatory framework from 1st April 2009. The CAA recognises that resources in local government are limited and the Council Tax payer must be protected (in West Berkshire nearly 70% of the non-schools budget comes from Council Tax payers). The CAA also recognises that the needs of local citizens must be heard and that the response may come from a number of public sector partners working together.
- 3.8. It follows that the challenges cannot be met by spending more money or working in isolation. The two key drivers for the workforce strategies of all local authorities will be working in partnership and achieving high quality, value for money services. Value for money is a key theme for the Council and will be part of the CAA assessment.
- 3.9. The priorities set together with our partners are set out in the [West Berkshire Partnership Strategy \(A Breath of Fresh Air\)](#) which seeks to address national and local performance indicators through its sub-partnerships.

Local challenges and priorities

- 3.10. West Berkshire Council has local challenges which also drive the Workforce Strategy.
- 3.10.1. The last CPA inspection report commended good progress on diversity and equalities. This focus has been expanded in 2009 with the drafting of an "Including Everyone" strategy which sets the ambitious objective

of linking work on equalities and diversity with social inclusion and community cohesion.

3.10.2. WBC has set itself a goal of reducing its carbon footprint and leading the work needed on climate change in the district. The Council will reduce its own property footprint and reduce the need for staff to commute to the office by the widespread introduction of mobile and flexible working through the [‘Timelord’](#) programme.

3.10.3. WBC is facing up to challenge of a growing elderly population and the need for personalised services by transforming its service for older persons under the [‘Putting People First’](#) programme.

3.10.4. WBC has gained external funding for large capital projects and is rebuilding two secondary schools. There are a number of smaller capital projects funded by the Council which reflect the priorities of transport; schools; disabled people; crime; safety; activities for youth; and vibrant towns and villages.

3.10.5. The Council set itself a target of 8.9 days sickness absence in 08/09. This is benchmarked against a national average for all local authorities of 9.3 days. However the out-turn figures for 08/09 show that the average level of sickness in WBC (excluding schools) was 9.95 days for 08/09. Therefore the need to reduce the level of sickness absence at the Council is a further local challenge.

3.11. West Berkshire Council is part of a sub regional area which includes the county of Berkshire with its six unitary authorities. WBC is part of the newly formed Berkshire Economic Strategy Board which sees its context as “economy, environment and society” and its strategic objectives as: enterprise and skills; transport infrastructure; global competitiveness; and sustainable prosperity.

3.12. WBC falls under the GOSE (Government Office for the South East) and SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) areas and is influenced by their priorities which include a focus on essential skills and community cohesion.

4. The five national themes for workforce strategy

4.1. The National Workforce Strategy for local government, and the South East Employers’ Workforce Strategy, both focus on the following five themes:

- **Organisational Development;**
- **Leadership and Management Development;**
- **Skills Development;**
- **Recruitment and Retention;**
- **Pay and Rewards.**

4.1.1. The five themes can be regarded as the “top down” priorities for a Workforce Strategy. The “top down” priorities may be augmented by elected members to reflect emerging local issues of importance.

4.1.2. The WBC Workforce Strategy takes the national themes and uses these to address issues that are relevant to the West Berkshire Council workforce.

5. **Priorities** (*extracts from the National Workforce Strategy in italics*)

5.1. **Organisational development**

Effectively building workforce support for new structures and new ways of working to deliver citizen-focused and efficient services, in partnership.

5.1.1. There are two strands to the organisational development theme in the Workforce Strategy; implementing the Timelord Programme and efficient use of staff resources.

Timelord Programme ([click here](#) for further information)

5.1.2. The first organisational development strand is implementing the Timelord programme to increase mobile and flexible working (M&FW) in the Council. The Timelord Programme will change organisational culture and practices. The programme will require excellent organisational development and change management skills to positively engage staff in M&FW and create new ways of working in teams.

5.1.3. The aims of the Timelord Programme are to increase the use of M&FW across the Council resulting in a "triple win" for the Council, its customers and its staff.

5.1.4. The Timelord programme will affect all Council staff (excluding schools). Phase One has applied to staff moving into the new office at Turnham's Green in March 2009. Phase Two, in autumn 2009, will apply to staff currently based in the Avonbank and Northcroft buildings.

5.1.5. The emphasis will be on creating high trust and high performing teams where output and outcomes are the focus of employee performance management. There will be a continuing need to engage and support staff in this major change programme. This will involve communication with staff and managers and training on how to make better use of technology and how to drive business process gains from the move to "smarter working".

5.1.6. There are a number of potential benefits of a successful move to greater M&FW. The Council will see reduced property costs and a reduced carbon footprint. The customers will see a more responsive and accessible workforce. The staff will appreciate an employer who trusts them and enables them to work flexibly. This will lead to greater "employee engagement" with a reduction in turnover, reduced absence and greater job satisfaction.

Efficient use of staffing resources

5.1.7. The second organisational development strand arising from the work undertaken by Heads of Service is about making the most of the staffing resources available. Wasteful processes need to be removed. Job roles may need to be redesigned. Technology must be used effectively. Existing

management structures may need to be challenged to achieve potential efficiency savings, which will include a review of the senior management tiers of the organisation. Spending on overtime, agency staff, casual staff and consultants needs to be justifiable. HR will provide expertise on organisational design principles; up to date management information; and commission training opportunities on making best use of technology and business processes where needed.

5.1.8. Heads of Service indicated that there was a mismatch between the staffing available and workload demands. The emphasis in the Workforce Strategy is on efficiency and effectiveness. The strategic work of the Transformation and Efficiency Board was already led to some decisions on achieving efficiency and disinvestments. The Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the need to make £9m in savings over the next four years.

5.1.9. The introduction of the Budget Monitoring Panel (which includes the Leader and Chief Executive) to scrutinise all new posts, and the expenditure on overtime and agency staff, is an example of how staffing costs have moved to the top of the organisational agenda. This will be a major area of work for HR over the next two years. HR has produced a new [Organisational Change Policy and Procedure](#) to deal with reductions in staffing levels.

5.1.10. Efficient use of staffing resources can be supported by reducing staff sickness absence. Heads of Service have been working towards achieving service level targets for sickness absence that will achieve the overall target for the Council of 8.9 days (compared to 9.3 days average for all local authorities). However the out-turn figure for 08/09 gave a Council actual sickness level of 9.95 days. [The focus for 2009/10 is likely to be on directorate targets \(rather than service level targets\) to track a reversal in the trend on sickness absence. A Members' Task Group has been examining the figures for sickness absence and will recommend that those services which are predicted to exceed their directorate target for sickness absence work with HR to ensure that the existing policy and procedure for managing sickness absence is being properly enforced by all managers.](#)

5.1.11. There is a range of HR tools available to managers to tackle sickness absence. These include a comprehensive Managing Sickness Absence [policy](#) and [procedure](#) on the HR intranet; an employee relations advice line for advice on ill health cases; [workshops for managers](#) on how to use the Managing Sickness procedure; quarterly information for all Heads of Service on progress against sickness targets; quarterly information for managers showing number and duration of sickness absence for each employee; access to a professional Occupational Health service for advice; counselling for employees suffering from stress and depression; and support from [HR Contacts](#).

5.1.12. The Workforce Strategy does not propose to extend the range of HR tools available as they cover all that is recommended in best practice guidance from the government. However HR will work with Heads of Service with high levels of comparative absence to ensure that an action plan for managing sickness absence is included in their workforce planning action plan. This may focus on long term or short term absence depending on the needs of the service.

5.2. Leadership development

Building visionary and ambitious leadership which makes the best use of both the political and managerial role, operating in a partnership context.

- 5.2.1. At national and regional level there is an expectation that local authority Workforce Strategies will address the need for visionary and ambitious political and managerial leaders. However this was not identified as a priority by Heads of Service in the “bottom up” strategic workforce planning exercise in November 2008. The Workforce Strategy therefore has a greater emphasis on management development rather than senior leadership development in 2009/10. [The emphasis on senior leadership will be reviewed as part of the next refresh of the Workforce Strategy.](#)
- 5.2.2. However, from 2010 onwards, the CAA framework will demand greater strategic skills from senior managers and elected members. To build capacity senior managers and elected members will need to know what partners are doing and could do, and to see and articulate how synergies can be identified to work together in an effective way. The Effective People Group (EPG) has identified the Common Purpose leadership programme as particularly relevant as it focuses on networking with partner organisations and achieving results for citizens beyond the formal authority structures in the public, private and voluntary sector. Four senior managers have attended the Common Purpose leadership programme which lasts for five months and involves visits to organisations across Berkshire to discuss how they can improve their services. One senior manager per year will attend the Common Purpose programme leading to a critical mass of senior leaders able to grasp the challenges of the partnership agenda in future years.
- 5.2.3. HR organised a one day “Learning about Leadership” course for all Heads of Service in July 2009 with an experienced external facilitator. As a result new terms of reference were agreed for the Corporate Management Team, including regular opportunities for learning. Some Heads of Service are receiving feedback on their performance through facilitated meetings with a selection of their staff, which will help to develop leadership skills, and this is set to expand in 2010/11. There may be more demand for external coaching support from some Heads of Service as a result of this feedback.
- 5.2.4. Funding for expert external consultancy for a programme to develop future political and managerial leaders, to include greater understanding of the issues surrounding succession planning, will be the subject of discussion and a possible budget build request for 2010/11 or 2011/12. This bid, if supported, would focus on working with the Leadership Centre of Local Government to support leadership development for members and senior officers to “create the future through building effective and efficient partnerships, improving the lives of local people” (quote from LGA).
- 5.2.5. Leadership and management development below Head of Service level is well established with the successful Institute of Leadership and Management [\(ILM\) training programme](#) for managers; and the new management induction programme introduced by HR. Managers will have an increasing obligation to help produce a skilled and productive workforce by embedding a learning culture and taking steps to encourage employee engagement. The 2009

Employee Attitude Survey ("[Have Your Say](#)") has provided valuable comparative information to allow managers to put in place action plans to make this happen.

5.2.6. HR continues to find ways to deepen the understanding of managers in using the National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership (West Berkshire Council's management competency framework). This will be assessed as part of the Investors in People re-accreditation process in March 2010.

5.2.7. The 2009 and 2011 biennial Employee Attitude Surveys (EAS) will provide a measure of leadership development. In the [Council Plan](#) there is a target of a 5% increase in the score for employee engagement (a composite measure taken from three questions: job satisfaction; proud of working for WBC; and would recommend WBC as a place to work). The EAS provides evidence to demonstrate the level of existing leadership skills across the Council.

5.2.8. HR Contacts will work with Heads of Service in services which have a higher than average turnover and seek ways to improve retention of staff so that the Council's overall turnover figure is at or below the average for all local authorities.

5.3. Skills development

With partners, developing employees' skills and knowledge, in an innovative, high performance, multi-agency context

5.3.1. The provision of training and development within West Berkshire Council is multi-layered and the details are included in the [Annual Employment Report](#) each year. West Berkshire Council has signed the Government's 'Skills Pledge' to support all staff in developing basic literacy and numeracy skills to achieve a "level two" qualification where appropriate. The Council has decided to support this government initiative because it recognises that a proportion of its own staff may have difficulties with literacy, numeracy and IT skills. One important way to build capacity is to increase the skills and productive capacity of our own workforce. A more skilled workforce will still require excellent leadership to help it to stay motivated and engaged whilst delivering high quality, value for money services.

5.3.2. HR is currently commissioning a survey of skill levels amongst the workforce (with the help of a government grant). This work will involve working with partner organisations. West Berkshire Council, by signing the Skills Pledge, can gain support in developing the skills of staff, as well as setting a positive example to other local employers. This is linked to the Local Strategic Partnership's action to develop the skills of the whole community. It also supports the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board priorities which note that "*the lack of skills (particularly the basic skills) is a major contributing factor to the cause of poverty and deprivation within local communities*" (BESB Strategy, December 2008).

5.3.3. The Council will respond to the Public Sector Skills Challenge and support the local community during the current economic recession by seeking to increase the number of apprentices employed by the Council. Young people

will have the opportunity to gain valuable vocational qualifications whilst learning on the job. Government funding is available for eligible employees and additional funds may be available for fixed term trainee salaries. [The Council will work with partner agencies \(for example, Newbury College and The West Berkshire Training Consortium\) to maximise these training opportunities.](#)

- 5.3.4. The [Timelord Programme](#) has an associated training programme which will increase the skill levels of all staff in the use of IT and telecommunications. The Timelord Programme will also address the people management issues of managing a “virtual” team through specially designed course run by an external trainer
- 5.3.5. In addition to essential skills development, Heads of Service have identified skills development as a critical success factor. HR will assist services to plan their learning and development with a new template for L&D plans and support from the HR Contacts.
- 5.3.6. The skills of managers in dealing with people management issues is being increased through the use of short [workshops](#) run by HR. These workshops cover subjects like discipline; grievance; capability; and sickness absence.
- 5.3.7. HR will seek more detailed information from services on their learning and development plans to map the investment in skill development across the Council and evaluate its effectiveness.
- 5.3.8. There are proposals to roll out of 360° feedback for managers across the Council (this currently only happens in social care areas). If this proposal is implemented it will highlight areas for skill development for managers (linked to the National Occupational Standards for Leadership and Management). This is regarded as a “high trust” HR initiative which is not suitable for mandatory implementation. [The success of the roll out will be reviewed by HR and a decision will be made on how to develop this proposal further.](#)
- 5.3.9. Skills development will be made more accessible through the expansion of “on-line” learning through the Council’s subscription to [“Learning Pool”](#) (a national organisation linked to the IDeA). The take up of all training will be monitored against a range of equalities criteria (age, race, disability, part time hours, and sex) to ensure equality of access and identify any barriers to accessibility.
- 5.3.10. The Council has its own [Project Management Methodology](#) (based on PRINCE2) which is supported by a dedicated training course. An increasing number of employees are now trained and this improves the Council’s management of major capital and other projects.
- 5.3.11. As part of its commitment to positive action to improve equality of opportunity the Council will target a specific training scheme on “women in management”. [This is an example of positive action which is permitted under the relevant legislation where the evidence shows a disproportionate number of posts are filled by one gender. In WBC the majority of staff are female but at Head of Service level the majority of staff are male. Appointments to Head of Service posts will always be on merit regardless of gender \(to do otherwise](#)

would be positive discrimination which is unlawful). However this training scheme will seek to balance the gender profile of the Head of Service level of the Council which does not currently reflect the gender composition of the whole Council (excluding schools).

- 5.3.12. The Council's approach to skills development will be tested by seeking re-accreditation for the national Investors in People (IiP) standard in March 2010. If successful the accreditation will last until 2013.

5.4. Recruitment and Retention

With partners, taking action to address key future occupational skill shortages; promote jobs and careers; identify, develop and motivate talent and address diversity issues.

- 5.4.1. The economic downturn has had an impact on recruitment. There are now ample applications for posts which recently attracted none or very few, especially in all occupations connected to the construction industry. HR will introduce a policy of asking some unsuccessful candidates for feedback on their "candidate experience" with the aim of improving the employer brand by ensuring that even unsuccessful candidates regard their interaction with the Council in a positive light.
- 5.4.2. Adherence to equal opportunities in recruitment will be monitored, using the management information system Resourcelink.
- 5.4.3. HR will focus on achieving reductions in advertising expenditure across the Council in response to the downturn.
- 5.4.4. Individual services will receive bespoke help from HR where shortages continue to exist. It is still proving difficult to attract enough applications for head teacher positions, especially at primary level. The main support for school governing bodies on this issue is provided by colleagues in Education with additional support from HR as required.
- 5.4.5. The HR service works with local employers in the district by holding an annual Recruitment and Skills Fair at the Corn Exchange in Newbury. This is one example of how jobs in WBC are being made available to a diverse potential workforce.
- 5.4.6. Retention of staff is likely to be less of an issue as the recession continues. However as the country comes out of recession our commitment to support diversity and good people management practice and policies will help WBC retain its staff. The Council's commitment to staff well-being will also help with retention. One example of this is the commitment to run at least three in-house smoking cessation schemes in 2009/10.

5.5. Pay and Rewards

Modernising pay systems to reflect new structures, new priorities and new ways of working and to reinforce high performance, including encouraging a total rewards approach

- 5.5.1. In the SE Region 34 (46%) of councils have left the national pay bargaining structure (known as the "Green Book") and operate local pay arrangements. West Berkshire Council operates a version of local pay that always shadows

the national pay award (subject to the Local Terms and Conditions from 1999), but allows for flexibility on other terms and conditions of employment.

- 5.5.2. Reward systems like overtime and honoraria payments are being monitored to ensure effectiveness and fairness.
- 5.5.3. The use of generic “job families” is being phased out to protect the Council from equal pay challenges and to provide a career structure for administrative employees.
- 5.5.4. The national exhortations to introduce performance related pay (PRP), which have been ignored by most local authorities, are likely to subside in light of the adverse effect of PRP (“the bonus culture”) on the banking sector.

6. Actions

- 6.1. An action plan (including measurable targets) to support the Workforce Strategy is attached at [Appendix A](#).

7. Longer term workforce planning

- 7.1. This section of the Workforce Strategy considers possible issues for longer term workforce planning. The following paragraphs set out some of the issues which may be included in future versions of the Workforce Strategy.
- 7.2. The need for the Council to listen to its citizens and work with its partners will call for an increasing number of staff to be out of the office meeting people and using technology on the move. The concept of “leading beyond authority” which is a core principle of the Common Purpose organisation will become increasingly important. The challenges for local areas increasingly involve partners sharing ideas and expertise to achieve positive outcomes for local people. The recession is a good example of an issue that needs partnership working to secure the knowledge and skills needed to “weather the storm”. For example the themes in [A Breath of Fresh Air](#) of providing support on skills for the rural communities in West Berkshire can be informed by the Council’s experience of mobile and flexible working through the [Timelord Programme](#). For example small businesses could be started in the rural community using modern technology to work from home. Partnership working will become more “distributed” through the Council rather than resting solely with the LSP.
- 7.3. The workforce of the future will need to be creative and innovative to seek and secure opportunities to be more efficient and increased use of partnership working will help to introduce new idea into the Council, as has happened as a result of the successful work with Vodafone on the Timelord Programme.
- 7.4. The workforce of the future will be highly skilled and highly educated. The concept of leadership is likely to change and become more distributed throughout the organisation as multi disciplinary projects become more common. Employees will exercise leadership outside the traditional hierarchies to get things done in partnership with other organisations in the public, private and voluntary sector.

- 7.5. The role of elected members may change as the Government seek to revitalise interest in local democracy and push choice down to a local level. This may produce difficult ethical issues which cannot be covered by “standing orders” and we may see the emergence of an ethics committee (such as is seen in the NHS) to advise on thorny issues.
- 7.6. The non statutory parts of local government may be passed to the private or third sector to increase choice. At the same time a final push to separate schools from local authority influence may be made by central government. This would reduce the size of the local government workforce.
- 7.7. The trend for larger local government entities which has witnessed nine new unitary authorities being born on 1 April 2009 will continue, as will the call for more shared services and joint working. This will be resisted by some who see this trend as weakening local democratic accountability. However it is possible that the workforce of the future may be employed across boundaries with other local authorities or other partner organisations. This will require additional people management skills to keep such workers engaged and productive. The national trend is to encourage local authorities to positively examine whether sharing services can produce cashable savings and this pressure is likely to increase.
- 7.8. The challenges to society from a disenfranchised minority of the population who have never worked may lead to calls for local government to find work for those on the margins of society. This would build on the work of the LSP which is already looking to partner organisations to provide work experience and apprenticeships for the young unemployed.

