



# CHELTENHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Notice of a meeting of Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Monday, 27 February 2012**  
**6.00 pm**  
**Pittville Room, Municipal Offices**

<b>Membership</b>	
<b>Councillors:</b>	Chris Coleman, Anne Regan (Chair), Rowena Hay (Vice-Chair), Diggory Seacome, Duncan Smith, Jo Teakle, Jon Walklett, Wendy Flynn and Simon Wheeler
<b>Coopteers:</b>	James Harrison and Karl Hemming

The Council has a substitution process and any substitutions will be announced at the meeting

### Agenda

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</b> To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2011	(Pages 1 - 14)
<b>4.</b>	<b>PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS</b> Public questions must be received no later than 10am on the fifth working day before the date of the meeting	
<b>5.</b>	<b>MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING</b> To include feedback from Cabinet meeting of 7 February regarding the Soc & Com resolution of 9 January on Youth and Anti Social behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cabinet Member Housing and Safety</li><li>• Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development</li><li>• Cabinet Member Sport and Culture</li></ul>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>TOURISM AND MARKETING STRATEGY UPDATE</b> Information/Discussion paper, Jane Lillystone, Museum,	(Pages 15 - 16)

		Arts and Tourism Manager	
8.		<b>PROSCENIUM BUILDING/GARDENS GALLERY</b> Presentation by Bob Freeman, Chairman-Gardens Gallery	
9.		<b>LONDON 2012 OLYMPICS UPDATE</b> Information/discussion paper, Craig Mortiboys, Healthy Communities Partnership Manager	(Pages 17 - 20)
10.		<b>CHELTENHAM BOROUGH HOMES- CHELTENHAM TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' VOICE</b> Presentation by Caroline Walker, (Head of Community Services) and Lisa Ledster, Cheltenham Borough Homes	
11.		<b>DRAFT HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2012-2017</b> Presentation from Martin Stacy, Housing and Communities Manager  (copy of presentation attached and draft housing and homelessness strategy, draft tenancy strategy and draft housing renewal policy documents attached for background information)	(Pages 21 - 114)
12.		<b>COMMITTEE WORK PLAN</b> The attached workplan lists items to be carried forward to the new Overview & Scrutiny committee.	(Pages 115 - 124)
13.		<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN DETERMINES TO BE URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION</b>	
14.		<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>  As per the Council Decision of 12 December 2011 new scrutiny arrangements will be in place following the May 2012 elections.	
15.		<b>BRIEFING NOTES-FOR INFORMATION ONLY</b> Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum Development Scheme update-Jane Lillystone, Museum, Arts and Tourism Manager	(Pages 125 - 126)

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### Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Monday, 9th January, 2012**

**6.00 - 8.35 pm**

<b>Attendees</b>	
<b>Councillors:</b>	Anne Regan (Chair), Chris Coleman, Rowena Hay, Diggory Seacome, Duncan Smith, Jon Walklett and Wendy Flynn
<b>Co-optees:</b>	James Harrison and Karl Hemming

### Minutes

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Teakle and the Cabinet Member for Sport and Culture.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2011 were signed and approved as a correct record.

**4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

There were none.

**5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE**

There were none.

**6. CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING**

The Cabinet member Housing and Health updated the meeting on the second phase of the allocation of youth funding. Bids to the value of £56k had been received. Successful bids were focussed on where there had been little coverage to date, gender gaps and ethnic groups. It was hoped that the County Council would continue to provide £50 k funding in subsequent years. CBC was working closely with CCP in developing youth services in the borough.

In her capacity as a governor of Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Trust the Cabinet member Housing and Health informed members of the proposed changes to the hospitals trust in terms of how specialist services were being taken forward. Paediatric emergency assessment would be directed to Gloucestershire Royal hospital, outpatient breast care would be directed to Cheltenham General Hospital. The new proposals were for stroke based and major trauma services to be based in Gloucester and vascular care to be based in Cheltenham. The Trust was committed to keeping an accident and emergency at Cheltenham. Cllr Hall was the CBC representative on the County Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and members should give their feedback on these proposals directly to her.