8. Implementation

- 8.1. The Workforce Strategy will be delivered through the [HR Service Plan](#) and work programme for 2009/10 and 2010/11. There will be contributions from Heads of Service as recorded in their service plans.
- 8.2. Progress against SMART targets will be monitored through the appraisal process for the Head of HR.
- 8.3. In addition, progress will be monitored by the Effective People Group
- 8.4. The results of the Employee Attitude Survey in 2009 and the Investors in People assessment in 2010 will provide important feedback on progress against the Workforce Strategy 2009-2011.
- 8.5. The [Timelord programme](#) will be evaluated using the Council's Project Performance Management framework.

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change? <u>Success criteria</u>	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
1. Mobile and Flexible Working					
<p>Increase the level of mobile and flexible working (numbers of employees working flexibly).</p> <p><u>Target: 25% of the non schools workforce to be working flexibly by January 2009.</u></p>	<p>Timelord Programme; changes to buildings, technology and employee working styles</p>	<p>Timelord Programme Board and Timelord Programme Co-ordinator</p>	<p>Commitment from elected members, trade unions and senior managers</p>	<p>Phase 2 will be completed By December 2009</p> <p>Subject to Executive decision Phase 3 will be completed by March 2011</p>	<p>Potential staff work patterns; costs of technology and accommodation – to be gathered as part of programme workshops etc.</p>
2. More efficient use of staff resources					
<p>Move from asking for more staffing resources to finding ways to achieve more with</p>	<p>Service plans to address this issue (as Heads of Service identified it as important), with</p>	<p>Heads of Service</p>	<p>HR to increase expertise in</p>	<p>Senior management review</p>	<p>Elected members and senior managers need</p>

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change? <u>Success criteria</u>	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
existing levels of staffing and technology. <u>Target: 25% of non schools workforce to be trained on use of technology to support flexible working by January 2010.</u> <u>Target: 90 managers to be trained on managing in a Timelord environment by January 2010.</u>	help from HR Contacts. Business process re-engineering may be appropriate in some areas Staff suggestions The Systems Transformation Programme on Community Services.	Heads of Service HR Head of System Transformation	organisational design to advise HoS on restructures.	summer 2009. Further structural changes may be needed in 2010 and 2011.	information from HR on how money is spent on staffing (overtime, agency etc) and analysis of management structures to get best use of resources.
Reduce staff absence levels. <u>Target: 8.9 days per employee for 2009/10.</u>	Targets for directorates HR advice and support to managers on actions to reduce staff absence, including application of existing procedures	Heads of Service and Corporate Directors. HR	Elected Member Task Group	March 2010	Accurate and targeted management information for managers on staff absence
3. Skills Development					
Improve access to the corporate training programme for all employees by completing an e-learning pilot. <u>Pilot complete by March 2010.</u>	Expand provisions of on-line learning through West Berkshire Council's link with "Learning Pool". Monitor training take up against age, race, disability, part time	HR	Funding for Learning Pool contract	Formal launch of on-line training September 2010	Accurate employee information on Resourcelink

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change? <u>Success criteria</u>	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
	hours, and sex				
3. Leadership skills					
Improve the leadership skills of senior managers. <u>Target: average score of 4 for the Learning about Leadership day (on scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is excellent and 1 is poor)</u>	Organise a “Learning about Leadership” day for all Heads of Service.	HR	External facilitator on the day Costs to be funded from Corporate Training Budget	July 2009 And annual event thereafter	Input on content and design of event from CMT volunteers
Improve people management skills for all managers <u>Target: all managers to attend on training event or HR workshop by March 2011</u> <u>Monitor take up of 360 degree feedback linked to appraisal.</u>	Expand range of HR procedures workshops available to managers Improve the Workforce Planning Toolkit for use in the 2010 service planning process. Seek feedback from managers attending the training course on this subject.	HR HR HR	Support from Heads of Service. Liaise with Social Care Training (SCT)	Ongoing Jan 2010 April 2010	Feedback from managers on effectiveness. List of attendees from SCT

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change? <u>Success criteria</u>	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
Promote opportunities for women to aspire to senior management positions. <i><u>Target: minimum of five third tier female managers to attend meeting to scope training needs.</u></i>	Identify a group of aspiring female managers and develop a programme to support them achieving their goals	HR	Commitment from Heads of Service	March 2010	Information on career aspirations arising from annual appraisals
4. Public Sector Skills Challenge					
Improve the skill levels of employees who are not at “Level Two”. <i><u>Target: all employees identified as below “Level Two” to receive targeted support and encouragement to engage in suitable training (for example at Newbury College).</u></i>	Offer training and support for all staff not already at Level 2 (five good GCSEs or equivalent) to achieve qualification	HR	LSC grant to be spent on consultancy from external training providers (normally Newbury College of WBTC)	Survey complete by autumn 2009, training on-going.	Information from staff on current skill levels.
Increase the number of Apprentices in the Council <i><u>Target: Policy in place to consider every vacancy for suitability for a trainee</u></i>	Seek approval for a policy approach to apprentices. Work with WBTC to bid for funding for fixed term apprenticeship costs (subject to BuMP approval)	HR	Future Jobs Fund money <i>Advice and support from WBTC and Newbury</i>	Policy in place by December 2009	Approval from CB/MB/BuMP

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change? <u>Success criteria</u>	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
			College		
5. Effective recruitment					
Reduce the amount spent on recruitment advertising. <u>Target: 90% of advertisements have 150 words or fewer (annual)</u> <u>Target: Average spend on advertising is £900 per advert or less (annual)</u>	Provide management information to inform service managers how to obtain value for maony from effective advertising.	HR	Commitment from Corporate Directors to support this work as over half the spend is from service budgets	Monitor quarterly and report at end of quarter 4 (March 2010)	Information on spend outside HR budget provided by advertising agency
Raise our profile as an employer of choice and ensure that we appeal to a diverse range of potential employees <u>Target: Annual recruitment fair to attract minimum of 250 people</u> <u>Customer satisfaction with web-based recruitment to reach 90% by March 2010</u> <u>Seek feedback from some</u>	Run an annual Recruitment and Skills Fair Improve web recruitment Design a system for seeking and	HR HR HR	Income to be raised from selling stands to local employers.	Annual Event April 2010 January	Evaluation from first Recruitment and Skills Fair in April 2009

Appendix A – Workforce Strategy Action Plan 2009-11					
What do we need to change? <u>Success criteria</u>	How will we achieve the change?	Who will lead	What support do we need?	Time-scale	What information do we need?
<i>unsuccessful candidates on their "candidate experience to improve our employer brand.</i>	analysing feedback from unsuccessful candidates.			2010	
<i>Promote careers at WBC to local A level students</i>	Contact Careers Teachers at schools with sixth form colleges and offer to speak to students.	HR	Support from Education colleagues	March 2010	
Introduce "safer recruitment" practices that meet new government demands. <i>Target: All legislative deadlines achieved</i>	Implement the demands of the statutory Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)	HR		Jan 2010	
6. 'Support staff'					
Integrate traditional administrative roles into service structures to provide clear career structures and improve recruitment <i>Target: All SSA job roles to be integrated into service teams and SSA job title to be removed by March 2010</i>	Removal of 'job families' project	HR	Commitment from Heads of Service	All services engaged in project by December 2009	Need information on case law affecting job families to judge urgency of project

Individual Executive Member Decision

Title of Report:	Health and Safety Strategy 2009-10
Report to be considered by:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date on which Decision is to be taken:	10 th December 2009
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1919

Purpose of Report: To outline a Strategy to support the Health and Safety of the Council's staff and customers.

Recommended Action: Approve the strategy.

Reason for decision to be taken: To provide a Health and Safety Strategy for the Council.

Statutory:
Other:

Non-Statutory:

Other options considered: none

Key background documentation: none

Portfolio Member Details	
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Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Ian Priestley
Job Title:	Assurance Manager
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Implications

Policy:	This Strategy sets out the Council's approach to managing Health and Safety issues across the Council
Financial:	none
Personnel:	none
Legal/Procurement:	none
Environmental:	none
Partnering:	none
Property:	none
Risk Management:	This strategy is aimed at mitigating risk to the Health and Safety of staff and customers.
Community Safety:	none
Equalities:	An EIA has been completed – minor changes have been made to the Strategy as a result.

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council:	Councillor Graham Jones – no comments received
Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:	Councillor Brian Bedwell – no comments received
Select Committee Chairman:	
Ward Members:	
Opposition Spokesperson:	Councillor Jeff Brooks – no comments received

Local Stakeholders:

Officers Consulted:

Trade Union:

NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.

Is this item subject to call-in.	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:</p> <p>The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Item is Urgent Key Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p>		

Supporting Information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Health and Safety Strategy is to set out how the Council will successfully manage the risks to the Health and Safety of its staff and customers. The Strategy sets out key H&S priorities for the Council for the coming year and outlines the work that will need to be carried out achieve those priorities, by the Council as a whole and specifically by the H&S Team.
- 1.2 The Strategy is designed to support the Council's H&S Policy, copy attached at **Appendix A**, and ensure that the Council complies with Health and Safety Executive's guidance "HSG 65 - Successful H&S Management" and hence complies with all H&S related legislation.
- 1.3 The Strategy includes the service that the H&S Team provides to the Council's schools. The Council retains ultimate responsibility for H&S issues in all schools apart from Foundation Schools where Governors have responsibility. Also the Council provides a traded H&S advice service to the majority of the Council's schools through Fair Funding.

2. Achievements in 2008-09

- 2.1 A draft strategy was produced for 2008-09 to provide direction to the work of the H&S team and to the Council in managing H&S. This highlighted the need to address a number of issues, and as a result the following changes and improvements were made.
- 2.2 The Webrisk incident reporting system was upgraded to allow automatic reporting of reportable incidents (RIDDOR) to the Health and Safety Executive. The system has also been update to allow reporting of bullying and racist incidents.
- 2.3 A Fire Compliance Audit process was introduced and a reporting protocol agreed. 11 compliance audits were carried out in 2008-09 and action plans implemented to remedy key issues.
- 2.4 Training for Responsible Persons was introduced. All Responsible Persons attended the course.
- 2.5 A programme of Fire Risk Assessments of all Council occupied properties was carried out and is now almost complete.
- 2.6 A similar programme of Water (Legionella) Risk Assessments was carried out.
- 2.7 A five year Fire Remedial Capital Works Programme was agreed and is being implemented. £650,000 has been budgeted for this work in 2009-10. £3m has been budgeted for the complete programme.

3. Priorities for 2009-10

- 3.1 The following sections outline the key priorities for ensuring improvements are made in H&S arrangements. These cover:

- (1) Governance arrangements – focus on developing the role of the Responsible Person
- (2) Management of Fire, Asbestos and Legionella - focus on the support arrangements for Responsible Persons and ongoing auditing
- (3) General Safety – focus on safety of staff and training
- (4) Contracted out services
- (5) Training

4. Improvements to the Governance arrangements for Health and Safety

- 4.1 The Council needs to improve the ownership of H&S by managers. The aim of this element of the strategy is to ensure that responsibility for H&S issues sits where it can best be managed, with the most senior officer for each site. The strategy supports using the concept of the Responsible Person to manage all aspects of Health and Safety. This strategy also aims to ensure that Responsible Persons are supported and performance managed in this role by their line managers and Heads of Service.
- 4.2 Heads of Service are responsible for oversight of the officers in their service who act as Responsible Persons. They must ensure that Responsible Persons have the appropriate support and supervision to enable them to meet the requirements of the Responsible Person role. In many cases Responsible Persons are relatively Junior Managers. In such cases Senior Managers have a key role to play in supporting and performance managing them in their Responsible Person role. Heads of Service should identify such Senior Managers and ensure they also attend Responsible Person training so that they are able to fulfil this role.
- 4.3 The role of the Responsible Person will be developed. The Responsible Person is usually the most senior officer at each site. They are responsible for the health and safety of staff and visitors to their site. In particular they are responsible for managing Fire, Legionella, Asbestos and general safety matters.
- 4.4 The H&S Team have designed a Toolkit for Responsible Persons. The aim of this toolkit is to provide a simple checklist to monitor compliance, supported by a guide to the checklist. In addition to monitoring compliance on site, a quarterly return will be required from each Responsible Person through their line manager and Head of Service in to the H&S team. This will allow central monitoring of compliance and enable support to be targeted where it is most needed. This reporting process will be rolled out across the Council during the year. Results of the quarterly monitoring will be included in the H&S Quarterly Report to Corporate Board.
- 4.5 To help them carry out this role Responsible Persons must appoint Competent Persons who can support them. The Competent Persons will be responsible for carrying out the checks required by the toolkit on site, and reporting back to the Responsible Person. They will also need to attend Responsible Person training.
- 4.6 Property Services are maintaining a list of Responsible Persons so that support and training can be provided more effectively. This list will be sent to Heads of Service on a quarterly basis so that they can ensure that the list is up to date. Heads of Service must check this list and report any changes to Property Services. A copy of

the list will be included in the H&S Quarterly Report to Corporate Board. In addition the H&S team will update the list with details of training undertaken by Responsible Persons, to ensure that all Responsible Persons are properly trained. To support this, refresher training will be made available for Responsible Persons and will be scheduled regularly during 2009-10.

4.7 The following recommendations are proposed:

1	<i>Annual refresher training, led by the Chief Executive and supported by Property Services and the H&S Team be maintained for Responsible Persons, line managers of Responsible Persons and their Heads of Service.</i>	<i>H&S Team / Property Services</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
2	<i>Responsible Persons be required to report quarterly to their Heads of Service on their monitoring of Fire Asbestos, Legionella and general Safety. A summary of the results of this monitoring will be included in the H&S Quarterly Report to Corporate Board</i>	<i>RPs & Heads of Service</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
3	<i>Responsible Persons be reminded to review the work / support of Competent Persons to ensure they have appropriate training and are effective.</i>	<i>Heads of Service</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
4	<i>Property Services issue the list of Responsible Persons to Heads of Service on a quarterly basis and require a sign off from Heads of Service to ensure the list is accurate.</i>	<i>Heads of Service</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
5	<i>H&S Team to ensure that training records for RP's are maintained accurately on the RP list.</i>	<i>H&S Team</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>

5. Fire Safety

- 5.1 The change in legislation relating to fire safety was introduced with the 2005 Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.
- 5.2 Fire risk assessments (FRAs) have been carried out at all Council properties, including schools, by consultants commissioned by Property Services. The FRAs are agreed with the responsible person and are signed off by them. Property Services are maintaining a record of sign off.
- 5.3 The FRAs identify remedial building works and also management actions that are required on each site. The Responsible Person is responsible for ensuring that the management actions are implemented. The delivery of the building works is being managed by Property Services through the Council's Capital Programme.
- 5.4 The Council's Capital Programme contains a programme of Fire Remedial Works covering the next five years. The programme is prioritised on the level of risk

identified from the Fire Risk Assessments and the observations of Property Services and the Compliance Officer.

- 5.5 The H&S Team are carrying out a programme of visits of all Council properties. A copy of the programme for 2009-10 and the reporting protocol is attached at **Appendix B**. An agreed action plan is produced for each audit and the Responsible Person is then required to submit a quarterly update on progress with implementing the action plan. The updated action plans are included in the H&S Quarterly Report to Corporate Board.
- 5.6 The progress with signing off the FRAs, the Capital Works programme and the results of the Compliance Audits will all be included in the Quarterly H&S Report to Corporate Board.
- 5.7 The following recommendations are proposed:

6	<i>The H&S Team carry out a programme of compliance audits that will cover the work of the Responsible Persons.</i>	<i>H&S Team</i>	<i>Ongoing as set out in the programme of audits</i>
7	<i>Corporate Board will monitor progress of the Fire Remedial Works Programme</i>	<i>Property Services</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
8	<i>Heads of Service will provide an updated action plan each quarter in response to compliance audits</i>	<i>Heads of Service</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>

6. Asbestos

- 6.1 The Council has asbestos in many of its buildings including schools. Effective management of asbestos is essential to protect the health of staff and clients using these buildings.
- 6.2 Although there are registers of asbestos for each Council property there is a possibility that they may not be referred to by either Responsible Persons or contractors when works are carried out. This may lead to the disturbance of asbestos and unprotected exposure.
- 6.3 The Council does not have a Permit to Work scheme in place. A permit to work scheme is a fundamental requirement of safe working. It will allow the Responsible Persons to have oversight of any works being carried out on site. This will be introduced for all Council properties by Property Services. This will help ensure that reference is made to asbestos registers before work commences.
- 6.4 The Council needs to put in place checks to ensure that these issues are being managed.
- 6.5 The following recommendations are proposed:

9	<i>A permit to work scheme will be introduced for all Council properties by Property Services. This will ensure effective control of works and reference to asbestos registers.</i>	<i>Property Services</i>	<i>October 2009</i>
10	<i>The H&S Team will carry out compliance audits of the registers and permit to work scheme to ensure that Responsible Persons are managing this issue.</i>	<i>H&S Team</i>	<i>December 2009</i>

7. Legionella

- 7.1 The Council has a number of buildings, including schools with cooling systems and showers, where there is a risk of Legionella being present.
- 7.2 Failure to manage water systems may lead to exposure to Legionella. Responsible Persons need to ensure that the results of the Legionella surveys commissioned by Property Services are followed up and adequate maintenance and testing is carried out.
- 7.3 The Council needs to put in place checks to ensure that these issues are being managed.
- 7.4 The following recommendation is proposed:

11	<i>The H&S Team will carry out compliance audits of the water testing scheme to ensure that Responsible Persons are managing this issue.</i>	<i>H&S Team</i>	<i>ongoing</i>
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8. Staff safety

- 8.1 A number of services have procedures in place to protect staff, but these are not all effective or up to date. In addition the Council does not have an overarching Policy on the protection of staff. The H&S Manager will produce a Policy for the Council and review and make recommendations on any changes required to Service procedures.
- 8.2 A key area of risk for the Council relates to lone working and working with difficult clients / clients of concern. The Council has an agreed policy for sharing information relating to clients of concern and this policy is now being implemented with services beginning to use the Clients of Concern database. Over the coming year all services who deal with clients of concern will be expected to start using this database.
- 8.3 The following recommendations are made:

12	<i>The H&S Team will produce a Council Policy for the protection of staff and will review service procedures.</i>	<i>H&S Team</i>	<i>31st October</i>
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13	<i>Heads of Service will implement use of the Council's Clients of Concern database to help manage the risk to staff</i>	<i>Heads of Service</i>	<i>31st March 2010</i>
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9. Contracted Services

- 9.1 The Council delivers a number of services to its customers by contracting with a number of external providers. Where this happens the Council needs to ensure that the arrangements within the contract provide for the management of H&S issues.
- 9.2 In addition the contract monitoring arrangements need to specify how the Council will monitor H&S compliance by the contractor.
- 9.3 All Heads of Service who manage such contracted services must ensure, over the coming year that the contract monitoring arrangements for H&S are secure.
- 9.4 The Council needs to put in place checks to ensure that these issues are being managed.
- 9.5 The following recommendations are made

14	<i>Where services are contracted out the Head of Service will review the arrangements for monitoring the H&S performance of the contractor</i>	<i>Heads of Service</i>	<i>31st March 2010</i>
15	<i>The H&S Team will carry out compliance audits of contracted services</i>	<i>H&S Team</i>	<i>ongoing</i>

10. H&S Training and guidance for staff

- 10.1 The Council has a range of H&S courses being run each year. It is timely, given the changes in legislation and in Council procedures, that the training is reviewed.
- 10.2 The H&S Manager will review all H&S Training and ensure that it is fit for purpose and identify training that can be optional and training that should be mandatory. In particular the Council needs to consider training for Heads of Service, and Senior Managers. They have a fundamental role in managing H&S and supporting Responsible Persons in their service.
- 10.3 All Service Management Team meetings must include H&S on the agenda as a matter of routine and link in with their Safety Committee representative, and consider any concerns raised by their staff. The same principle should apply to Directorate Management Team Meetings.
- 10.4 The Council has a Safety Management System in place which sets out guidance for staff and managers. This will be updated to include generic policies that are required to support the Responsible Persons, for example an Arson Policy.

10.5 The following recommendation is made:

16	<i>The H&S Manager review all H&S Training and ensure that it is fit for purpose and identify training that can be optional and training that should be mandatory. (information gained from training must be available in suitable formats)</i>	H&S Team	September 2009
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11. Health & Safety monitoring of service performance

11.1 The Council monitors H&S performance through quarterly reporting, by Heads of Service on a number of indicators. These indicators need to be amended to reflect the improvements made over recent years and the revised arrangements that are now being introduced. A copy of the revised template is at **appendix C**. This is designed to ensure focus on the key issues outlined in this strategy.

11.2 The Council needs to put in place checks to ensure that these issues are being managed.

11.3 The following recommendations are made:

17	<i>The revised performance indicators for Heads of Service be introduced</i>	Heads of Service	immediate
18	<i>The H&S Team carry out compliance audits of the performance indicators</i>	H&S Team	3rd quarter

12. Schools

12.1 The governance of H&S in schools is rather complicated. Governors of Foundation Schools, rather than the Council, retain liability for H&S. However, the Council retains ultimate liability for H&S for non Foundation Schools and these form a large majority of the WBC schools. Therefore this strategy needs to address schools H&S, whilst accepting that schools are effectively autonomous in terms of the daily management of H&S. The Headteacher will perform the role of the Responsible Person for each school, with Governors providing an oversight. All of the forgoing elements of the strategy will be applied to schools as appropriate.

12.2 As individual units the schools face all or most of the risks noted above, with the addition of the care of around 25,000 pupils. Set out in **Appendix D** is the proposed approach from the H&S team to minimising schools specific H&S risks and also take account of the way the schools purchase H&S advice from the Council through fair funding.

12.3 The schools H&S Team has recently been expanded to three. This is in response to the increased buy back from schools of the H&S Service.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 This H&S Strategy is designed to continue the considerable progress made in improving the Council's systems and procedures for managing the Health and Safety of its staff and customers.
- 13.2 It is the intention that this strategy will be revised on an annual basis to ensure that improvements continue to be made.
- 13.3 A number of recommendations have been put forward in this strategy and these are summarised at **Appendix E**.

Appendices

- Appendix A – WBC H&S Policy
 - Appendix B – Compliance protocol and Programme
 - Appendix C – PI's for H&S
 - Appendix D – Schools H&S service arrangements
 - Appendix E – Action Plan
-

Appendix A**Health, Safety and Welfare Policy for****West Berkshire Council****Statement of Intent**

West Berkshire Council recognises and accepts its responsibility to provide a safe and healthy place of work for all employees, and others affected by its activities.

Full compliance with legislation is the minimum standard to achieve. This ensures all who may be affected by the work of the Council, so far as is reasonably practicable, are not exposed to hazards or related risk.

The Authority shall also follow a safety management system that provides guidance and direction to work safely. The system provides detail behind local arrangements such as staff consultation and training, safe use of equipment and chemicals, and roles and responsibility, etc.

Underpinning the above, the Authority shall provide necessary training, instruction and resource to ensure a safe place of work. Through visible management action, appropriate conduct shall be second nature rather than imposed.

Health and safety is everyone's responsibility, but management shall also demonstrate a progressive improvement in injury and ill health prevention. The goal shall be prevention of accidents and causes of ill health at work.

Risk assessment is essential for a safe and healthy place of work. Measurable benefit is seen from this process, and it demonstrates the commitment to staff well-being and proper attention to health and safety. This approach shall continue, focusing on everyday good service management and provision.

Services shall adopt the attached Safety Policy statement, ensuring ownership and measured improvement in local operating methods.

The Chief Executive and Chief Officers of the Council give their full support to the above Statement of Intent, and the attached Health, Safety and Welfare Policy.

Signed:

Chief Executive

Leader of the Council

West Berkshire Council

Appendix A

Health, Safety and Welfare Policy

It is the express policy of West Berkshire Council to ensure that:

- The place of work shall be safe and without risk to health, with proper facilities and arrangements for welfare and first aid.
- Safe systems of work shall be employed to preserve the health and safety of employees and customers who may be affected by our activities, within the environments we have responsibility for.
- Appropriate planning, organising and reviewing of work activities shall be carried out, with hazards fully addressed through the risk assessment process.
- Health and safety performance shall be measured on a regular basis, to benchmark performance, to establish challenging targets, and to investigate and learn from all safety related incidents.
- Suitable and safe arrangements shall be in place for the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances, with suitable safety equipment and protective clothing made available.
- Appropriate information, advice, training and supervision shall be provided to ensure all persons under our control are fully aware of their responsibilities for all aspects of health and safety.
- Channels of communication shall be in place that encourage and permit employees, and their representatives as appropriate, to contribute in suggesting and implementing measures to protect the health and safety of everyone.
- Positive contributions to health and safety shall be recognised and rewarded, however, disciplinary procedures shall be applied where deliberate or flagrant breach of health and safety regulations, procedures or directions is evident.

Arrangements

Subsequent 'arrangements' are the means whereby West Berkshire Council formally accept and enact their responsibility.

The arrangements comprise policies, procedures and guidance compliant with nationally recognised standards, brought together within the 'Safety Management System'. Procedures covered include:

- Roles, Responsibility and Competency
- Risk Assessment and Hazard Control
- Accident prevention and reporting
- Contractor control
- Fire Prevention, Housekeeping and Safety Inspection, etc.

Content shall be reviewed annually, with re-issue determined by changes in Legislation or working practice.

Appendix A

Responsibilities

Responsibility for discharging health and safety duties rests with the Employer. As such, the ultimate responsibility for proper management and review of health and safety rests with the Chief Executive of West Berkshire Council. Specific responsibilities within West Berkshire Council include:

1. Chief Executive:

West Berkshire Council Chief Executive shall ensure that the Health and Safety Policy remains an effective working document. In particular, the Chief Executive is responsible to ensure that:

- The commitment to health and safety is translated into effective action
- The Safety Policy is periodically reviewed in the light of current conditions
- Adequate resources are provided to implement and maintain the effectiveness of the Councils Health and Safety Policy

2. Directors and Heads of Service:

All Directors and Heads of Service are responsible to the Chief Executive for the implementation of the Health and Safety Policy.

In particular, Heads of Service and other officers in a supervisory capacity are responsible for the health and safety of Employees within their jurisdiction.

To this end, they are required to ensure that:

- They are properly trained so that they understand Health and Safety and are able to ensure that their staff operate in a safe manner.
 - Responsible Persons are given the support and training they need to fulfil their roles.
 - Responsible Persons are supervised adequately to ensure they fulfil their roles.
 - Risk Assessments are undertaken for those activities under their control
 - Appropriate preventative and protective measures are implemented
 - A systematic approach to health and safety is adopted which identifies objectives and sets priorities
 - All reportable accidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses within their areas of responsibility are centrally reported using West Berkshire Council's electronic incident reporting system (Webrisk).
 - As an area of potentially high risk, Service area contracts are suitably managed and the health and safety issues are controlled (see relevant contractor control section of safety management system)
 - Health and safety performance is maintained and where possible improved
-

Appendix A

- Any decisions taken relating to health and safety are being implemented promptly
- Arrangements are regularly monitored and reviewed to achieve progressive improvements
- Appropriate health and safety instruction, information and supervision is provided
- Employees are trained in appropriate safe working methods
- Work activities are regularly monitored to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained
- Employees with designated health and safety roles are given appropriate time and resources to enact that role

3. Responsible Persons

The implementation of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in October 2006 introduced the role of Responsible Person. West Berkshire Council has identified, authorised and trained suitable employees within Council buildings to enact this role. To ensure consistent application across the Directorates, Corporate Board has agreed that this role should fall to the most senior West Berkshire Council employee on each site / premise.

In addition the Council has extended the role of the Responsible Person to include oversight of issues relating to:

- Fire
- Asbestos,
- Legionella and
- general Health and Safety for each site.

The Council is in the process of developing a “Responsible Person” toolkit to help the Responsible Persons carry out their role, and through a reporting arrangement allow the Council to monitor the work of the Responsible Persons.

4. Competent Persons / Safety Representatives

These share the common aim of ensuring a safe place of work. These persons are identified to help the Responsible Persons fulfil their roles and to:

- whom health and safety responsibilities are delegated, or
- whom volunteer for the benefit of their team/area

The role is vital to ensure two-way communication is maintained from the highest management level, to where risk itself is evident, (and back again).

As such, senior management with primary health and safety responsibilities shall allow such persons appropriate time, training and resource to enact the role.

Appendix A

5. Incident Control Officer and Fire Wardens

These are specific roles to enable the safe and prompt evacuation of West Berkshire Council controlled buildings and support the Responsible Person in discharging their legal duties.

Individuals must be suitably trained in the site / premise emergency evacuation procedures and are responsible for undertaking regular fire safety checks of the working environment.

More specific guidance on the roles can be found in the relevant Safety Management System guidance (Fire Management).

Training is available via the Social Care Training team.

6. First Aiders

West Berkshire Council shall ensure appropriate first aid cover for staff, at all sites, if they are injured or become ill at work. First Aiders provide key support to Responsible Persons.

First Aiders are responsible for attending relevant First Aid training to attain the relevant qualification, providing first aid commensurate with their training, and promoting their ability at work via Notice Boards and appropriate signage.

More specific guidance on the role can be found in the relevant Safety Management System guidance (First Aid Arrangements).

7. Employees:

All Employees have clear legal responsibilities that include:

- Taking reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what you do or do not do - there are no exceptions to this, every employee has this duty
- Working in a safe and proper manner at all times, in accordance with the health and safety training provided
- Co-operating and complying with management instructions regarding statutory health and safety duties
- Bringing defective equipment or dangerous situations immediately to the attention of Line Management
- Never intentionally or recklessly interfering with or misusing anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare
- Only undertaking tasks for which one is trained and competent to do, and observing all warning, restriction and emergency signs at all times

In addition,

- Reporting all accidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses to line management immediately so that they may be investigated as required to prevent reoccurrence
 - Remaining fully conversant with Fire and Emergency Evacuation Procedures at the workplace
-

Appendix A

- Always using any safety equipment provided, as trained, and in a responsible manner at all times.
- Use, maintain and correctly store any Personal Protective Equipment or clothing issued to you

8. Specific to Elected Members:

Elected Members, (as employers of Council staff), shall ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, a safe and healthy place of work.

They shall help support and implement the Safety Policy and strategy of the Council.

- Members shall also work within the framework of the Policy as it applies to all Employees.

9. Advice and support:

Whilst Directors, Heads of Service and Managers are responsible for health and safety within their Service, advice and support on health and safety matters is available from the WBC internal Safety Advisor Team. Key areas which the Safety Team focus include:

- Assist with development of corporate policies and procedures to promote effective health and safety compliance across the Council
- Provide support and advice to the Councils Risk Strategy Group (RSG)
- Co-ordinate and implement planned Health and Safety Audits to an agreed Schedule of Audits, and subject to other demands, undertaking unplanned Audits when complaints or events dictate
- Investigate work environment complaints, making recommendations to improve working conditions
- Investigate accidents and provide action and advice to prevent re-occurrence
- Undertaking a programme of Fire, Water and Asbestos compliance audits within the Council buildings portfolio, including schools.

Consultation with Employees

Means of consultation on health and safety matters shall be provided:

- For all Employees at work
 - Through a range of Safety meetings at local, Service or Directorate level, including local Link Groups, and Safety Committees, and management meetings
 - Through the Risk Strategy Group (the RSG)
 - Through the Joint Consultative Panel (the JCP)
 - By appointment and encouragement of Safety Representatives by recognised Trade Unions, providing them with sufficient facilities and training for the role
-

Appendix A

- By the appointment and provision as above of Representatives of Safety where no Union Safety Representatives are in place

Reporting arrangements

The Council has in place Safety Committees for each Directorate, and a Safety Committee for Schools. These report in to the Risk Strategy Group, which in turn reports to Corporate and Management Boards.

Sitting along side this process the Council has the Joint Consultative Panel which also considers H&S issues.

Monitoring arrangements are in place for Heads of Service to report on H&S performance, and Performance of Responsible Persons through the Health and Safety Quarterly report to Corporate and Management Boards

Communication of Policy

This policy shall be displayed at work locations as appropriate, being brought to the attention of employees at their initial induction, at any refresher safety training as appropriate, and upon revision of the Policy.

The underlying health and safety message shall be:

- A positive safety culture shall be encouraged within each Service, and senior management are required to enthusiastically support this
- Employees shall be actively involved in the decision-making process
- A safe working environment requires dedicated and sustained effort from all

The aim shall be for continuous improvement of health and safety at work.

Protocol for Compliance Auditing

Appendix B

1 Purpose and Scope

1.1 This document outlines the way the Health and Safety Team will initiate, and report on Compliance Audit work for the Council.

1.2 The scope of Compliance Auditing covers:

- Fire
- Asbestos
- Legionella and
- General Health and Safety

2 Initiating work

2.1 The following highlights the key stages for commencing Compliance Audits

2.2 The Health and Safety Strategy for the Council will include a plan of audit work for the coming year.

2.3 One month before each audit is due to take place the relevant Responsible Person and their Head of Service will be informed of the audit and the areas that the audit will cover.

2.4 In exceptional circumstances the Health and Safety Team reserve the right to carry out unannounced audits. These will usually be triggered by an incident or concerns raised. In these cases the Head of Service will be informed that the audit has been carried out immediately after the conclusion of the visit.

3 Reporting the results of Compliance Audit work

3.1 The reporting process planned work has two key stages:

- A Draft Report will be issued to the Responsible Person and the Head of Service. A copy will be sent to the Head of Property Services for information.
- The Final Report will be issued to the Responsible Person, Head of Service, Corporate Director, Portfolio Holder and copied to the Head of Property and the Portfolio Holder for Health and Safety.

3.2 We request comments/observations from all recipients, however, we treat the relevant Responsible Person as the main client, and as such we require the Responsible Person to agree to the details, and comment on the recommendations, of the report before it is finalised. The recommendations will be contained in an agreed Action Plan that the Responsible Person will be responsible for implementing

Protocol for Compliance Auditing**Appendix B**

3.3 Where, during an audit, a serious problem is discovered which requires immediate attention; it may be necessary to issue an interim report.

4 Monitoring of Audit Recommendations

4.1 A monitoring and follow up process is required in order to be able to give management/members assurance that the agreed action plans have been implemented. This will consist of two elements:

- The Responsible Person will be required to submit an updated Action Plan at each quarter end. IE 30th June, 30th September, 31st December, 31st March. The details from the updates will be included in the quarterly Health and Safety report for Corporate and Management Board.
- The Health and Safety Team will carry out a formal follow up audit, by revisiting site 6-9 months after the audit was finalised. A follow up report and updated action plane will be completed and agreed with the Responsible Person. The results of the follow up will be issued to the same people as the initial report.

4.2 A follow will normally be carried out for all audits where recommendations have been made. Details of the results of the follow up audits will be included in the Quarterly Health and Safety report for

5 Timeframes for issuing and responding to audit reports.

5.1 The initial draft audit will be issued to the Responsible Person two weeks after the audit.

5.2 We expect that the Responsible Person will respond to the draft audit report within two weeks.

5.3 The Final Audit and agreed action plan will be issued within two weeks of the response to the draft.

5.4 The same timeframes will be followed for follow up audits.

5.5 Where the audit identifies serious risks to life, a briefing note will be issued immediately to the Responsible Person, Head of Service, Director and Chief Executive.

6 Reporting to the Corporate Board and Management Board

6.1 The Health and Safety Manager will provide a quarterly Health and Safety Report. This will be considered by the Risk Strategy Group, Corporate Board and Management Board.

6.2 The Quarterly Report will provide summary details of:

- all audits carried out in the quarter.
-

Protocol for Compliance Auditing**Appendix B**

- All follow up audits carried out in the quarter
- Updates from the Responsible Person where there are outstanding recommendations.

6.3 The Audits will be rated as follows:

- Red (where issues identified may lead to enforcement action)
- Amber (where issues identified may lead to a deficiency notice)
- Green (where only minor issues are identified)

6.4 The follow up audits:

- Will re rate the status of the building, dependent on progress made in implementing the recommendations. (structural issues may well take 12 months or more to resolve)
 - Will rate the progress made with implementing the action plan – as satisfactory or unsatisfactory
-

Protocol for Compliance Auditing

Appendix B

Compliance Visits

2009 / 10

Quarter

1

April

May

John O Gaunt fire
Northcroft Leisure Centre
Fire

June

Willink Leisure Centre

Cotswold Leisure Centre
Hungerford Leisure Centre

Quarter

2

July

Trinity School
Bridgeway PRU, Thatcham
Asbestos management systems

August

Turnhams Green Offices
Building 616, Greenham
Hungerford Day Centre

September

The Oaks PRU
Upper Basildon Primary School
Hungerford Nursery

Quarter

3

October

Greenham House
Greenham Community Centre
Faraday Rd

November

Merchant House
Building 150, Greenham
Newbury Museum

December

Henwick Worthy Sports
Ground
Greenfield House
Badgers Hill PRU

Quarter

4

January

Kennet Leisure Centre

Hungerford Library
Whitelands Park

February

Little Heath School

March

Winchcombe School
Shaw - cum - Donnington
School

Appendix C

H&S Performance Indicator Targets

The following table looks at key health and safety issues, focusing available resource to ensure a safe and healthy workplace.

Process: Services complete quarterly to local evidence. Please submit to Safety Unit in time for Quarterly Safety Report to Corporate Board.

Service Unit:	Report by:	Date issued:
Sub Section (if appropriate):	Report period:	

1 Risk Assessment	2 Planned Inspections	3 Lone working /	4 Clients of Concern	5 Incident Reporting	6 RP Reporting	7 Training
'Risk Assessment' process is <u>mandatory</u> , and key to a safe and healthy workplace.	Safety inspections are proactive, allowing Service Heads to <u>lead by example</u> .	Staff likely to 'work alone' are identified, and their health and safety assured <u>at all times</u> .	The Council must ensure that staff are not exposed unnecessarily to "clients of Concern"	Every accident must be drawn to management attention and <u>investigated</u> accordingly	Heads of Service must ensure that their RP's are properly trained and supported in their roles and that they operate effectively	All staff need to be trained to understand the H&S system of the Council and appreciate the H&S risks
All Risk Assessments are to corporate standard, and all affected persons <i>understand</i> safety controls.	Service Head or rep' conducts any '1hr monthly inspection form'	List of 'lone workers' drawn up. Corporate guidance completed. Controls in place as required.	A list of "clients of concern" is maintained and shared via the Council's database. Staff are made aware of the list, and the details are kept up to date	Senior mg't' review (on a monthly basis), a Service wide 'incident summary report' from Webrisk. And ensure their Webrisk coordinators are trained	1. Heads of Service ensure RP's are correctly identified on the RP list held by Property 2. RP's provide a quarterly return to the Head of Service 3. RP's have identified competent persons to support them 4. RP's complete required checks each month	Staff Appraisals identify all H&S Training needs and the 1.2.1 process ensures that all training is undertaken
Green <input type="checkbox"/> = 3 points	Green <input type="checkbox"/> = 3 points	Green <input type="checkbox"/> = 3 points	Green <input type="checkbox"/> = 3 points	Green <input type="checkbox"/> = 3 points	<input type="checkbox"/> = 3 points	Green <input type="checkbox"/> = 3 points
Risk Assessments completed but no formal record of <i>understanding</i> of control measures by staff.	Any actions from '1hr safety inspections' remain outstanding for longer than 3 months.	List drawn up, guidance completed, but some work outstanding to fully control <i>all</i> associated risk.	A list of "clients of concern" is maintained and shared via the Council's database.	Incidents are reported but not in sufficient detail to allow management to identify corrective actions. Webrisk coordinators appointed but not trained	Three of the above	Staff Appraisals identify all H&S Training needs and some of these needs are met
Amber <input type="checkbox"/> = 2 points	Amber <input type="checkbox"/> = 2 points	Amber <input type="checkbox"/> = 2 points	Amber <input type="checkbox"/> = 2 points	Amber <input type="checkbox"/> = 2 points	Amber <input type="checkbox"/> = 2 points	Amber <input type="checkbox"/> = 2 points
Few if any RA's in place, or those that have been undertaken not being reviewed appropriately.	No monthly safety inspections completed during the Quarterly reporting period.	Documented review of 'lone working' not carried out across the Service.	A local list is kept which is not exchanged with the Council's cooperate list.	Any incident report to Webrisk is delayed by more than 14 days. No Webrisk coordinator	Two of the above	H&S Training needs are not formally identified
Red <input type="checkbox"/> = 1 point	Red <input type="checkbox"/> = 1 point	Red <input type="checkbox"/> = 1 point	Red <input type="checkbox"/> = 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> = 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> = 1 point	Red <input type="checkbox"/> = 1 point

Appendix D**Summary of the arrangements for the delivery of H&S advice to Schools****Non buy back schools**

- 1.1 Schools who do not buy back H&S advice, will be provided with the following services at the Council's expense:
- (1) Compliance visits covering Fire, Asbestos and Legionella
 - (2) H&S Audit / Needs Assessment to ensure the H&S risks are being managed. No support will be provided to implement any advice given or to respond to any external intervention eg from the Fire Authority or HSE.