When asked whether the proposals would involve staff redundancies the Cabinet Member replied that she had not been informed that this would be the case. The details would be worked up with staff in terms of the suitability of particular wards. The strength of general older age medicine would be directed at Cheltenham as the town serviced an older population. Members highlighted the importance of maintaining the Accident & Emergency at Cheltenham due to the degree of older age people at Cheltenham, many of whom did not have transport.

The Cabinet Member was asked whether CBC was doing anything to respond to a campaign recently televised on encouraging local people to report housing voids. In particular it was asked whether CBC was intending to use its powers in taking over privately owned voids and bringing them in to use for those that are homeless. In response the Cabinet Member confirmed that she had raised this issue with the Private Sector Housing Manager and they would be examining this within the context of the developing housing strategy. This issue would also be discussed by the housing review group and via this means a briefing could be brought back to this committee.

### **7. INTERIM BUDGET AND HRA PROPOSALS 2012-2013**

The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development explained that the budget process had been easier this year despite the continued recession. This was partly due to the targeted decisions that had been made in the last budget round but also due to the Icelandic bank decision which had been dealt with more expeditiously than expected. In addition £250 000 of New Homes Bonus had been built into the 2012/13 base budget and the impact of HRA self-financing was positive. In addition the projected overspend in 2011/12 of £476k had been avoided due to the immediate freeze on recruitment and supplies and services.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the following structural issues, which included low level investment interest. Car parking income continued to decline, as was the case nationally. Concessionary fares also played a role in this decline. The Garden Waste scheme had not generated as much income as envisaged and whilst the scheme funded itself the estimated revenue had been reduced in next year's budget.

Whilst this year's budget saw the continuation of the council tax freeze the Cabinet Member warned that the situation would be very difficult in the following financial year as there would effectively be 5 % uplift in the level of council tax.

In terms of the Housing Revenue Account the Cabinet Member stated that it was a huge year of transformation for housing revenue and capital would be liberated by coming out of the national subsidy system. He did however express concern for tenants who, as a result of government policy, would be faced with increasing rents whilst benefits would be decreasing. Officers would be monitoring this closely.

Sarah Didcote, Group Accountant, gave a brief presentation on the budget, which is attached to these minutes for information.

The following responses were given by the Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development and the Group Accountant, to questions from members of the committee :

- The grant to the Cheltenham Festival for the Performing Arts had been reduced last year.
- Funding for the Arts Council would no longer exist in 2012/13 but £6 k had been given as a one off grant in 2011/12.
- The budget for Cheltenham Festivals had been entirely cut in 2011/12 but the Festivals had been awarded £50 k in New Homes Bonus funds and they would be eligible to bid for the same funds in the coming financial year.
- Bids had been received and analysed for the renewed Single Advice Contract and the results would be made public in the very near future.
- CBC had a good record of financial management. Producing a balanced budget was a statutory requirement. Quarterly monitoring reports were produced to flag up any deviations so that remedial action could be taken.
- Usage of the concessionary fares scheme had increased and this had an impact on reduced income from car parking. Cheltenham had a higher percentage of over 60s who were eligible for the scheme.
- Rents from allotment sites had been built into the base budget.
- In the context of the New Homes Bonus funding and in particular the Promoting Cheltenham Fund the purpose of this fund was to promote the image of the town on the back of enterprise. Government was examining the possibility of phasing in rates for new start ups. This would ensure that the town was an attractive place for small businesses.
- In terms of the £50 k allocated to youth work CCP was working closely with CBC and this money funded a youth worker. The scheme would be reviewed next year to evaluate its effectiveness and a decision would be made at that stage as to whether this arrangement should continue. In addition the County had allocated £50 k to CBC for youth projects and a second bidding round had just been concluded which had addressed certain gaps in the town.

The Cabinet Member was asked to explain why Cabinet had deemed it appropriate to freeze Council tax this current year bearing in mind that a 5 % increase would be necessary next year due to the time limited allocation from government. He said that the funding allocated by government had been built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In taking the decision this year Cabinet was mindful that there could have been a less steep transition for council tax payers next year but on the whole felt it was what government had intended. Cabinet had however written to central government explaining that this would put extra pressure on next year's budget.