Buy back schools

- 1.2 Schools who purchase through Fair Funding will be given the following services:
- (1) Compliance visits covering Fire, Asbestos and Legionella
 - (2) Annual visits, as a minimum with review of Needs Assessment and update of H&S Risk Registers
 - (3) Advice and support in dealing with any issues arising from the above.
 - (4) Advice and supporting maintaining H&S Policies and Guidance for Staff
 - (5) Bespoke Training for staff and governors
 - (6) Support with any external intervention eg from the Fire Authority or HSE.
-

Health and Safety Strategy 2009-10 – Draft Action Plan

Appendix E

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Deadline for delivery
1	Annual refresher training, led by the Chief Executive and supported by Property Services and the H&S Team be maintained for RP's, line managers of RP's and their Heads of Service.	H&S Team / Property Services	Quarterly
2	Responsible Persons be required to report quarterly to their Heads of Service on their monitoring of Fire Asbestos, Legionella and general Safety. A summary of the results of this monitoring will be included in the H&S Quarterly Report to Corporate Board.	RPs & Heads of Service	Quarterly
3	Responsible Persons be reminded to review the work / support of Competent Persons to ensure they have appropriate training and are effective.	Heads of Service	Quarterly
4	Property Services issue the list of RP's to Heads of Service on a quarterly basis and require a sign off from Heads of Service to ensure the list is accurate.	Heads of Service	Quarterly
5	H&S Team to ensure that training records for RP's are maintained accurately on the RP list.	H&S Team	Quarterly
6	The H&S Team carry out a programme of compliance audits that will cover the work of the Responsible Persons.	H&S Team	Ongoing as set out in the programme of audits
7	Corporate Board will monitor progress of the Fire Remedial Works Programme.	Property Services	Quarterly
8	Heads of Service will provide an update action plan each quarter in response to compliance audits.	Heads of Service	Quarterly
9	A permit to work scheme will be introduced for all Council properties by Property Services. This will ensure effective control of works and reference to asbestos registers.	Property Services	March 2010
10	The H&S Team will carry out compliance audits of the registers and permit to work scheme to ensure that Responsible Persons are managing this issue.	H&S Team	March 2010
11	The H&S Team will carry out compliance audits of the water testing scheme to ensure that Responsible Persons are managing this issue.	H&S Team	4 th quarter
12	The H&S Team will produce a Council Policy for the protection of staff and will review service procedures.	H&S Team	October 2009
13	Heads of Service will implement use of the Council's Clients of Concern database to help manage the risk to staff.	Heads of Service	March 2010
14	Where services are contracted out the Head of Service will review the	Heads of Service	March 2010

Health and Safety Strategy 2009-10 – Draft Action Plan**Appendix E**

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Deadline for delivery
	arrangements for monitoring the H&S performance of the contractor.		
15	The H&S Team will carry out compliance audits of contracted services.	H&S Team	Ongoing
16	The H&S Manager review all H&S Training and ensure that it is fit for purpose and identify training that can be optional and training that should be mandatory.	H&S Team	December 2009
17	The revised performance indicators for Heads of Service be introduced.	Heads of Service	immediate
18	The H&S Team carry out compliance audits of the performance indicators.	H&S Team	3 rd quarter

Individual Executive Member Decision

Title of Report:	Private Sector Housing Policy
Report to be considered by:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date on which Decision is to be taken:	10 December 2009
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1936

Purpose of Report: To seek approval to adopt the reviewed Private Sector Housing Policy following a period of consultation.

Recommended Action: That the proposed policy is adopted by Individual Member Decision

Reason for decision to be taken: The current policy was adopted in September 2006 and required review and updating. The reviewed policy has been approved by Corporate Board, Management Board and Executive and has been published for consultation. It is therefore proposed that the policy is adopted.

Statutory: **Non-Statutory:**
Other:

Other options considered: The consultation period resulted in very few comments reflecting that the policy is fit for purpose, and an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

Key background documentation: Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, adopted September 2006
 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) order 2002 (RRO)
 ODPM Circular 05/2003, Housing Renewal, ODPM
 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Alan Law - Tel (01491) 873614
E-mail Address:	alaw@westberks.gov.uk

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

Implications

Policy:	The report outlines the proposed Private Sector Housing Policy for the Council, including the financial support and assistance that will be made available
Financial:	The financial position is set out in the report and is contained within existing budgets.
Personnel:	N/A
Legal/Procurement:	As set out in the report. The policy includes mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants which the Council has a statutory duty to award. All other forms of support and assistance are discretionary.
Environmental:	The report includes support and assistance for improving the energy efficiency of private sector housing.
Partnering:	In order to offer the range of support and assistance, it is necessary to engage in extensive partnership working with the Home Improvement Agency, United Sustainable Energy Agency, Warm Front Scheme and RSLs amongst others.
Property:	N/A
Risk Management:	N/A
Community Safety:	The nature of the support and assistance offered is in line with community safety, to ensure that residents are able to live in good quality, safe and secure homes.
Equalities:	An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the consultation.

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council:	Cllr Graham Jones
Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:	
Select Committee Chairman:	
Ward Members:	All Members were informed of the consultation
Opposition Spokesperson:	
Local Stakeholders:	Ridgeway Care & Repair United Sustainable Energy Agency Sovereign Housing Association Age Concern

Help the Aged
 Grants Contractors
 Charities

Officers Consulted:

June Graves, Head of Housing & Performance
 Anna Smy, Principal Environmental Health Officer
 Carolyn Murrison, Principal Civil Contingencies Officer
 Bob Watson, Group Accountant
 Adrian Slaughter, Buildings Energy Officer

Trade Union:

NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.

Is this item subject to call-in.	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box: The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval <input type="checkbox"/> Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council <input type="checkbox"/> Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position <input type="checkbox"/> Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months <input type="checkbox"/> Item is Urgent Key Decision <input type="checkbox"/>		

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Tackling poor housing is a key component of the Council's overall housing strategy and is recognised within the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Council Plan.
- 1.2 It is Government Policy that everyone should have the opportunity of living in a "decent home". The Decent Homes Standard contains four broad criteria that a property should:
- Be above the legal minimum standard for housing, and
 - Be in a reasonable state of repair, and
 - Have reasonable modern facilities (such as kitchens and bathrooms) and services, and
 - Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and efficient heating).

Failing one of these four criteria would class a property as "non-decent".

- 1.3 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 (RRO (HA)) on housing renewal came into force on 18th July 2002. The RRO (HA) repealed much of the prescriptive legislation governing the provision of housing renewal grants to home owners and replaced it with a wide-ranging power to provide assistance for housing renewal. The RRO (HA) provides local authorities with a much greater degree of flexibility in devising a policy to deal with poor housing conditions, both in terms of the policy tools available and in terms of the ability to work in partnership with others. It therefore provides a major opportunity for local authorities to contribute towards tackling poverty, social exclusion, health inequalities and neighbourhood decline.
- 1.4 The Council adopted a Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy in September 2006. This policy formalised existing policies, with only minor review. Since then, the Council has commissioned a new Private Sector House Condition Survey; has been successful, as part of a consortium of local authorities, in obtaining funding to establish a Flexible Home Improvement Loan scheme for home owners over 60; has commissioned a new Home Improvement Agency and has had to deal with the flooding issues of 2007. It is therefore considered timely to undertake a major review of Private Sector Housing Policy to ensure that assistance is aimed at those who most require it.
- 1.5 On 22nd September and 8th December 2008, the Safer, Stronger and Sustainable Communities Policy Development Commission (SSS PDC) considered a report that set out background information on private sector housing renewal issues. The PDC was asked to undertake a review of the private sector housing renewal policy and consider what assistance the Council should be offering, who that assistance should be made available to, and what form the assistance should take.
- 1.6 The draft policy incorporates the requests made by SSS PDC. SSS PDC has now been replaced by a Select Committee. The framework recommends that financial

assistance continues to be applied on a client-based approach, that grant eligibility criteria is amended to ensure that applicants are directed towards the loan before grants, and that a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for disabled children's cases is applied, to top up works exceeding the mandatory DFG maximum. Financial assistance for flood protection for those with homes at significant risk of flooding was also requested.

- 1.7 The draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy sets out the range of private sector housing renewal assistance available, based on the SSS PDC's recommendations.

2. Current Policy

- 2.1 In order to consider the policy review, the assistance offered by the current policy is outlined. The Council currently offers 4 discretionary grants: Renovation Grants, Home Repair Assistance (HRA) grants, Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and Empty Homes Grants. The Council also offers mandatory DFGs, which fall outside the scope of the policy review.

2.2 Renovation Grants

Renovation Grants offer assistance of up to £20,000 to home owners and tenants who require major repairs. Applicants are means-tested, and the property must have a Category 1 or 2 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS), which could result in an Improvement Notice. A charge is secured against the property.

2.3 Home Repair Assistance

HRAs offer home owners and private tenants assistance of up to £3000 for minor repairs. The grants are aimed at residents classed as vulnerable (according to the Government's definition), namely those who are disabled, over 65 or in receipt of a means-tested benefit, and are subject to a capital limit of £16K.

2.4 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

The Council currently only offers one Discretionary DFG, which provides assistance of up to £10,000 to enable a disabled person to move to more suitable accommodation, where this is more economic than adapting their existing home. Applicants must meet the same criteria as for mandatory DFGs.

2.5 Empty Homes Grant

The Council offers grants of up to £20,000 to owners of empty homes who need to repair homes to bring them back into use. In return for the funding, the owner is required to give nomination rights to the Council for a period of up to 5 years, (depending on the level of the grant) for households registered on the Council's Common Housing Register.

2.6 Other Grants

There are a number of other smaller grants and repair schemes, including energy efficiency grants offered via the United Sustainable Energy Agency, the Small Repairs Scheme which offers a handyman service to over 65s, and Warm Front – a national scheme providing mainly heating to homeowners on qualifying benefits. These schemes fall outside of the review of the current policy, but are included in the draft policy to provide an understanding of what is available and to avoid repetition.

3. Draft Policy

3.1 As a result of the introduction of Flexible Home Improvement Loans, information derived from the Private Sector House Condition Survey and various recent events, the draft policy details amendments and additions to some of the above assistance measures.

3.2 Flexible Home Improvement Loans

In March 2008, the Council agreed to implement a Flexible Home Improvement Loan Scheme (FHIL) to assist home owners over the age of 60 to repair or improve their homes. Works must exceed £1000. The scheme has developed via a consortium of 16 local authorities, who have received £16M of Regional Housing Board (RHB) funding over a period of 3 years. West Berkshire Council is likely to receive at least £169,000 a year from the RHB allocation.

3.3 Although the FHIL is already available in West Berkshire, a loan has yet to be processed due to the fact that those eligible for a loan are on the whole also eligible for a grant under our current policy. The draft policy therefore amends the grant eligibility criteria to ensure that only homeowners who are not eligible for a FHIL are eligible for grant assistance.

3.4 Renovation Grants and HRAs

It is proposed that Renovation Grants and HRAs will continue to be available to those who do not qualify for a FHIL. Those who do qualify for a FHIL, will only be entitled to an HRA for works up to £1000, and must apply for a FHIL for works costing over £1000. To ensure HRAs are targeted towards those most in need, an earnings limit for those in receipt of tax credits has been added to the HRA eligibility criteria, and a charge will be secured on the property. The means test applied to Renovation Grants is the nationally prescribed format applied to DFGs.

3.5 Discretionary DFGs

It is proposed that a second discretionary DFG is offered to provide a top-up to mandatory DFGs for disabled children. Disabled adaptations for children are often extremely complex and the cost of works can be at least £10,000 - £20,000 more than the mandatory DFG maximum of £30,000. This can put a family under significant pressure to fund the excess costs. A discretionary top-up grant of up to £20,000 would assist such families and enable disabled children to live at home long term, and as independently as possible.

3.6 Flood Grants

Following the floods of 2007, Members were keen to offer financial assistance to households in areas at risk of flooding to apply protection measures to ensure minimum possible damage from any future flooding. Due to the complexity of these proposals and the limited availability of the necessary contractors, the advice of external agencies has to be sought, and so flood alleviation grants are therefore not included in this draft policy. The Civil Contingencies Team is currently applying to Defra for funding for local authorities to assist local communities to implement self help flood protection measures. Further work on the possibility of offering assistance for such works through housing grants will be suspended pending the decision of the Defra bid round.

3.7 Private House Condition Survey

The Stock Condition Survey 2008 did not identify any significant client groups or

geographical areas that were associated with particularly poor housing conditions. It is therefore proposed that the financial assistance continues to be offered on a client-based approach.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The financial assistance outlined above will be provided by existing budgets and the funding secured from the Regional Housing Board for Flexible Home Improvement Loans. The implementation of FHILs will free up some of the grants budget to enable the provision of additional discretionary DFGs for disabled children's cases.
- 4.2 HRA grants awarded during 2008/09 amounted to £89,384. Many of these applicants would now qualify for a FHIL, so even allowing for a 20% non-eligibility, there should be approximately £70,000 within existing grant budgets, as a result of the introduction of FHILs, which could be directed towards discretionary DFGs.
- 4.3 Between April 2007 and March 2009, West Berkshire Council approved 13 DFGs for disabled children. 5 of these involved extensive works which exceeded the grant maximum of £30,000.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The draft policy was published for consultation for a period of 6 weeks until 20th November. The Council received very few comments regarding the policy as a result of the consultation. The only comment which required amendment of the policy was the information that the earnings limit for tax credits had increased from that outlined in the grant eligibility criteria. This has been amended.
- 5.2 Three focus groups consisting of local residents have been arranged to discuss the policy and ways in which procedures and promotion can be amended in order to provide an improved service to all.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Draft Private Sector Housing Policy
- Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix A
West Berkshire Council
Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy
DRAFT

June 2009

Purpose

This policy 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 assistance.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 Eligibility Criteria for Financial Assistance

Appendix 2 Procedure for administering Disabled Facilities Grants

Appendix 3 Procedure for administering Renovation Grants and Home Repair Assistance Grants

Appendix 4 Procedure for administering Flexible Home Improvement Loans

Appendix 5 HHSRS

Appendix 6 Enforcement

Appendix 7 Budget Projections

Appendix 8 Terms and Conditions applicable to financial assistance

Appendix 9 Acronyms

Appendix 10 Contacts

1. Introduction

This policy sets out how West Berkshire Council will promote the provision of safe and healthy living conditions for all as well as setting the criteria and conditions under which West Berkshire Council will assist with the cost of adaptations and essential repairs and improvements to private sector housing.

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 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 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 Communities and Local Government (CLG)) produces 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 programme 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 to 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. The strategy sets the target to ensure that 70% of private sector homes are made decent by 2010, and recommends the services of Home Improvement Agencies to assist older, disabled and other vulnerable households in carrying out improvement works and

adaptations. 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 the 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 is for 70% of private sector homes 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 i.e. does not contain a Category 1 Hazard (see Appendix 5)
- 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 home
- The target for West Berkshire is discussed in more detail in Section 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 approach evaluates 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.

Government 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 guidance also says that a local authority should have regard to the decent homes standard when considering financial assistance. See Appendix 6.

1.1.3 National Fuel Poverty Action Plan and National Indicator 187

Fuel poverty results from a contribution 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.

Government's continued commitment to tackling fuel poverty has led to the recent introduction of National Indicator 187, which requires local authorities to annually report their levels of fuel poverty to the government. The level of fuel poverty is monitored by measuring the percentage of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low and high energy efficiency rating.

In the context of West Berkshire, in 2008 14.8% of households in receipt of income related benefits live in fuel poverty compared with 14% in England. The largely rural nature of West Berkshire results in a large amount of older and remote properties. Older properties are often less energy efficient due to features such as solid wall construction, and have the highest incidents of fuel poverty. The rural nature of West Berkshire also has an effect on fuel and heating costs due to areas without access to mains gas supplies.

1.1.4 The Rugg Review

In 2008 the government commissioned Julie Rugg and David Rhodes to carry out a detailed review of the private rented sector. The resulting report, *'The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential'* recommended six 'policy directions of travel' aimed at raising the standards and professionalism in the private rented sector. The recommendations are as follows:

- Develop a sound evidence base to provide a firm understanding of the private rented sector
- Promote housing management
- Initiatives to 'grow' the letting business
- Equalising the rental choice to make private renting as desirable as other tenures
- Light-touch licensing with effective redress to encourage local authorities to put effective sanctions in place to target the worst landlords
- Tenancy frameworks to help deal with issues of tenure insecurity, housing benefit, regulation and housing support for vulnerable tenants.

The government has welcomed the review and its recommendations, and has outlined a series of proposals in response. These proposals are designed to encourage the growth of professionalism, tackle bad landlords and provide improved customer protection, and are split into the following three strands:

- An improved regulatory framework

- More support for investment
- Improved engagement with the sector

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 submit Regional Housing Strategies to the Government which advise on spending priorities over the current spending review period.

The South East Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) sets out the context and priorities for investment in the south east from 2008 to 2011. The RHS has "adopted a new competitive approach to funding through local authority partnerships that will improve non-decent housing in urban and rural locations and will include developing equity release and loan products, tackling thermal comfort and fuel poverty issues and bringing empty homes back into use". The emphasis is on innovation and the promulgation of good practice across the region.

In the context of private sector renewal in West Berkshire, the number of non-decent properties in the private sector is 16,800, consisting of 31.6% of the stock, of which 2,090 are occupied by vulnerable households. The Public Service Agreement 7 target to make 70% of dwellings occupied by vulnerable households decent by 2010 leaves a shortfall in West Berkshire of 480 properties (Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, 2008).

1.3 Local Context

1.3.1 Sustainable Community Strategy

West Berkshire has established a Local Strategic Partnership of key service deliverers. The Local Strategic Partnership has prepared the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) '*A Breath of Fresh Air*' which sets out the vision and priorities for West Berkshire up to 2026. The strategy is based on five key themes:

- Prosperous
- Accessible
- Greener
- Safer
- Healthier

The SCS recognises the proportion of the District's vulnerable households who live in non-decent private sector housing as an area of concern and seeks to identify actions that will encourage empty homes to be bought back into use, improve the overall fitness of private sector homes and facilitate closer working with landlords.