With regard to housing commitments a question was raised as to whether there was any correlation with housing targets in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS). In response the Cabinet member replied that the commitments were based on the five year period of the MTFS in terms of the number of planning permissions and recent history of building and not against JCS targets but the Government drive for new build and perceived demand.

Concern was expressed by members that the risk analysis did not take account of the risks associated with the introduction to the base budget of part of the new homes bonus, the impact of the 0 % council tax freeze and the timing of the delivery of key projects.

The issue of Grosvenor Terrace car park was raised. Funds were, in one members view, continually invested in the car park but it was asked at what point the council would agree that this was not the right location for a car park. In response the Cabinet Member explained some of the funds were directed at providing cctv on the site and that with the future development of North Place and Portland Street car parks this car park would be required.

Members also requested details of the equality and diversity impact assessment to be reassured that this had been undertaken correctly.

### **8. EVERYMAN THEATRE**

Geoffrey Rowe, Chief Executive, Everyman Theatre, gave a presentation to the committee which is attached to these minutes for information.

Members congratulated the Everyman for the success it had in putting on a wide variety of performances, the good value for money that it represented and its major contribution to the town. They also congratulated the theatre for having completed its refurbishment works on time and within budget. Members also recognised the valuable work the theatre undertook with the community in terms of schools and community organisations.

A member commented that some critics regarded a trip to the theatre as elitist but ticket prices did compare favourably with entry to local sporting events. The Chief Executive responded to this by saying in an ideal world there would be a funded scheme which would give every young person in the borough the opportunity to visit and experience a theatre performance for free.

Members requested a breakdown of concessions as 52 % of all tickets were sold as concessions. It was also asked whether concessions included group discounts. The Chief Executive undertook to send members this information.

Members commented that whilst the Chief Executive had identified 2017 as being a tough financial year for the theatre where difficult decisions would have to be made, profit was significant in 2010/11 and it was asked whether the theatre could meet its losses without external help. In response the Chief Executive replied that the surplus was one off and the anticipated loss this year would be more than £200 000 due to the closure for refurbishment.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his presentation and wished the theatre well.

### **9. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UPDATE-FOCUS ON IMPACT OF YOUTH CENTRE CLOSURES IN THE BOROUGH**

The Community Safety Manager outlined his report and explained that at this stage it was a little premature to link the closure of youth facilities to any rise in anti-social behaviour committed by young people. He was however working

closely with the police to obtain the information in the coming 12-24 months and this issue had also been raised countywide.

Members understood that statistics may take time to be formulated but were concerned that youth related anti social behaviour was not captured in some form. This was a vital issue and a failure to record what was going on on the ground must mean there was a lack of understanding of what was actually happening. They made reference to the Community Orientated Police Scheme (COPS) and asked whether they provided any such data in terms of records of COPS resolutions. In response the Community Safety Manager explained that he had consulted widely but to date there were no figures coming through.

Members were also concerned that the safeguarding young people work previously carried out by the youth service was no longer being undertaken. They asked whether monitoring and signposting was still being done bearing in mind that there was now only one dedicated youth worker in the borough.

The Community Safety Manager responded to Members by saying that CBC worked closely with the Police. The County Council ran an Anti Social behaviour strategy group which was seeking funds to set up a database to record issues. It was however not just a question of finding an IT solution. He also reported that in Cheltenham the Crime and Disorder partnership facilitated information exchange between stakeholders and intervention was starting to be put in place before enforcement.

Members could not understand why it was possible on the Gloucestershire Constabulary website to access the number and nature of particular crimes in a particular area and that neighbourhood watch leaflets also reported crime statistics yet it was not possible for a report to be provided to Councillors.

The Community Safety Manager acknowledged that it was difficult to get the information down to the right level. It was suggested by members to invite an officer from Gloucestershire Constabulary to a future meeting to explain why incidences were not being recorded properly.

When asked how the Committee could take forward its strong views the Director of Commissioning suggested that the Committee submit a recommendation to Cabinet expressing its concerns with regard to the lack of reporting figures and that Cabinet should take this issue up directly with the Police. Members felt that this was the correct approach but that in addition to this the wider issue of lack of youth provision in the town and the lack of coordination of new projects being undertaken should be raised with Cabinet.