1.3.2 The Council Plan 2007 – 2011

The Council Plan 2007-2011 identifies sixteen outcomes. Six of these are directly relevant to the Private Sector Renewal Policy. These are

- Safer stronger communities
- Promoting independence
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Including everyone
- Affordable housing
- A healthier life

Within the Affordable Housing outcome, there are specific targets to award grants and loans to bring properties up to a safe and decent standard.

The 'Best Value' regime was introduced in April 2000 following the Local Government Act 1999. It placed a statutory duty on local councils in England and Wales to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness'. From 2008/09, the old best Value performance Indicators are being replaced by new a set of 200 National Indicators as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process. NI187, 'Tackling fuel poverty – people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating' is the only national indicator relevant to this policy.

1.3.3 The Cleaner Greener Strategy 2007 - 2017

Cleaner Greener was adopted as one of West Berkshire Council's 17 key priorities within the Council Plan. To ensure that the Cleaner Greener Programme is embedded within West Berkshire Council's services, an internal strategy has been developed to increase working partnerships across the council. The following aims of the strategy directly relate to Private Sector Renewal:

- Encourage people to change to a greener way of life
- Protect and enhance the natural environment of West Berkshire
- Keep West Berkshire Clean
- Tackle issues of climate change and resource management

1.3.4 Housing Strategy 2005 - 2010

The Housing Strategy 2005-2010 is currently under review and the new Housing Strategy 2009-2014 will be available later this year. In order to review the Housing Strategy a Housing Vision event was held which identified the vision for West Berkshire to deliver housing services that:

- Provide **quality** housing

- Deliver **appropriate** housing services – meeting a range of needs, tenures and sizes, with high levels of accessibility to reflect people’s changing needs
- Are **affordable** – not just in terms of our housing costs but also in respect of running costs
- Offer **support** – to ensure that vulnerable households are able to sustain their homes
- Are **sustainable** – in terms of the environment, community and meeting future needs; and
- Are **safe and secure** – building communities that are inclusive and where people have a sense of belonging.

1.3.5 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. Domestic energy efficiency is also incorporated within the Cleaner Greener Strategy.

The United Sustainable Energy Agency (USEA) acts as an agent for West Berkshire Council and undertakes the council’s duties under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995. USEA 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. USEA has recently expanded its service to offer advice and assistance for householders wishing to install renewable energy generating measures. The main schemes currently on offer are as follows:

- Cocoon
- Warm Front

These schemes are explained in more detail in Appendix 1.

West Berkshire Council will also work in partnership with other organisations to offer free and discounted home energy efficiency measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation, and to promote awareness of the advantages of becoming more energy efficient.

1.3.6 The Housing Act 2004

The Council’s Environmental Health Officers in the Environmental Health and Licensing Team 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. See Appendix 5.

The HHSRS assessment applies to houses in regardless of tenure or 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 three storeys or over and comprising 5 or more people. 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.

1.3.7 The Supporting People Strategy

The fundamental aim of the Supporting People service in West Berkshire is to ensure high quality; cost effective, housing related support services are available and delivered to the people who most need them. The Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010 is currently under review and a review strategy is available however the vision remains the same. 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 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 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

1.3.8 Putting People First in West Berkshire 2008-2011

Putting People First, published in December 2007, has prompted a radical system transformation of adult social care services. The new agenda focuses on personalisation of services, including a strategic shift towards early intervention and prevention, which will be the cornerstone of public services. This means that every person who receives support, whether provided by statutory services or funded by themselves, will have choice and control over the shape of that support in all care settings. It will mean that people are able to live their own lives as they wish; confident that services are of high quality, are safe and promote their own individual needs for independence, well-being, and dignity. Appropriate housing and accommodation services are integral to the success of this new approach.

This policy will directly contribute towards the Council's Putting People First Strategic priority of:

- Enabling people to live as independently as possible

1.3.9 The Safer Communities Partnership Plan 2008/2009

The 2007 West Berkshire Strategic Assessment identified nine key areas of concern related to community safety. Domestic burglary is one of these key areas and rates have recently increased. The Plan recommends continued work with Help the Aged's Handy Van scheme to promote burglary campaigns and to further develop the Safe at Home scheme to provide safety and crime prevention help and advice to vulnerable households. The Handy Van scheme offers help to those over 60 years old with installing alarms, locks and other measures to ensure their homes are secure. The Safe at Home scheme, run by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, offers home fire safety checks.

1.3.10 Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2011

The focus of the Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2011 is on the early intervention and prevention of homelessness using a customer focussed front-line approach. This involves strong partnership working and aims to achieve the following five strategic objectives:

- Prevent homelessness
- Improve customer service
- Improve support for vulnerable groups
- Improve standards in the provision of temporary accommodation
- Increase the supply of affordable housing

1.3.11 Empty Homes Strategy 2008 – 2011

The South East Regional Housing Strategy states that it expects local authorities to identify and tackle long term empty properties that might help to meet local housing needs. West Berkshire Council's Empty Homes Strategy 2008 – 2011 identifies the benefits of bringing empty homes back into use to include:

- Promoting the use of a potential resource to assist West Berkshire Council in meeting its strategic housing objectives
- Facilitating the provision of good quality affordable housing by the private sector
- Minimising the development of green-field land
- Reduction in the number of complaints about empty homes

Measures available to help to bring empty homes back into use is covered in more detail in sections 3 and 4.

2. Assessment of Housing Needs

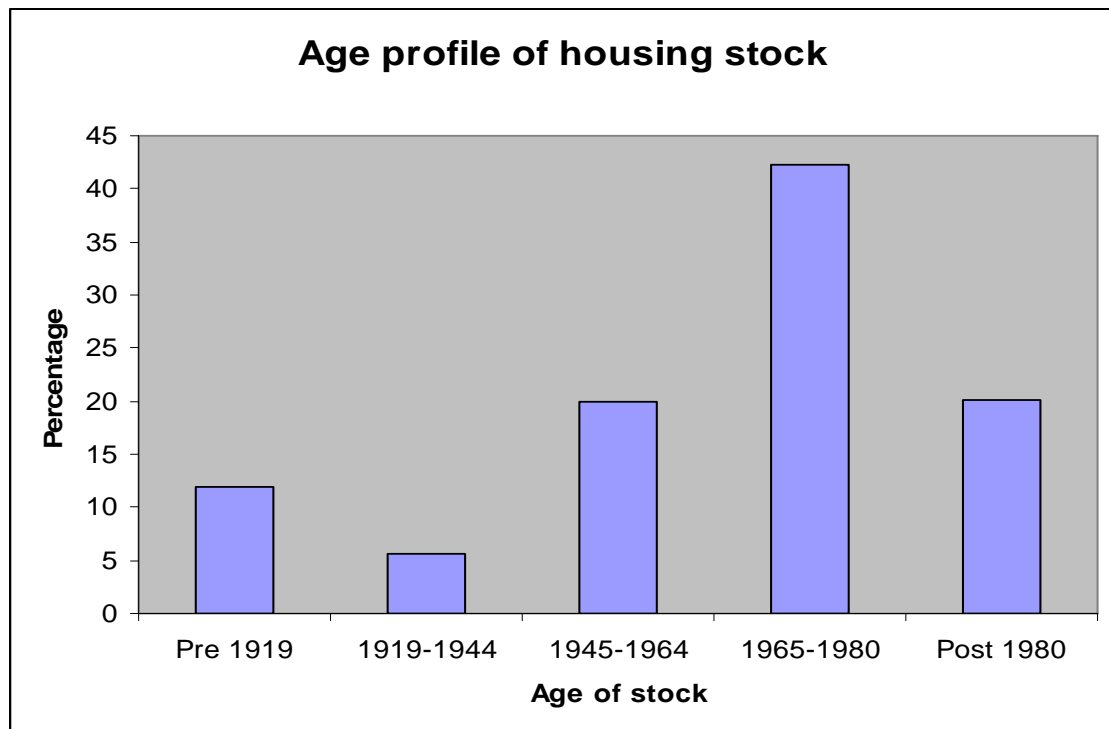
Accommodation costs in West Berkshire are amongst the highest in the country and the provision of affordable housing continues to be the key strategic concern. This policy document is based on data obtained from the West Berkshire Private Sector House Condition Survey, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) return for 2008, Census Data and National Indicator 187.

2.1 Stock Condition

In 2008 a Private Sector House Condition Survey was carried out in order to provide a detailed picture of the private sector housing conditions within West Berkshire. The survey was carried out by taking a sample from the West Berkshire Council tax list of 1,600 in order to undertake 800 surveys. 858 surveys were carried out in total. Based on the HHSRS the survey gathered information on the general characteristics of the property; condition of the internal and external fabric; provision of amenities; compliance with housing health and safety; age and type of elements; energy efficiency measures; compliance with the Decent Homes Standard and socio-economic information about the household.

The survey identified that in 2008 there were:

- 62,580 private sector and housing association dwellings
- 72% were owner occupied, 14% housing association and 13% privately rented
- 19,200 dwellings were estimated to be non decent (30.7% of the housing stock)
- 16,800 private sector dwellings were estimated to be non decent (31.6%)
- Lowest income groups were most likely to live in non decent properties
- 16.8% of properties had one disabled resident
- Disabled residents were more likely to live in unfit properties and to have lower incomes compared to West Berkshire as a whole
- The age profile of the housing stock in West Berkshire illustrated by the following graph



2.2 Local Housing Market Conditions

The Council, in conjunction with the other Berkshire authorities, conducted a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in 2007. The SHMA found that there were two function housing markets in Berkshire, with West Berkshire falling within the Berkshire West housing market. The SHMA also highlighted that:

- In the last decade there has been very rapid household and population growth in West Central Berkshire, equivalent to more than twice the rate in East Berkshire. In total 10% of South East population live in Berkshire. Berkshire is also the economic engine of the South East, generating 15% of the region's economic output and 12% of jobs (disproportionate to its share of population). Berkshire has experienced rapid economic growth over the last decade.
- Berkshire has high house prices relative to the South East and poor affordability, though it is not as extreme as some parts of South East, largely due to the urban centres of Reading and Slough offering cheaper accommodation to buy or rent.
- There is substantial housing need within Berkshire. This can be evidenced simply by looking at the numbers of households in temporary accommodation in each of the authorities. However, estimates of housing need in each of the authorities suggest there is a need for an *additional* 3,000-4,200 affordable homes *per annum* to address housing need within Berkshire. This range takes account of the expected supply of new affordable homes in each authority for the next 5 years so this represents the need for affordable homes over and above that.

- Future economic growth is likely to produce further social and economic inequality with those on higher incomes demanding more living space. There are also differences within both housing market areas in terms of the type and size of properties available, with concentrations of smaller dwellings within Reading and Slough in particular, although the stock available within each market area is relatively balanced overall.
- In West Central Berkshire the housing stock is relatively large, in contrast to smaller sized stock in East Berkshire. There has been high numbers and an increased proportion of flats and two bedroom dwellings completed for private and public sector over the last 6 years within Berkshire which, if continued into the future, could limit choice and the flexibility within the housing stock, particularly within Reading and Slough.
- Housing delivery within Berkshire has kept pace with targets over the last 5 years but the strength of the housing market is likely to have made delivery easier. Berkshire as a whole has delivered its Structure Plan housing allocation 2001- 2006. The authorities will need to maintain delivery over the next 20 years if they are to meet the Draft South East Plan housing targets, which will be particularly challenging if market circumstances change.

2.3 Local Housing Needs

The Housing Needs Assessment (2007) carried out for West Berkshire as part of the SHMA found that there was a minimum shortfall of 560 affordable homes (assuming that 2003 estimates on household growth are correct) and a maximum shortfall of 850 affordable homes (assuming a 50% growth in household projection). These figures are in addition to the planned new affordable housing. The proposed housing allocation for West Berkshire in the South East Plan is 530 units per annum.

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 16 March 2009, 5,353 households were in need of social rented housing in the district. This compares with a district wide figure of 1008 households in 2002. In addition, as at 16 March 2009, 268 households already in social rented housing require a move to more suitable accommodation. A further 1,532 households are seeking housing through shared ownership.

The Council adopts a preventative approach to homelessness, which has resulted in a dramatic reduction in number of homeless applications. In 2007/08 the Council accepted 25 households as homeless and in priority need, and 11 households in 2008/09, and on the 31st March 2009 the Council was accommodating 41 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 domestic breakdown and domestic violence.

2.4 Age Profile, Health and Deprivation

According to the latest Indices of Deprivation, West Berkshire ranks 330 out of 354 local authority areas, i.e. it is the 24th least deprived district in England (2007). However, the general affluence and prosperity of the region, and of West Berkshire, masks pockets of real deprivation and exclusion. The district does have communities with individuals who experience particular difficulties as a consequence of being poor within a generally wealthy region.

The Office for National Statistics estimate an overall projected growth in the population of the district of 3.4% by 2026. This will not be a universal growth across the different age bands. The numbers of young people are expected to fall significantly over the next 20 years (9% or 3,500 people). Conversely, the number of older people is expected to rise significantly. For example, numbers of people aged 64-84 will rise by 47% and the numbers of people aged over 85 will rise by 74% in the period 2007-26. The increase in the number of people aged 65+ will increase national and local debate about how best to provide and fund long-term care for the elderly and these demographic changes will place additional pressure on health, social care and housing services.

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). The Private Sector House Condition Survey 2008 estimated that 16.8% of dwellings contain someone with a long term illness or disability. This means the number of households with significant caring responsibilities for a family member is likely to increase.

The overall life expectancy of residents is rising steadily in line with national trends. Average life expectancy in West Berkshire is higher than the national average, but there are differences between different income groups.

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 minority ethnic population of 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. The 2008 West Berkshire House Condition Survey found that the mean SAP (energy rating on a scale of 0 (poor) to 100 (good)) was 50 compared with 46 nationally. Lower SAP ratings were found in older dwellings, bungalows, converted flats and privately rented accommodation and excess cold was found to be one of the leading causes of category one hazards, which is particularly hazardous amongst an ageing population.

3. Principles and Policy

The Private Sector House Condition Survey 2008 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 survey identified excess cold and falls on the level and stairs as the primary hazard failures in West Berkshire. The Council has therefore decided to adopt a policy that is client based and focused on vulnerable people.

- The key priority will 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 provide grant and loan assistance to enable empty properties to be brought back into use
- The Council will promote the provision of the Flexible Home Improvement Loan to owner occupiers over 60 years old and the owners of empty properties in order to carry out repairs, improvements and adaptations.
- The Council will work with private sector landlords to ensure a high quality supply of private rented accommodation in the district. The Council will also hold regular private sector landlords' forums to provide useful information and build a good working relationship between the Council and local landlords.
- As well as working with landlords of empty properties, the Private Sector Housing team will work with Environmental Health and Licensing to improve the conditions of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)s.
- Where enforcement action is necessary by the Environmental Health and Licensing Team consideration of circumstances will be given and the West Berkshire Council Enforcement Policy adhered to
- The Council will continue to fund Ridgeway Care and Repair along with Reading and Wokingham Borough Councils to provide a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) function within the district. The HIA provides assistance to clients seeking grant or loan funding.
- The Council will continue to work with the United Sustainable Energy Agency (USEA) to carry out its duties under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 and to actively promote energy efficiency. USEA will also provide free energy efficiency and renewable energy advice and Home Energy Check surveys to West Berkshire residents.
- 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 organisation to deliver these services. It will work across all council departments, in particular Community Services, Planning and Environment, Environmental Health and Licensing and with the Crime Prevention Officer to promote financial assistance outlined in this policy and assistance offered by other organisations.

These priorities contribute to the policies set out in the Housing Strategy by assisting in the provision of decent homes and in improving homes for vulnerable people. They also contribute to the Council Plan priorities of promoting independence for older people and access to a decent home.

This Private Sector Housing Policy supports the needs for older people identified in the Supporting People Strategy through the provision of grant and loan assistance and the services of the Home Improvement Agency.

The assistance for empty properties promotes the provision of affordable housing, a key priority in the Council Plan, Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Housing Strategy.

Advice and assistance to private sector landlords through the Landlords' Forum and the Private Sector Housing Team's work with the Environmental Health and Licensing will assist in the provision of affordable housing and help to focus on some of the most vulnerable households, who often live in the private rented sector. The Private Sector House Condition Survey found that the private rented sector is generally of poorer quality and possess more hazards than other tenures, so work with private sector landlords will help to target these issues.

Ridgeway Care and Repair will offer support and assistance to people seeking to apply for financial assistance to carry out adaptations or repairs to their homes. Ridgeway Care and Repair will also help vulnerable households to carry out private works to their homes where they do not qualify for financial assistance but still require practical help.

The Flexible Home Improvement Loans will help offer a more varied range of financial assistance for home owners in need of assistance to adapt and repair their homes. This will also provide assistance for works and applicants that would not be eligible for grant funding.

Improving the energy efficiency of homes will assist in achieving the decent homes standard and the priorities set out in the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Housing Strategy and the Cleaner Greener Plan. Energy efficiency promotion will also help to improve the fuel poverty rate and increase the rate of carbon use reduction.

The provision of financial assistance for flood alleviation will enable households at particular risk of flooding to identify the measures suitable for their property and help them to be applied. Property-level protection measures limit the entry of floodwater into a property which can enable households to protect the contents of their homes.

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

4. Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available to owner occupiers and tenants. All discretionary grants are means tested and grants for disabled facilities are only given where it is mandatory, with the exceptions detailed below. The Council will offer the following financial assistance:

- ***Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants*** (mDFG)
- ***Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants*** (dDFG)
- ***Discretionary Home Repair Assistance Grants*** (HRAG)
- ***Discretionary Renovation Grants*** (RG)
- ***Empty Home Grants*** (EPG)
- ***Flexible Home Improvement Loans*** (FHIL)s

The Council's eligibility criterion for grants and loans is outlined in Appendix 1: The Financial Assistance 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 security schemes.

4.1 Mandatory DFGs

Local authorities are obliged under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, to provide Disabled Facilities Grants to eligible applicants in order to carry out eligible adaptations to their homes to enable them to remain in their homes and to live as independently as possible. DFGs are means tested (except in the case of disabled children) and have a limit of £30,000. Works must be deemed necessary and appropriate by an occupational therapist and reasonable and practicable by the local housing authority.

4.2 Discretionary DFGs

The RRO(HA) gives the council the power to offer discretionary DFGs. However, after careful consideration the council has decided that with the exception of two specific circumstances, it is unable to award discretionary DFGs because the current demand for mandatory DFGs exceeds the budget available.

The two circumstances in which the Council would consider a discretionary DFG are:

1. Where it is more cost effective and appropriate to provide assistance to enable a person to move to 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 agent fees, solicitor fees, survey fees and removal costs) only, up to the value of £10,000. All applicants for this discretionary DFG, except those on behalf of children and young people under the age of 18, will be means tested.

The move may be inside or outside the district. Where the move is inside the district, the council would not expect to offer a 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 Housing 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.

2. Where a major adaptation is required to meet the needs of a disabled child that exceeds the grant maximum.

As the discretionary DFG would be awarded on behalf of a disabled child it will not be means tested. The grant will fund works exceeding the mandatory grant maximum to a value of £20,000.

All discretionary DFGs are subject to a land charge for a period of five years.

Where there are pressures upon the DFG budget, mandatory DFGs will be given priority over discretionary applications. 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 direct via 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 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

4.3 Discretionary HRA

The Home Repair Assistance grant has a limit of £3,000 and can fund essential repairs to owner occupied properties. Applicants are eligible if they are not eligible for a FHIL, are in receipt of particular income or disability related benefits, subject to a capital limit.