The Director Commissioning explained that the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership had a Positive Lives Partnership under its umbrella which should capture the impact of the cuts to youth activity. The Community Safety Manager added that if there was a link between the withdrawal of funding and the rise in incidences of antisocial behaviour he would help bringing the right people together.

### **Resolved**



**To express the Committee's concerns to Cabinet regarding the lack of data on the impact of the reduction in funding for general/universal youth provision in the town with a particular focus on incidences of antisocial behaviour.**

**The Committee recommends that Cabinet**

- 1. takes this issue up directly with Gloucestershire Police**
- 2. works with the CSP Positive Lives partnership to address the wider issue of lack of youth provision in the town, particularly in terms of coordinating new youth projects being undertaken**

**10. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY 2012-13**

Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager, explained that early views were being sought from scrutiny on the first version of the draft corporate strategy and the 2012-13 draft action plan. He highlighted that SLT had introduced a change to last year's strategy which included adding value for money as a core objective running across all outcomes. Given the resource challenge the draft strategy recognised that commissioning should also help to deliver outcomes and the strategy reflected the commissioner-provider split. Section 4 of the report outlined a list of 6 priority areas that partners had identified where there was scope for more collaborative working. A number of improvement actions had been identified in the draft strategy and views were sought on these.

Members questioned whether officers had the capacity to deliver all the outcomes identified in the draft strategy and wondered whether there was duplication of the work being undertaken by the partnerships. In response the Strategy and Engagement Manager explained that CBC was working alongside the partnerships and the priorities were aligned to those of the partnerships as opposed to duplication. Even in partnership members still commented whether the council could achieve these outcomes.

Members commented on the consideration for 2012-13 on how best the council can work in partnership to tackle burglary in the town through the burglary task and finish group. Members believed that the council should commit to this work as burglary was a high issue of community concern and the council should be seen to be taking the lead on this. The partners involved should be clear on what they are doing with tangible milestones and performance indicators.

The Strategy and Engagement Manager thanked members for their input. The issue of capacity and resources would be taken on board and a clearer, more specific document would be taken to full Council at the end of March.

**11. COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The Chair informed members that the February meeting of Social & Community would be the last meeting in this format before the new scrutiny arrangements were introduced following the elections.

The cooptees were unaware of the scrutiny changes. The Director of Commissioning apologised for this oversight and undertook to send them the



report which had gone to December council and the excerpt of the minutes from that meeting.

Karl Hemming, cooptee, commented on Cheltenham Tenants and Leaseholders Voice (CTLV) which was on the agenda for the February meeting. He reported that by the February meeting members of that committee would have only just finished their training. The Director of Commissioning understood this but felt that it was important for members to understand what arrangements had been put in place by Cheltenham Borough Homes for liaising with its tenants.

**12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN DETERMINES TO BE URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION**

None.

**13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 27 February 2012

Anne Regan  
**Chairman**

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## Budget Consultation 2012-13




## The Council's Budget

In 2012/13 CBC's Government cash grant will fall by a £0.534m; this will result in a total cash cut of £1.624m over 2011/12 and 2012/13.

**Funding Gap =**  
Cost of Maintaining Current Service Levels plus growth *minus* Funds Available to Spend  
*(grant settlement + achievable income)*

**2012/13 estimate £1.115m**




## The 2012/13 'Funding Gap'

- Economic downturn continues to impact on the Council's budgets:
  - **Car Parking** income continues to fall: a further £100k less than budgeted in 2011/12, with similar trend continuing in 2012/13.
  - Estimated income from sale of **garden waste** bins down by £272k in 2011/12, with a similar trend continuing in 2012/13.
  - Low bank base rate resulting in low levels of **investment interest**.



## Cabinet general approach

- No increase in Council Tax - Band D £187.12 (using Government funding);
- A reduction in number of staff – 5 jobs will be lost;
- Flexible retirement and voluntary reduction in employee hours;
- Internal restructures to increase efficiencies – part of becoming a 'commissioning organisation';
- Continued promotion of shared services;
- Reduction in cost of council assets e.g. sale of surplus assets.




## Key areas for Growth – Appendix 3


**Social & Community:**

**Ongoing Revenue Growth:**

- Continued provision of town centre **taxi marshall** service - £17,000 pa.
- No inflationary increase to **lettings fee income** at Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room - £11,700 pa.

**One-off Revenue Growth:**

- Carbon reduction – **new LED Lights** at Leisure@  
*(funded from Property R & R Reserve)*



## Key areas for Savings – Appendix 4

**Social & Community:**

- Reduction in grant to **Everyman Theatre**, as part of renegotiated lease and support towards funding of refurbishment costs – £5,000 savings.
- Reduction in grant to **Performing Arts Society** - £10,800 savings.
- Re-tender of **Single Advice Contract** - £25,000 savings.
- Reduction in grants to **Oakley & Hesters Way regeneration partnerships** - £4,000 savings.




## Key areas for Additional Income – Appendix 4

### Leisure & Culture Commissioning - Leisure@

- New income streams in partnership with University of Gloucestershire - £18,000 additional income.
- Increased volume of children's activities - £3,000 additional income.
- Price increases for some services above inflation - £14,000 additional income.
- Staff restructuring - £45,000 savings.



### Town Hall:

- New income stream from Box Office system and staff restructuring - £48,000 additional income / savings.



## New Homes Bonus

### 2012/13 allocation of £574k to be used:

1. £250k built into base budget.
2. £50k to fund youth work issues.
3. £137k for small environmental works costing up to a max. of £15k per application.
4. £137k towards a Promoting Cheltenham fund.



## Questions?



## EVERYMAN THEATRE

Geoffrey Rowe  
Chief Executive

## CBC Scrutiny Committee 2012



## Introduction

- 1. The year's activities 2010/2011
- 2. The year's results 2010/2011
- 3. Funding
- 4. The Restoration
- 5. The future

## 1. The Year's Activities

46 weeks of performance  
Pantomime, opera, ballet, drama,  
dance, variety, musicals  
2 amateur companies  
Festivals  
Youth Theatre  
ONS  
Studio season  
Education and community  
programme

## 2. The Year's Results 2010/2011

- 240,000 attendances
- Up 3.6%
- £160,000 surplus
- Anticipating loss in 2011/12
- Concessions 52%
- Performances/Events 534

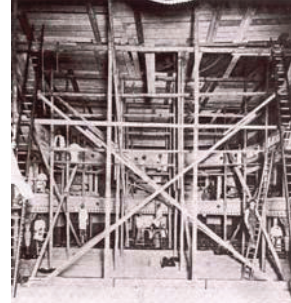
## 3. Funding

- 14.5% of turnover but £575k in 2012/13
- Lost GCC £52,000
- Arts Council agreement to 2015 – standstill
- CBC continuing gradual loss
- 2017!

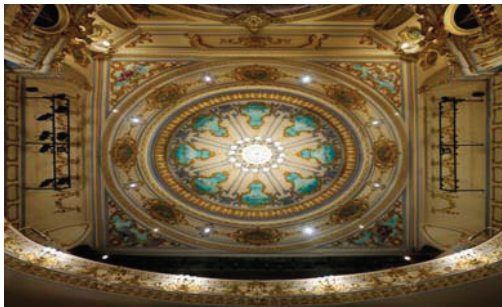
#### 4. The Restoration

- 1. Cost £3.2million
- 2. Re-opened on time and within budget
- 3. Net cost to CBC £250,000
- 4. Historic and beautiful
- 5. Economic importance to CBC
- 6. Economic importance to ET
- 7. Heritage

#### Decorating the auditorium



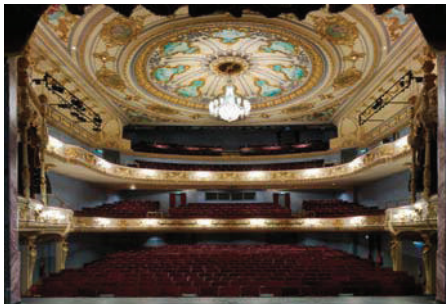
#### The Ceiling



#### The Auditorium



#### A View from the stage



#### The Angel returns!



## The Future

- 1. Survival
- 2. Quality productions
- 3. A Wide range of shows
- 4. Improved customer experience
- 5. Heritage
- 6. Education and Community
- 7. Own productions?
- 8. Touring?