4.4 Discretionary Renovation Grant

Renovation Grants are means tested and have a limit of £20,000. They are available to owner occupiers to reduce category 1 or 2 hazards identified under the Housing Health and safety Rating System.

4.5 Empty Home Grant

Empty Homes Grants of up to £20,000 are available to empty home owners in order to reduce HHSRS category 1 and 2 hazards and bring the property back into use. For HMOs fire escapes and precautions, and the provision of facilities for multiple households are also eligible. In return for the grant, the Council has nomination rights for up to five years.

4.6 Flexible Home Improvement Loans

West Berkshire Council is part of a consortium of 16 local authorities across the South East which has secured funding of £16 million over a period of three years from the Regional Housing Board to implement a Flexible Home Improvement Loan scheme.

Flexible Home Improvement Loans (FHILs) are available to home owners over 60 years old to carry out repairs and improvements to their homes over the value of £1000. The loans are secured by a charge on the applicant's property and can be repaid in a range of ways. The applicant can choose to make regular repayments, occasional repayments or no repayments at all. Repayment methods can be changed during the course of the loan. The loan must be repaid in full when the property is sold or the owners cease to occupy it.

The tracker interest rate is linked to the Bank of England rate, with a minimum interest rate of 3.5% and a maximum rate of 7%. The eligibility criteria for works that can be funded by FHILs are outlined in Appendix 1.

FHILs can also be offered to the owners of empty properties to undertake works that will enable them to bring the home back into use. Loans awarded for this reason must be re-paid within five years. and can be combined with an Empty Home grant. There are no nomination requirements attached to the FHIL for empty homes, but if combined with an Empty Home grant, the nomination requirements will be determined by the grant level.

All FHILs, whether for home improvements or empty homes, are secured by a charge on the property.

5. Implementing the Policy

5.1 Assistance in Applying for Financial Assistance

The Council, in conjunction with Reading and Wokingham Councils, has contracted Ridgeway Care and Repair to provide a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service in the district. All enquiries for financial assistance for disabled adaptations and repairs will be directed to the HIA with the exception of Sovereign Housing Association tenants.

Ridgeway Care and Repair will assist applicants in applying for grants and loans as well as assisting home owners ineligible for financial assistance to carry out repairs and improvements to their homes.

Sovereign Housing Association offers a similar agency service for their own tenants who are applying for a DFG.

5.2 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 by the Head of Housing and Performance as a special case which falls outside the normal policy.

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

The council has a complaints procedure if you consider that your application has been mistreated. Please see Section 6 and Appendix 8 for further information.

5.3 Scope of this Policy

The procedures apply to:

- Staff working in the Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team (part of Housing and Performance Service)
- Social Services staff involved with assessing need and eligibility for support
- Ridgeway Care and Repair staff involved with financial assistance on behalf of applicants in West Berkshire

- Any other organisation or individual acting as an agent on behalf of grant applicants in West Berkshire
- Private sector residents of West Berkshire applying for assistance
- Environmental Health Officers and other enforcement officers in the Environmental Health and Licensing Service

5.4 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 to further promote and encourage residents to use all of the financial resources available to them to improve their homes.

The council also recognises that further work needs to be undertaken to develop closer relationships with private sector landlords to ensure a high quality supply of private rented accommodation within the district. The council has recently established a Private Landlords' Forum and intends to hold regular events to support private landlords and offer advice on issues such as tenancy agreements, ending tenancies, HMO standards and the services that the council can offer.

Environmental Health Officers are working to a National Protocol with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service which will improve information sharing and enforcement of standards. Officers are also working to proactively identify HMO's, particularly any which still require licensing

The policy will be kept under review and unforeseen budget restrictions may necessitate the re-prioritisation of financial assistance and use of waiting lists.

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

5.5 Local Performance Indicators

The following local 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	40 dwellings per annum

HRAGs)	
Adaptations, repair and improvement of dwellings with loan assistance (FHILs)	20 dwellings per annum
Empty dwellings brought back into use	20 dwellings per annum 2009/10 22 dwellings per annum 2010/11
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 12 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
Approval or formal response to HRAG, RG or Empty Home Grant applications	90% within 12 weeks of receipt of full grant application
Average number of weeks waiting for major adaptations from assessment to work beginning	Target is 24 weeks (measured by referral to housing agency to approval of DFG)
Response times for complaints	20 working days for Stage 1 and up to 3 months for Stage 2 for Social Care complaints 10 working days for Stage 1 and 20 working days for Stage 2 for all other complaints

5.6 Policy Monitoring

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

- Total number grants by type
- Average cost per grant per type by Agency
- Number of discretionary DFGs
- Number of FHILs
- 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 initial enquiry to approval of full grant application
- 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

5.7 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.

6. Grant Applications and Procedures

The procedures for administering financial assistance are outlined in the Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Eligibility Criteria for Financial Assistance
- Appendix 2 Procedure for administering Disabled Facilities Grants
- Appendix 3 Procedure for administering Renovation Grants and Home Repair Assistance Grants
- Appendix 4 Procedure for administering Flexible Home Improvement Loans
- Appendix 5 HHSRS
- Appendix 6 Enforcement
- Appendix 7 Budget Projections
- Appendix 8 Terms and Conditions applicable to financial assistance
- Appendix 9 Acronyms
- Appendix 10 Contacts

The test of resources (means test) used by the council is as set out by Communities and Local Government, and further information can be found on their website at www.communities.gov.uk.

6.1 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, Environmental Health and Licensing, Ridgeway Care and Repair and other agents acting on behalf of applicants.

6.2 Resources

The amount of capital resources that will be committed to implementing this policy, including resources provided by partner organisations is outlined in Appendix 6 and projected until 2013/14.

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 by the occupational therapist based on the prescribed priority rating guidelines. All high priorities will be approved, subject to available budget, upon receipt and consideration of the full grant application. All medium and low priority applications will be referred to the DFG Panel. The DFG Panel will consider the applications on a monthly basis and can either approve the application, defer it to the next Panel meeting or increase its priority rating. All applications will be determined within the statutory 6-month period.

Applicants who experience a change in circumstances after submission of their full grant application should ensure that their Occupational Therapist is informed. The Occupational Therapist can then pass the information onto the DFG Panel for consideration.

6.3 Complaints and redress

If an applicant has a complaint about any aspect of the service, initial contact should be made with the Private Sector Housing 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.

If the applicant's concerns are related to the service provided by the Home Improvement Agency, the applicant should contact Ridgeway Care and Repair and follow their complaints procedure.

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.

7. Consultation

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

External Organisations

Ridgeway Care and Repair
Sovereign South + West Housing Association
Reading Borough Council
Wokingham Borough Council
Citizens Advice Bureau West Berkshire
West Berkshire Disability Alliance
Disability Equality Board
Minority Ethnic Forum
Grants Contractors
Registered Social Landlords
Age Concern
Help the Aged

Internal Departments

Environmental Health and Licensing
Community Care
Environment and Planning
Corporate Policy

All Members were informed of the consultation period and the policy was available to view on the Council's website.

A copy of the policy was also made available for consultation on the Council's website.

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

Once the Council have formerly 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 our partner agencies. Occupational Therapists and the Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team 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.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment

In Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.

Appendix 1 Financial Assistance Eligibility Criteria

Type of Assistance	Eligibility Criteria	Eligible Works	Non-eligible Works	Conditions
<p>Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (Max £30,000)</p>	<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 these 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 Housing Officer (PSHO).</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 PSHO.</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 Housing 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> <p>For grants over £5,100 awarded to owner occupiers, a charge of up to £10,000 is secured on the property, to be re-paid if the property is sold within 5 years.</p>

<p>Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants</p>	<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 under 18 years.</p>	<p>Fees (estate agent, solicitors, removals, surveys) for moving to more suitable property and minor works to new home. £10,000 maximum.</p> <p>Provide top-up funding to mandatory DFG works exceeding the mandatory grant maximum. Works for disabled children only. £20,000 maximum top-up grant.</p> <p>Move and 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>Move and works not supported by an OT and PSHO.</p> <p>Move where alternative adaptations to the existing home could be provided more cost-effectively to meet the 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 that have already been started or completed.</p> <p>Works that do not relate to the</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 Housing Officer.</p> <p>Works must be carried out within 12 months of approval.</p> <p>Written confirmation required from Social Services 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>A charge is secured on the property for a period of five years, to be re-paid if the property is sold within this time.</p>
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			disabled person's medical and or independence needs.	
<p>Discretionary Home Repair Assistance Grant</p> <p>(Max £3,000 per application, £6,000 in any three year period).</p> <p>(Max £1,000 for those that qualify for a FHIL).</p>	<p>Home owners or private tenants only.</p> <p>Available to residents in receipt of at least one of the principle means tested or disability related benefits listed below who do not qualify for a Flexible Home Improvement Loan or for works costing less than £1,000.</p> <p>Subject to a capital limit of £16,000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Support • Housing Benefit • Council Tax Benefit • Disabled Persons Tax Credit • Income-based Job Seekers 	<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 over-bath showers, essential stair-lift 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 (only where it is non-repairable), 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</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>Boiler repairs.</p> <p>Energy</p>	<p>Not available to landlords.</p> <p>Not available to RSL tenants or private tenants where the property is owned by a family member.</p> <p>Works must be carried out within 12 months of approval.</p> <p>A report from the Crime reduction Advisor is required to support security and home safety works.</p> <p>Post-grant occupancy conditions apply otherwise grant repayable 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 scale of 20% per year, unless the occupier goes into full-time</p>

	<p>Allowance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Families Tax Credit (income limit £16,040) • Attendance Allowance • Disability Living Allowance • Industrial Injuries Benefit • War Disablement Benefit • Child Tax Credit (income limit £16,040) • Working Tax Credit (income limit £16,040) • Guarantee Pension Credit 	<p>locks, spy holes, door chains, five lever mortice locks on external doors and replacement of insecure doors or windows (upon recommendation of the Crime Reduction Advisor).</p>	<p>efficiency works in isolation.</p>	<p>residential care. Entry on the Land Charges Register will be made.</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.</p>	<p>Renovation works to reduce any of the 29 hazards set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, housing Act 2004.</p>	<p>Works covered by insurance. Decorating. Upgrading non-</p>	<p>Works must be completed within 12 months of approval. Post-grant occupancy conditions apply otherwise</p>

	<p>Must not qualify for a FHIL.</p> <p>Tenants must have been in occupation for 3 years and have a repairing obligation and the tenancy must have not less than 5 years to run. NB someone living in the 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>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 Band and which could result in the service of an Improvement Notice.</p> <p>Energy efficiency works can be included in conjunction with the above.</p>	<p>defective installations.</p> <p>Energy efficiency works in isolation.</p> <p>Replacing installations that are not defective.</p> <p>Repairs to rectify poor DIY.</p> <p>Servicing of boilers and other installations and equipments.</p> <p>Energy efficiency works that a Warm Front Grant could cover, unless it has been refused.</p>	<p>grant repayable 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 scale of 20% per year, unless the 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 that the property is no longer in a Category 1 or category 2 Hazard Band.</p>
<p>Discretionary Empty Homes Grants</p>	<p>Must own property. Must rent property for up to 5 years to a nominee from the Council's Common Housing Register at</p>	<p>Same as those required for a Renovation Grant.</p> <p>HMO works: including fire</p>	<p>Same as Renovation Grant.</p>	<p>Property must be rented at an affordable rent to a nominee by the Council from the Common Housing</p>

(Max £20,000)	an affordable rent after grant completion, otherwise repayable.	precautions, means of escape and the provision of adequate facilities and amenities for the number of people or households.	HMO: any non structural works required under S372 of Housing Act 1985, Management Regulations for e.g. Cleaning communal areas, rubbish removal, decoration, servicing of gas and electrical installations.	<p>Register for a period of 5 years from completion of the work.</p> <p>Entry on the Land Charges Register will be made.</p> <p>May be used in conjunction with an Empty Homes FHIL.</p> <p>Length of Nomination Agreement dependent on level of grant awarded:</p> <p>£15,000 or above – 5 years £10,000 - £14,999 – 3 years £5,000 - £9,999 – 2 years Up to £5,000 – 1 year</p>
Flexible Home Improvement Loans	<p>Owner occupiers over 60 years of age.</p> <p>Joint owners must both be over 60 years of age.</p> <p>Available to empty property owners to bring the property back into use.</p> <p>Must have sufficient equity in the property to support the loan.</p>	<p>Works relating to the improvement of the warmth, comfort, safety and security of the property. Works include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Essential repairs and maintenance ▪ Central heating or improvements to heating ▪ Replacement doors and windows ▪ Improvements to insulation ▪ Roof and structural 	<p>Works relating to general maintenance.</p> <p>Decorating</p> <p>Servicing of boilers and other installations and equipment.</p>	<p>The cost of the loan is secured by a charge on the property.</p> <p>The loan must be repaid if the property is sold or the owners cease to occupy it.</p> <p>The loan must be repaid in either of the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular repayments ▪ Occasional repayments ▪ No payments at all – loan is repaid in full

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> repairs ▪ Replacement bathroom suites ▪ Replacement kitchens ▪ Plumbing and drainage repairs ▪ Rewiring ▪ Burglar alarm and home security ▪ Replacement guttering, soffits and cladding ▪ Work associated with eradicating dampness, wet rot, dry rot and woodworm ▪ Installation of stair lifts, level access showers or other adaptations ▪ To fund disabled adaptations in excess of the DFG limit 		when the property is sold
Flexible Home Improvement Loan (Empty Homes)	<p>5 year fixed term loan available to empty property owners to bring the property back into use. Must have sufficient equity in the property to support the loan. Can be used to supplement a Empty Homes Grant.</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 or households.</p>	<p>Same as Renovation Grant.</p> <p>HMO: any non structural works required under S372 of Housing Act 1985, Management</p>	<p>The cost of the loan is secured by a charge on the property. The loan must not exceed the lesser of the cost of works or two-thirds of the value of the property. Further advances or stage payments may be possible if the value of the property</p>

			Regulations for e.g. Cleaning communal areas, rubbish removal, decoration, servicing of gas and electrical installations.	<p>increases as the work progresses.</p> <p>The loan must be repaid in full at the end of the 5 year term if not before, either by re-mortgaging or selling the property.</p> <p>The loan must be repaid if the property is sold.</p> <p>The loan must be repaid in either of the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular repayments ▪ Occasional repayments ▪ No payments at all – loan is repaid in full when the property is sold
Small Repairs Scheme	Over 65 and/or disabled. Private tenant or home owner.	Small repairs including: Doors/window repair and adjustments, minor joinery work, minor plumbing repairs, fitting locks/security chains/smoke alarms, half steps, garden rails, glazing, minor electrical work (e.g. wiring plugs), refix loose carpeting/floor boards.	Decorating, gardening, work above first floor level, gas or electrical work, jobs taking longer than half a day.	
Energy Efficiency	Open to all except RSL tenants.			

<p>Cocoon (USEA act as agent for this scheme)</p> <p>Warm Front (Managed by Eaga) (Max £2,700)</p>	<p>Over 70 or in receipt of means tested or disability related benefits qualify for fully granted works. Discounts available for everyone else.</p> <p>Over 60 or with a child under 16 or pregnant women and in receipt of at least one of following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Support • Council Tax Benefit • Housing Benefit • Job Seekers Allowance (income-based) • Pension Credit • Income-related Employment and Support Allowance <p>OR householders in receipt of disability related benefit or a benefit with disability premium attached.</p>	<p>Cavity wall and loft insulation</p> <p>Cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, provision or upgrading of heating system.</p>		
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Notes:

1. Where heating is being installed, the Council will seek to install high efficiency heating.
2. Where an applicant is receiving a Discretionary Renovation Grant, Home Repair Assistance Grant or Empty Homes Grant, the Council will seek to include minimum energy efficiency standards including minimum levels of insulation within the grant award. Where applicable, applicants will be directed to other appropriate grants for installation of these features.
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 the United Sustainable Energy Agency 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 that the service for applicants is as straight forward and consistent as possible.

Stage 1: Making a preliminary application and assessment

The process begins when a potential applicant makes enquiries regarding possible assistance. The initial contact via a Social Services or private OT, a Care Manager or a direct self referral is made to the Council's Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team.

An immediate assessment will be made to determine whether the work required qualifies for financial assistance, and by carrying out a Preliminary Test of Resources (PTOR) i.e. a means test. The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Ridgeway Care and Repair will carry out the PTOR for all applications except those for tenants of Sovereign Housing Association (SHA). The Council's Private Sector Housing Officer (PSHO) will carry out the PTOR for applicants that are Sovereign Housing Association tenants.

Applications for children and young people under the age of 18 years are not subject to a financial assessment and so do not require a PTOR.

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 1 of this policy.

Once the PTOR has been carried out, applicants will be notified by the Council of the outcome and whether they are eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant and the allocated OT will be informed. Applicants that do not financially qualify for grant assistance will be offered advice on making a nil grant application, as the contribution may be used to offset future grant applications.

Stage 2: Application process (See flow chart)

Once it is established that an applicant financially qualifies for a DFG, the case will be referred to the relevant OT. The OT will specify the works considered necessary and appropriate to meet the identified needs of the disabled person, using guidance from the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

The OT will advise the Private Sector Housing Officer of all recommended works, the priority rating and justifications for such works. The PSHO will verify that the works are eligible under the DFG guidance and refers the case to the HIA or Sovereign Housing Association as appropriate.

The HIA or SHA will draw up a detailed specification and schedule of works based on the OT's requirements. A copy of the specification is submitted to the OT for approval.

The HIA or SHA will then arrange for the specification to be priced by at least two contractors. Where appropriate the HIA or SHA will obtain planning or building regulations permission.

The HIA or SHA will assist the applicant in completing the application form, owners/tenant certificates and will obtain landlord consent and property title details where appropriate.

The HIA or SHA will then submit the full completed application to the Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team for approval.

The PSHO assesses the application to ensure that it is complete and eligible. The PSHO will complete the final financial test of resources. The HIA or SHA is notified of any missing or incorrect information.

The Council will approve mandatory DFGs if all of 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. If there is a specific reason for wishing to use the services of the contractor providing the dearer quote, this must be justified in writing by the applicant, OT or the agent. If the applicant wishes to use the dearer contractor and the OT does not believe that this is necessary, the applicant can fund the difference in cost at their discretion.

The application is then passed to the Housing Strategy Manager for full approval in accordance with the following timescales and funding availability:

- 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 approved within that month. Where budget provision is available at the end of the month, medium and then low priority applications will be approved. Where insufficient monthly budget provision has been made available, medium 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. A monthly DFG panel will review that waiting cases.

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

Once the grant has been approved, the HIA or SHA will arrange for the works to begin and will oversee the works while they are on site.

In the instance of unforeseen works, the HIA or SHA must seek approval from the PSHO or Housing Strategy Manager before the works continue, and the grant will be re-approved. Additional or unforeseen works that are carried out without such authorisation will not be paid.

The Council have produced a leaflet 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 works, unless otherwise agreed with the PSHO. In the case of large scale works, a contractor can negotiate an interim payment plan with the PSHO before the works begin.

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 works, subject to the conditions stated below, the Council will pay the contribution directly to the contractor.

All applicants will be expected to sign a Completion Certificate 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.

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. Invoices must not be dated prior to the completion of the works.

The acting agent for the case must submit their fee invoices together with the contractor invoices and the relevant completion certificates.

Appendix 3

Grant Application Process for Discretionary Renovation and Home Repair Assistance Grants

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 that 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 either to the Council's Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team or the HIA. Enquiries made to the Council will be referred to the HIA unless the applicant wishes to manage their own application.

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 HIA will carry out a Preliminary Test of Resources (PTOR) i.e. means test. The test of resources is set out in Annex J2 of the circular 17/96 entitled 'Private Sector Renewal: A Strategic Approach' 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 1 of this policy.

Once the initial assessment and/or PTOR have been carried out, applicants will be notified by the HIA if they are considered eligible for a grant application. The HIA will also visit the applicant's property to assess the eligibility of the works required. In the case of Renovation Grant applications, the HIA will carry out a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment of the property to identify the hazards present and the works required. The applicant will also be required to complete a Home Energy Check survey as part of their application.

The HIA will draw up a schedule of works which will be priced by at least two contractors (three for works over £10,000). The HIA will also assist the applicant in the completion of the application form and accompanying owner's certificate. The HIA will obtain title details of the property and the applicant's financial information required to prove eligibility for the grant.

The HIA will submit the full application to the Council's Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team for approval. The PSHO will assess the application to ensure that it is complete and eligible. The PSHO will also carry out the final financial test of resources.

The following fees can be included within the grant application:

- Agents fees (10% of cost of works for RGs, 5% for HRAs)
- Planning application fees
- Building Regulation approval fees
- Architect 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 conditions are met, based on the tender quote provided, normally the lowest of the competitive tenders, or according to a schedule of rates, where used.

The level of grant approved may be the total cost of the agreed works (plus fees) subject to the grant maximum, or where the applicant has an assessed contribution, or is able to raise funding of their own, the difference between the value of the applicant's contribution and the total cost of the agreed works, subject to the grant maximum.

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

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 commence 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 grant payments will be made direct to the relevant contractor, upon satisfactory completion of the work, unless otherwise agreed with the PSHO. All applicants will be expected to sign a form stating that they are satisfied with the work before payments are made. The HIA must also inspect the works and 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 PSHO. Additional or unforeseen works that are carried out without such authorisation will not be paid. In the event of the cost of unforeseen works exceeding the grant maximum, the applicant will be expected to meet this cost.

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.

Contractors who wish to seek interim payments should make this known at the time of quotation and should negotiate a payment plan with the PSHO.

Appendix 4

Application Process for Flexible Home Improvement Loans

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 that 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 either to the Council's Housing Strategy, Enabling and Grants Team or the HIA.

An immediate assessment will be made to determine whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria and if work required qualifies for financial assistance. The applicant will then be provided with a Customer Information Document by the PSHO or the HIA.

The PSHO will visit the applicant to discuss the terms of the loan and to obtain the required information to establish whether the applicant has sufficient equity in the property and to provide an illustration of the loan.

The PSHO will provide the applicant with a preliminary illustration of the loan based on an estimated cost of works and advise the applicant to discuss the loan with family, friends or a financial advisor.

Stage 2: Application process

If the applicant is eligible and wishes to proceed, the HIA will assist the applicant in producing a schedule of works which will be priced by at least two contractors. The HIA will also assist the applicant with completion of the application form and associated documents.

At any time the applicant can request revised illustrations from the PSHO.

The HIA will submit the application, tenders and supporting documents to the Council for a final illustration and approval.

The following fees can be included within the loan application:

- Agents fees (up to 12% of the overall cost of the works)
- Planning application fees
- Building Regulation approval fees
- Architect fees

The PSHO will assess the application to ensure that it is complete and eligible. The PSHO will provide the applicant with a final illustration.

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

If the applicant wishes to accept the loan and proceed, the HIA will oversee the works on site.

The Council will aim to determine all Flexible Home Improvement Loan applications within 12 weeks of receipt of the full loan application.

Stage 3: Payment of loan

The Council has the discretion to decide whether to provide the loan recipient with the full loan and enable the recipient to make payments direct to the contractors, or to retain the loan and request that the contractors invoice the Council for payment.

This discretion is to be exercised on a case by case basis. The Council will only retain the loan and make the payments itself if there is significant doubt as to whether the recipient would use the funds for the approved repairs, improvements or adaptation.

Where the loan is paid to the recipient, invoices must be directed to the HIA or the recipient.

Appendix 5

The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a system for assessing the health and safety risks in dwellings, and replaces the fitness standard.

The Principle

The principle of HHSRS is that any dwelling (including the structure, associated out buildings, gardens, yards, amenity space and means of access) should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor.

A dwelling includes a house, a self contained flat, bedsit, a room in a hostel or similar residential building.

The assessment judges whether there is a hazard present in the dwelling, that is likely to cause harm to an occupier or visitor.

The assessment is based on the most vulnerable potential occupant, but the Council will be able to take account of the vulnerability of the actual occupant when deciding the best course of action to take following an assessment (see Enforcement Guidance).

The rating system can also compare the risks associated with different types of hazards. Some are more long term and chronic in their nature, like dampness and cold, whilst others how their effects quickly, such as falls and trips. It should be borne in mind that all homes contain some inherent hazards such as stairs and electrical equipment. The aim of the rating system is to minimise the risks posed to occupiers, potential occupiers and visitors.

The Hazards

There are 29 hazards and these have been arranged into 4 main groups reflecting the basic health requirements:

PHYSIOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

Hygrothermal conditions

1. Damp and mould growth
2. Excess cold
3. Excess heat

Pollutants (non-microbial)

- 4 Asbestos and manufactured mineral fibre
- 5 Biocides
- 6 Carbon Monoxide and fuel combustion products
- 7 Lead
- 8 Radiation
- 9 Uncombusted fuel gas
- 10 Volatile Organic Compounds

PSYCHOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

Space, Security, Light and Noise

11. Crowding and space
12. Entry by intruders

13. Lighting
14. Noise

PROTECTION AGAINST INFECTION

Hygiene, Sanitation and Water Supply

15. Domestic hygiene, Pests and Refuse
16. Food safety
17. Personal hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage
18. Water supply

PROTECTION AGAINST ACCIDENTS

Falls

19. Falls associated with baths etc
20. Falling on level surfaces etc
21. Falling on stairs etc
22. Falling between levels

Electric Shocks, Fires, Burns and Scalds

23. Electrical hazards
24. Fire
25. Flames, hot surfaces etc

Collisions, Cuts and Strains

26. Collision and entrapment
27. Explosions
28. Position and operability of amenities etc
29. Structural collapse and falling elements

The Inspection and Risk Assessment.

An appropriately qualified officer from the Environmental Health and Licensing Team inspects a dwelling and notes down all defects found. Once the inspection is completed the officer judges the hazards present and the likelihood of an incident causing harm to the persons within the property (including potential visitors).

Every effort will be made to notify the owner/landlord of the property of the intention to inspect and give them the opportunity to be present during the inspection.

This results in a score representing the degree of risk of any hazard. If the score for a hazard is in excess of 1000, this is known as a **Category 1 hazard**, and there will be a legal duty on the Council to take appropriate enforcement action. For scores less than a 1000, known as **Category 2 hazards**, the Council will have power to take action, but no legal duty.

Meaning of “Category 1 hazard” and “Category 2 Hazard” in the Act

- “category 1 hazard” means a hazard of a prescribed description which falls within a prescribed band as a result of achieving, under a prescribed method for calculating the seriousness of hazards of that description, a numerical score of or above a prescribed amount;
- “category 2 hazard” means a hazard of a prescribed description which falls within a prescribed band as a result of achieving, under a prescribed method for calculating the seriousness of hazards of that description, a numerical score below the minimum amount prescribed for a category 1 hazard of that description; and

- “hazard” means any risk of harm to the health or safety of an actual or potential occupier of a dwelling or HMO which arises from a deficiency in the dwelling or HMO or in any building or land in the vicinity (whether the deficiency arises as a result of the construction of any building, an absence of maintenance or repair, or otherwise).

Dealing with multiple Hazards

Officers should be aware to the cumulative impact that many category 2 hazards may have against one single high scoring hazard. There may be an obvious need to require action on certain hazards even if they are still considered category 2 i.e. Falls on stairs may need more attention than an equal scoring hazard.

Building Regulations

Approval under the building regulations needs to be addressed separately. It can be used as a guide as to the lowest “ideal” standard.

Empty Property

Relationship with the Empty Homes Strategy needs to be considered and the type of empty property and its impacts on adjacent properties.

Appendix 6

West Berkshire Council

Environmental Health and Licensing Private Sector Housing

Purpose:

To set out the options for enforcement action when assessing properties primarily within the private rented sector.

All actions shall be taken with regards to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System: Enforcement Guidance (ODPM 2006), the Housing Health and Safety Rating System: Operating Guidance (ODPM 2006) and the West Berkshire Council Environmental Health Enforcement Policy

The above guidance shall also be read in conjunction with the Housing Act 2004 and HHSRS (England) Regulations 2005 (SI2005 No 3208)

Date: 30 June 2009
Review Date: 30 June 2011

1. ENFORCEMENT

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) involves officers assessing 29 potential hazards (see appendix 5) and using professional judgement to decide whether improvements are needed. The rating system separates hazards into either category 1 or 2.

1.1. CATEGORY 1 HAZARDS

Officers have a duty to deal with these types of hazards; this could include requiring the owner to carry out works to remedy the defect.

1.2. CATEGORY 2 HAZARDS

Officers have a discretionary power to deal with these types of hazards. These are hazards which the officer believes are less likely to cause harm to the health and safety of the occupant/s.

1.3. ENFORCEMENT OPTIONS (Non HMO/ non licensed HMO)

If an officer believes enforcement action is needed they must provide a 'statement of reason' which explains their decision. Where Category 1 hazards exist the officer must use 1 of the following actions:

- **Improvement Notice** – this is a schedule which identifies the hazard, where the deficiency is in the property, what can be done to remedy the deficiency and the dates when work should start and finish.
- **Prohibition Order** – this is similar to the above but will prohibit use of all or part of the residential property. The nature of the prohibition will depend on the category 1 hazard identified.
- **Hazard Awareness Notice** – this is used to advise the person on whom it is served about the existence of a hazard but there is no penalty for non-compliance. These are generally used in situations where officers believe that the remedy to the deficiency is not practical to achieve and would be excessive, given the nature of the hazard.
- **Emergency Remedial Action** – this action is only taken where there is an identified Category 1 hazard that presents an imminent risk of serious harm to the health or safety of the occupiers either in that property or any other. This would be used in situations where officers decided that remedial work was needed to remove such a hazard in a short space of time. The Authority is able to recover expenses when action like this is taken.
- **Emergency Prohibition Order** – these are used when there is an identified Category 1 hazard that presents an imminent risk of serious harm to the health or safety of any of the occupiers either in that property or any other. These would be used in situations where all or part of the property needed prohibiting.

1.4. ENFORCEMENT OPTIONS (Licensed HMO)

In addition to those stated in 4.3 Officers have the following powers:

- **Licence Variation** – where an officer believes there to be a change of circumstance since issue.
- **Licence Revocation** – where an officer believes there to have been serious or repeated breach of a licence condition/s. Where an officer believes the licence holder or management is no longer a fit and proper person/s.

- **Rent Repayment Orders (RRO)** – this authority will pursue landlords for housing benefit repayment where convicted of operating an unlicensed HMO. The extent of repayment will be based on the number of months passed since the landlord was required to licence the property, capped to a maximum of 12 months.
- **Restrictions on Terminating Tenancies** – this protects tenants who were already living in a property before the licence was issued.
- **Interim Management Orders (IMO)** – An order which, for 12 months or less, aims to protect the health, safety or welfare of persons occupying the house, or people occupying or having an interest in any premises in the vicinity. In addition an order can aim to secure the proper management of the house pending the granting of an HMO Licence or the making of a final management order.
- **Final Management Orders (FMO)** – An order which, for 5 years or less, aims to secure proper management of the house on a long term basis in accordance with a management scheme contained in the order.

1.5. ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Environmental Health and Licensing work to the Crown Prosecution Service Enforcement Concordat, the Compliance Code and Code for Prosecutors.

2. PRIVATE SECTOR RENTAL (NON HMO)

Main contact from this sector of the housing market is through tenant complaints and service requests. EH Officers use the HHSRS in determining appropriate standards and use methods described in 4.3 to achieve compliance. Occasionally officers will work in conjunction with WBC Housing Officers in relation to allocations of Grant funding, Empty Homes and Allocation of Housing Points to tenants.

3. SOCIAL LANDLORDS

As with Private Sector Rental (Non HMO) these are dealt with on a reactive basis from complaints and service requests from tenants. EH Officers make contact with social landlords and discuss cases and based on risk to occupants agree course of action.

4. OWNER – OCCUPIED PROPERTY

Environmental Health and Licensing will not pursue such properties for enforcement of this legislation other than exceptional circumstances where either public health, disrepair and/or nuisance were a significant problem and it was in the public interest to take formal action.

5. APPEALS

As with most legislation there are processes which allow for the appeal against decisions made.

Improvement Notices

HA 2004 Part 1 Chapter 2 section 17 – Schedule 1. Appeals must be made to the Residential Property Tribunal within 21 days (28 days for variation or revocation). Information will always accompany an authorised notice.

Prohibition Orders

HA 2004 Part 1 Chapter 2 section 27 – Schedule 2. Appeals must be made to the Residential Property Tribunal within 28 days and information will always accompany an authorised order. Options available include stating that there is a more appropriate course of action such as improvement notice, hazard awareness notice, demolition order or a variation or full revocation of the order.

Hazard Awareness Notices

There is no provision for appeals against this type of notice as they do not require any works to be carried out.

Emergency Actions

HA 2004 Part 1 Chapter 3 section 45. Appeals must be made to the Residential Property Tribunal within 28 days but will not prevent the action from being taken or Order having effect until the RPT have made their decision.

Appendix 7 Budget Projections 2009/10 to 2013/14

	2009/10			2010/11			2011/12			2012/13			2013/14		
	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total
Disabled Facilities Grant	805,810	648,000	1,453,810	804,636	500,000	1,304,630	803,410	500,000	11,303,410	802,160	500,000	1,302,160	800,870	500,000	1,300,870
Home Repair Assistance Grant	109,270		109,270	109,270		109,270	190,270		109,270	109,270		109,270	109,270		109,270
Renovation Grant	125,660		125,660	125,660		125,660	125,660		125,660	125,660		125,660	125,660		125,660
Empty Property Grant	57,750		57,750	57,230		57,230	56,700		56,700	56,150		56,150	55,580		55,580
Flood Resilience Grant	TBC														
Flexible Home Improvement Loan		169,000	169,000		169,000	169,000		TBC			TBC			TBC	

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.

	2009/10			2010/11			2011/12			2012/13			2013/14		
	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total	Council	External	Total
Occupational Therapist Equipment	85,420		85,420	85,420		85,420	85,420		85,420	85,420		85,420	85,420		85,420

Sovereign Housing Association also has an annual budget of £230,000 to pay towards adaptations, up to the value of £2500 for their tenants

Appendix 8 Summary of Grant Conditions

Carrying out and Completion of works (applicable to all grants)

1. In approving an application for a grant the Council may require as a condition of the grant that the eligible works are carried out in accordance with any specification they decide to impose.
2. It is a condition of grant that the eligible works are carried out within twelve months from the date of approval of the application. This period may, however, be extended by the Council if they think fit, particularly where they are satisfied that the eligible works cannot be, or could not have been, carried out without carrying out other works which could not have been reasonably foreseen when the application was made.

Availability for letting

In a case where a certificate of intended letting accompanies the application,

1. It is a condition of the grant that, throughout the initial period (that is five years beginning with the date on which the Council certifies the eligible works to have been completed to their satisfaction).
 - a) the dwelling will be let or available for letting as a residence, and not for a holiday, on a tenancy which is not a long tenancy (except in the case of a disabled facilities grant), by the owner for the time being of the dwelling, to a person who is not connected with him (generally speaking, this means not a member of his family), or
 - b) the dwelling will be occupied or available for occupation by a member of the agricultural population under a service contract, and otherwise than as a tenant.
2. It is also a condition of the grant that the Council may by written notice require the owner to provide within 21 days a statement showing how the property is occupied.
3. The grant conditions remain in force throughout the initial period and are binding not only on the person who provides the certificate but also on any subsequent owner of the dwelling (except for a housing authority or registered housing association).
4. In the event of a breach of the grant conditions, the Council may demand the repayment of the grant with interest, but they do have the discretion either not to demand repayment, or to require payment of less than the full amount.
5. It is a further condition of the grant that if, within the initial period, an owner makes a relevant disposal (other than an exempt disposal) of the dwelling *with vacant possession* he is obliged to repay to the Council the entire amount of the grant. If such a relevant disposal is made *without vacant possession*, the amount the owner is obliged to repay will depend on the period which has elapsed before disposal takes place, the amount being reduced by one-fifth for each complete year which has elapsed during the initial period, up to the date of disposal. [An owner is required to notify the Council forthwith in writing of his intention to make a relevant disposal and to give the Council any information reasonably requested by them in that connection].

Notes:

- i) If neither (a) nor (b) above applies during any part of the initial period, but the dwelling is occupied by a person who is a protected occupier under the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 or is occupied under an assured agricultural occupancy, within the meaning of Part I of the Housing Act 1988, the condition will not be breached.
- ii) In a case where personal representatives or trustees are the owner, the letting must not be to a person who has a beneficial interest under the will, intestacy or trust, in the property or the proceeds of its sale.
- iii) "Relevant disposal" means the sale of freehold or assignment of the lease, or the grant of a long lease (one of over 21 years, otherwise than at a rack rent).
- iv) "Exempt disposal" means a disposal which is:
 - (i) of the whole of the dwelling to the owner or one of the joint owners of the dwelling or to a wife or husband or former wife or husband of one of the joint owners, or a member of that person's family, or, in the case of a company, to an associated company;
 - (ii) of the whole of the dwelling under a will or inheritance on a death;

- (iii) of the whole of the dwelling by Court Order in the course of a domestic breakdown;
- (iv) compulsorily, or by agreement, to a public body with compulsory purchase powers;
- (v) of land which is "included land" under Section 184 of the Housing Act 1985; or
- (vi) of a defective house under part XVI of the housing act 1985 and the owner is exercising his entitlement to assistance by way of repurchase.

Note: Under sections 45 and 48 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, where a disposal is made under (i) and (ii) above, the grant recovery conditions remain in force for any subsequent disposal within the original grant condition period.

Renovation Grants

In a case where a certificate of owner-occupation accompanies the application.

It is a condition of the grant that where an owner makes a relevant disposal of the dwelling, other than an exempt disposal, within a period of ten years from the date on which the Council certifies that the eligible works have been carried out to their satisfaction, ("the certified date"), he will be required to repay the grant to the Council, on demand. This condition remains in force for the whole of the ten years and is binding not only on the person who gives the certificate, but also on any subsequent owner, except that where an exempt disposal is made, the conditions as to repayment cease to have effect. [An owner is required to notify the Council forthwith in writing of his intention to make a relevant disposal and to give the Council any information reasonably requested by them in that connection].

1. The Council may decide not to make any demand for repayment in a case where they are satisfied that the owner is elderly or infirm and is disposing of the property with the intention of going to live in sheltered housing or a residential care home. The Council also has discretion not to make a demand in certain circumstances where a mortgagee exercises a power of sale.

Note: The meaning of "relevant disposal" and "exempt disposal" are set out in notes (iii) and (iv) above.

HMO Grants

In a case where an HMO grant has been approved by the Council,

1. It is a condition of the grant that, throughout a period of five years from the date on which the Council certifies that the eligible works have been carried out to their satisfaction ("the initial period"), the house will be residentially occupied or available for residential occupation, under tenancies or licences, by persons who are not connected with the owner for the time being of the house (generally speaking, this means not a member of his family). A residential occupation does not mean a holiday.
2. It is also a condition of the grant that the Council may by written notice require the owner to provide within 21 days a statement showing how the above condition is being fulfilled.
3. In the event of a breach of the above conditions, or if at any time within the initial period the Council have given a direction under Section 354 of the Housing Act 1985 (power to limit the number of occupants in a house) the Council may demand the repayment of the grant with interest, but they do have the discretion either not to demand repayment, or to require payment of less than the full amount.
4. It is a further condition of the grant that if, within the initial period, an owner makes a relevant disposal (other than an exempt disposal) of the house he is obliged to repay to the Council the entire amount of the grant. [An owner is required to notify the Council forthwith in writing of his intention to make a relevant disposal and to give the Council any information reasonably requested by them in that connection].
5. The grant conditions remain in force throughout the initial period and are binding not only on the person who provides the certificate but also on any subsequent owner of the house (except for a housing authority or registered housing association). Any HMO condition shall cease to have effect once a demand for repayment in respect of the conditions mentioned in paragraphs 3 and 4 above has been satisfied.

Note: The meanings of "relevant disposal" and "exempt disposal" are set out in notes (iii) and (iv) above.

Common Parts Grants

In a case where a landlord's Common Parts Grant has been approved by the Council,

1. It is a condition of the grant that if, within the initial period, (that is, a period of five years beginning with the date on which the Council certifies that the eligible works have been carried out to their satisfaction) an owner makes a relevant disposal (other than an exempt disposal) of the building his is obliged to repay to the Council the entire amount of the grant. [An owner is required to notify the Council forthwith in writing of his intention to make a relevant disposal and to give the Council any information reasonably requested by them in that connection].
2. The grant conditions remain in force throughout the initial period and are binding not only on the person who provides the certificate by also on any subsequent owner of the building (except for a housing authority or registered housing association). Any Common Parts grant condition shall cease to have effect once a demand for repayment in respect of the condition mentioned above has been satisfied.

Note: the meanings of "relevant disposal" and exempt disposal" are set out in notes (iii) and (iv) above.

Disabled Facilities Grants

DFGs for owner occupied dwellings may be subject to a charge. A limited charge of up to £10,000 on grants over £5100 is repayable if the property is disposed of within 10 years of the certified date and subject to the Council being satisfied that it is reasonable in all circumstances to require the repayment, having considered:

- The extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he required to repay all or any of the grant
- Whether disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment
- Whether disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or well being of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
- Whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm or in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need of by reason of disability or infirmity.

The Council will also seek repayment of a DFG where it has investigated and has reasonable cause to believe that the applicant has abused the DFG system.

Appendix 8

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Summary of Grant Conditions

Disabled Facilities Grant

1. In approving an application for a grant the Council is liable to pay the grant only in so far as payment for the cost of the eligible works described in any specifications or agreed schedule of work and any agreed drawings or schematic and where these works have been carried out in a reasonable and workmanlike manner.
2. It is a condition of the grant that the eligible works are carried out within twelve months from the date of approval of the application. This period may, however, be extended by the Council if they think fit, particularly when they are satisfied that the eligible works cannot be, or could not have been, carried out without carrying out other works which could not have been reasonably foreseen when the application was made.
3. 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/loan process.
4. The applicant is responsible for ensuring the quality of the completed works
5. If an applicant submits an estimate/quote from a member of their family who then carries out the agreed works the grant/loan will only be paid on the basis of the cost of materials and not labour.
6. 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/loan assistance as long as work is not commenced prior to formal approval.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 of Housing Strategy 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.

12. In any case where financial circumstances at the time of application are later confirmed differently 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 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 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.
13. 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.
14. In the case of assistance for works to common parts an individual applicant may be assisted with the proportion of the cost for which they are responsible, eg where there are 4 residents each will be considered responsible for one quarter of the common parts unless evidence to the contrary, eg deeds or tenancy agreements etc, prove otherwise.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. The responsibility to gain all necessary approvals for works to be undertaken with assistance rests with the applicant or their agent, such approvals may be Planning Permission or Building Regulation Approval or any of the matters raised within the terms and conditions of grant assistance.
18. Where a grant approval includes the cost of installing specialised equipment for the benefit of a person with a disability it is a condition of the approval that the equipment is returned to the Council if within 10 years it is no longer needed. The grant recipient, or a representative, must notify the Council as soon as the equipment is no longer needed and 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.
19. Where the grant was approved in addition to a contribution from the applicant for the cost of any specialist equipment, in accepting a grant the applicant waives their right to recover their contribution on removal or re-use of any equipment.
20. 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 Housing Strategy Services.
21. DFGs for owner occupied dwellings may be subject to a charge. A limited charge of up to £10,000 on grants over £5100 is repayable if the property is disposed of within 10 years of the certified date and subject to the Council being satisfied that it is reasonable in all circumstances to require the repayment, having considered:
 - The extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he required to repay all or any of the grant
 - Whether disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment
 - Whether disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or well being of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and

- Whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm or in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need of by reason of disability or infirmity.

The Council will also seek repayment of a DFG where it has investigated and has reasonable cause to believe that the applicant has abused the DFG system.

Appendix 9 Acronyms

CHR	Common Housing Register
CLG	Communities and Local Government
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
EPG	Empty Property Grant
FHIL	Flexible Home Improvement Loan
FRG	Flood Resilience Grant
GOSE	Government Office for the South East
HECA	Home Energy Conservation Act
HHSRS	Housing Health and Safety Rating System
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
HRA	Home Repair Assistance
LLTI	Limiting Long Term Illness
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OT	Occupational Therapist
PSA	Public Service Agreement
PSHO	Private Sector Housing Officer
PTOR	Preliminary Test of Resources
RRO	Regulatory Reform Order 2002
RG	Renovation Grant
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure
SHA	Sovereign Housing Association
USEA	United Sustainable Energy Agency

Appendix 10 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 and Grants Team

Housing Strategy Manager: Melanie Brain 01635 519403
Alison Reilly 01635 519363
Karen Felgate 01635 519586
Maureen Sheridan 01635 519680
Rachel Randall 01635 519629

Social Services

Council Offices, Avonbank House, West Street, Newbury, RG14 1BZ
Adult Services 0845 601 4726
Children & Families 01635 503090

Ridgeway Care & Repair Berkshire West

2 Rivermead, Pipers Way, Thatcham, RG19 4EP
Tel: 01635 588811
Email: bwcr@ridgewaycommunity.org.uk

Sovereign Housing Association

Berkshire House, 17-24 Bartholomew Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5LL
Tel: 01635 550222
Email: enquiries@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: Valarie Whitton, Tel: 01635 519489
Email: vwhitton@westberks.gov.uk

Crime Prevention

Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Officer: Romy Freiburghaus
Tel: 01635 264 624 Email: romy.freiburghaus@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

West Berkshire Council Community Safety Manager: Rachel Craggs
Tel 01635 519325 Email: rcraggs@westberks.gov.uk

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

Energy Efficiency

United Sustainable Energy Agency 0800 512012

Tel: 07908 699920 Email: usea@usea.org.uk

www.usea.org.uk

Cocoon

Tel: 0800 40 48 777

www.cocoonyourhome.co.uk

Warm Front

Tel: 0800 316 6011

Enquiries 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

Enquiries about poor housing conditions in the private rented sector

Public Protection 01635 519192

Email: ehadvice@westberks.gov.uk

Complaints

Corporate Complaints West Berkshire Council

Tel: 01635 42400

Email: comments@westberks.gov.uk

Social Care Services Public Liaison Officer

Tel: 01635 519024

Email: 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

Ad Hoc Equality Impact Assessment Template

Note: In line with our comprehensive approach to equality, key policies and procedures are assessed for their impact on the six strands of equality: race; disability; gender; age; sexuality; and religion or belief. This template should be used to record evidence of an ad hoc assessment. For further information see 'general guidance on impact assessments' available on the intranet.

Name of policy or function to be assessed:

Private Sector Housing Policy

Is this an assessment of an existing policy or function, or a new one to be developed?

A review of the existing Private Sector Housing Policy consisting of some additions and amendments to the range of housing assistance and support offered by the Council.

Officers responsible:

Head of Service: June Graves	email: jgraves@westberks.gov.uk
Lead Officer for Assessment: Mel Brain	Email mbrain@westberks.gov.uk
Teams involved: Housing Strategy, Enabling & Grants	

Date evidence workbook was approved by Head of Service or Corporate Director

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Details of what has been assessed and how it has been assessed

Copy of the policy or details of function assessed

This section should include the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy or function and the desired outcome:

The Private Sector Housing Policy sets out the support and assistance offered by the Council to residents to adapt, improve and maintain their homes, as required by the Regulatory Reform Order (England and Wales) (Housing Assistance) 2002 (RRO). The RRO provides the Council with discretionary powers to offer a range of financial assistance for home improvements. The Council also has a statutory duty to provide mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

The Council has opted to offer the following discretionary support and assistance:

- Home Repair Assistance Grants (HRA) – over 65 years old or in receipt of certain benefits, subject to a capital limit
- Renovation Grants – subject to a means test
- Flexible Home Improvement Loans (FHIL) – homeowners with sufficient equity over 60 years old
- Discretionary top up grant for DFG in respect of children – subject to works costing more than the mandatory grant limit and sufficient budget.
- Discretionary DFG to assist a disabled person to move house – subject to a means test in line with mandatory DFGs

A Housing Stock Condition Survey was carried out in 2008, which identified the need to continue to offer assistance on a client-based basis by targeting vulnerable private sector households. The government definition of vulnerable is used for the purpose of housing grants eligibility (over 65 years old or in receipt of benefits). DFGs are offered irrespective of tenure, subject to a means test (with the exception of children's cases).

The Council already offers HRAs, Renovation Grants, FHILs and Discretionary DFGs to assist with moving house. The new policy amends the eligibility criteria to direct those eligible for FHILs away from grants. Under the current policy, the FHIL is under utilized as many that would qualify for a FHIL also qualify for a grant. By utilizing the FHIL funding, further grant funding will become available to provide extra assistance for disabled children.

Adaptations for disabled children are often extremely complex and families struggle to meet the cost of the works when they exceed the mandatory DFG maximum.

This EIA assesses the Council's proposal to implement the above range of housing assistance measures.

Evidence used for assessing equality impact

Outline what *existing* data has been considered to help assess the impact:

The Council maintains a detailed database of all private sector renewal grants and DFGs. This data has been used to inform this assessment as well as data from the Stock Condition Survey 2008 and the District Profile.

What forms of consultation have taken place? Who was involved?

NB: please consider both internal and external consultation

Outline the responses from the consultation and key findings from existing data.

Issues identified regarding the six strands of equality

1. Race

This section indicates particular data and findings from consultation relevant to the impact on different racial groups, as required by the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000.

a. Are there concerns that the policy or function *could* have a differential impact on racial groups?

If so, please give details about which racial groups may be affected.

The housing assistance outlined is available to all vulnerable households, irrespective of race. Accessibility if English is not their first language. There may be cultural issues where such schemes are not acceptable

b. What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for stating it does, OR does not, have any differential impact on racial groups?

Our grants data illustrates that the majority of grant recipients class themselves as white British. 1.8% of DFG recipients, 6.6% of HRA recipients and 2% of Renovation Grant recipients were of other ethnic origin. The higher rate for HRAs can be explained by a larger number of these grants awarded to Gypsies and Travellers. Although non-white British grant recipient numbers are low, they are in line with the District Profile figure of 2.6% of the population being from a BME background.

2. Disability

This section indicates particular data and findings from consultation relevant to the impact on people with disabilities, including physical disabilities, learning difficulties or mental health problems, and supports our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

a. Are there concerns that the policy or function *could* have a differential impact on disabled people?

If so, please give details about which disability groups may be affected.

As DFGs and top up grants for children's DFGs are specifically for disabled people, the policy does have a differential impact on people with disabilities. The grants fund the provision of adaptations to enable disabled people to remain in their own homes, or to assist them to move house should this be more appropriate. DFGs can only be awarded if the works are deemed necessary and appropriate by an Occupational Therapist (OT). Therefore a disabled person could be thought to be differentially impacted upon should an OT not deem the works necessary and appropriate.

The HRA policy also prioritises disabled people as disabled people are more likely to live in lower income households and are less likely to be able to maintain or repair their own home..

b. What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for stating it does, OR does not, have on any differential impact on people with disabilities?

The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey showed that 10.2% of households which have a resident with a disability are likely to live in homes with disrepair. This compares to a West Berkshire average of 8.0%. Currently 34% of HRA grant recipients self-report as having a disability.

3. Gender

This section indicates particular data and findings from consultation relevant to either gender and supports the Gender Duty, which will come into force in 2007.

a. Are there concerns that the policy or function *could* have a differential impact on men or women?

If so, please give details about which gender may be affected.

There may be a differential impact on women, who tend to live longer and therefore are more likely to need to access a DFG, HRA, Renovation Grant or FHIL.

b. What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for stating it does, OR does not, have on any differential impact on either gender?

Although the District Profile states that West Berkshire consists of fewer older women than the national average, around 37% of DFG applicants are male and 63% are female. Similarly 60% of Renovation grant and 55% of HRA grant applicants are women..

Please note that the person requiring the adaptation does not necessarily have to be the applicant, therefore there is some degree of error in these figures.

4. Age

a. Are there concerns that the policy or function *could* have a differential impact on any particular age group? If so, please state which age group(s) may be affected.

As HRAs and FHILs are specifically aimed at older people, they do have a differential impact on particular age groups. People under 60 do not qualify for a FHIL at all, and people under 65 only qualify for a HRA if they are in receipt of certain benefits. Discretionary DFG top-up grants are only available to disabled children. DFGs and Renovation Grants do not have any age restrictions. The FHIL is specifically targeted at older homeowners as this group is particularly at risk of living in non-decent homes. The FHIL can help people to make improvements to the warmth, safety and security of their homes..

b. What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for stating it does, OR does not, have on any differential impact in terms of age?

The age figures for grants do not indicate a particularly higher number of older grant recipients. 49.8% of DFG recipients were of pension age. 4.6% of the remaining recipients were disabled children. 52.5% of HRA recipients and 60% of Renovation Grant recipients were of pension age. However, the District Profile states that only 17% of West Berkshire's population is of pension age, and 63% of the population are of working age, higher than the national average. Therefore, a higher proportion of the pension age group is accessing housing grants than other age groups. The Private Sector house Condition Survey 2008 showed that low income is mostly associated with older age groups, with the greatest proportion of low income households being where the head of the household is aged over 75 and the highest rate being for the over 85 age group.. Non-decency is also more prevalent in older age groups., again with the largest proportion of non-decent homes being for households whereh the head of household is over 85 and the next two highest being 16-24 year olds and 75-84 year olds. This pattern indicates that the greatest need for assistance to vulnerable occupiers is at the oldest end of the age range. As our housing assistance is aimed at vulnerable people, namely the elderly and those on low incomes, the assistance is partly targeted at specific age groups.

5. Religion or Belief

a. Are there concerns that the policy or function *could* have a differential impact in terms of different religions or faith groups? If so, please give details about which groups may be affected.

The housing assistance eligibility criteria are not affected by religion or beliefs. However, some with religious beliefs regarding loaning money may be affected by a differential impact, such as some sections of the Muslim community.

b. What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for stating it does, OR does not have, on any differential impact in terms of religion or belief?

Sharia Law has rules regarding the loaning of money which could affect the ability of people of this faith accessing FHILs. Further work would be required to understand this in detail.

6. Sexual Orientation

a. Are there concerns that the policy or function *could* have a differential impact on due to sexual orientation? If so, please give details.

The housing assistance eligibility criteria are not affected by sexual orientation. There is no data available to ascertain whether assistance is accessed by particular sexual orientations.

b. What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for stating it does, OR does not have, on any differential impact on sexual orientation

Please see above.

Risks of discrimination and/or opportunities to better promote equality

Could the differential impact, identified in sections 1 – 6, amount to there being the *potential* for adverse impact in this policy or function? If so please explain.

Yes, overall there is a positive impact as the policy promotes choice and health among those who are aged over 60 and/or are vulnerable. However, the schemes may negatively impact on other sectors of our overall client group (e.g. vulnerable or disabled people under 60, Muslims), for example in respect of accessing the service, or the fact that some assistance is only available to homeowners over a certain age.

Can the adverse impact be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one particular group? Or, for any other reason?

Note: Direct Discrimination cannot be legally justified; only indirect discrimination can be objectively justified

Yes, the policy promotes choice and health amongst people who are aged over 60 or who are vulnerable due to low income or disability.

Set out what *changes*, if any, will be made to the policy or function as a result of this assessment? Please use the table below to identify changes / actions, including timetable and outcome.

Action / Amendment	Outcome	Timescale
No changes will be made to the policy as a result of this assessment		

Note: All actions should be incorporated into your service or team plans, and/or, where appropriate inform action plans in Corporate Equality Schemes eg the Disability Equality Scheme, the Race Equality Scheme or the Gender Equality Scheme

State any other *actions* identified which might lead to greater equality but which are outside the remit of this assessment, or which require additional resources, or senior approval to implement.

Action(s) Recommended	Outcome Expected
The Flexible Home Improvement Loan scheme should be reviewed by the consortium by the end of 2010/2011 and in the next round of fund bidding (depending on demand for the loan). At the moment the priority is to set up the scheme and provide services to the equality groups (i.e. 60+) mentioned above	To try and extend the remit of the loan scheme to include other disabled and vulnerable groups

Future monitoring and review process

State how the on-going effects of this policy or function will be monitored for future impact

Note: all policies / functions should be reviewed at intervals to reassess their likely impact

State the date of the next review of this policy or function and the officer responsible.

Thank you for recording evidence of this impact assessment.

Please copy this record to the Lead Head for Equality within your directorate, and also a copy to Policy & Communication, who co-ordinate publication of impact assessments as required.

Email: evincent@westberks.gov.uk Telephone: 01635 519441

Individual Executive Member Decision

Title of Report:	Representation on South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
Report to be considered by:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date on which Decision is to be taken:	10 December 2009
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1964

Purpose of Report: To appoint a replacement representative on this Outside Body

Recommended Action: To appoint a substitute representative.

Reason for decision to be taken: This is one of the Council's outside bodies.

Statutory:
Other:

Non-Statutory:

Other options considered: None

Key background documentation: None

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Graham Jones - Tel (01235) 762744
E-mail Address:	gjones@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Moira Fraser
Job Title:	Democratic Services Manager
Tel. No.:	01635 519045
E-mail Address:	mfraser@westberks.gov.uk

Implications

Policy: None

Financial: The travel and subsistence claims will be met from within existing budgets.

Personnel: None

Legal/Procurement: None

Environmental: None

Partnering: None

Property: None

Risk Management: None

Community Safety: None

Equalities: Not required

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council: Graham Jones - no comments received

Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman: Brian Bedwell - fully endorses the appointment of Cllr Findlay

Select Committee Chairman: See OSMC Chair

Ward Members: Not applicable

Opposition Spokesperson: Jeff Brooks – no comments received

Local Stakeholders: Not applicable

Officers Consulted: Carolyn Murison, Jo Naylor, Robin Steel

Trade Union: Not required

Is this item subject to call-in.	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Supporting Information

1. Background

1.1 The role of this outside body is to:

- Supports Britain's reserve forces and cadets and therefore an interest in Reserve Forces and Cadets in the area is desirable;
- represent West Berkshire Council and the other Councils in Berkshire in relation to supporting the reserved forces and cadets within Berkshire;
- attend meetings and functions in this capacity;
- identify opportunities for the Councils of Berkshire to work with the reserved forces and cadets within Berkshire

1.2 Meetings take place twice a year usually at the TA Centres in Reading or Windsor.

1.3 The current representative Councillor Tony Linden is no longer able to fulfil this role.

1.4 The following Members have expressed an interest in being appointed as a substitute: Councillor Geoff Findlay

Appendices

There are no Appendices to this report.