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# Discussion paper

Committee name

Social & Community O&S Committee

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012

Responsible officer: Jane Lillystone,  
Museum, Arts & Tourism Manager

## Tourism & Marketing Strategy Update

Following the last progress report to the Committee, the Tourism team have continued to work towards / on the delivery of a number of actions and improvements that were identified within the Marketing & Tourism Strategy action plan. The progress of the work so far, is:

- 1) The merger of the frontline Tourist Information Centre (TIC) team and the Art Gallery & Museum (AG&M) visitor services team – into a combined Customer Services Team for both the Art Gallery & Museum and Tourism – was completed by June 2011. This became operational from July 2011, and the new team is currently running the Tourist Information Centre, prior to the re-location of the TIC into the new building.
- 2) Merger of the individual visitor guides from Cheltenham, Gloucester and the wider Cotswolds to one guide was successfully launched in 2011. Working in partnership on a shared visitor guide is continuing with the 2012 edition – with particular emphasis for this year in ensuring the distribution / presence of the visitor guide at key entry points to Britain i.e. Paddington Station and Heathrow Airport. With regards to Cheltenham Tourism, the savings generated from the merger have been used towards the publication of a specific *Discover Cheltenham* guide and a review of the current Cheltenham tourism website – initially exploring selling / advertising opportunities to boost income generation.
- 3) Following the review (in April 2010) of the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean DMO (Destination Management Organisation) – and the resulting withdrawal of the Forest of Dean from the DMO – the Executive Officer Group continues to meet on a monthly basis and this is attended by the Museum, Arts & Tourism Manager. The main activity of this group is to support the wider Cotswolds tourism sector through its revised strategy and work delivery programme – linking into the Visit England Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010-2020 – and with direct contribution to / and representation on the GFirst LEP Tourism Sector Group. The current membership of the Executive Officers Group is: GFirst, Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council, Cotswolds District Council, Tewksbury Borough Council and Stroud District Council – and two members from the Executive Officers Group are also representatives on the GFirst LEP Tourism Sector Group.
- 4) The strategy and work programme of the Cotswolds DMO focuses on four key interdependent objectives – which whilst aligning to the national strategic plan – also focus on delivery at a local level. The key objectives are:
  - To increase England's global market share,
  - To offer destinations of distinction,
  - To champion a successful thriving tourism industry,
  - To develop greater engagement between the visitor and the experience.
- 5) Significant projects for the Cotswolds DMO Group and Board are currently focussing on developing media relations – to promote the region and increase the global market share (particularly in relation to the Olympics); commissioning new market research on visitor perceptions to the Cotswolds, reviewing how statistical information on visitor numbers / business

information is being collated and distributed; and the quality of service provision for visitors to the region in accessing direct information (i.e. web or Tourist / Visitor Information Centre points).

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- 6) With specific regards to Cheltenham Tourism, a number of key strands from the Tourism & Marketing Strategy Action Plan have been included within the Tourism Service Plan, as follows:
- Preparation and planning for the re-location of the Tourist Information Centre to the re-developed Art Gallery & Museum during 2013;
  - Reviewing the Cheltenham Tourism website - with the aim of focussing Cheltenham's tourism marketing more effectively. The review has included consultation / engagement with visitors and users (stakeholders) of the current site - gaining ideas for improvements for the visitor experience, attracting more income streams and new ways / initiatives of supporting local businesses and attractions within the town. Following this review, a grant application will be made to the Promoting Cheltenham Grant Fund for support in developing and launching a new website for Cheltenham Tourism;
  - Development of cross-working initiatives with Tourism and the Art Gallery & Museum through the creation of an Arts and Crafts specific Mobile App for touring around the Cotswolds (with funding from the Arts Council);
  - A proposed review of Street Dressing within the town – including linking into the proposals to improve displays, signage and information boards at key locations – as part of the Cheltenham Development Task Force project.

Contact Officer: Jane Lillystone, Museum, Arts Tourism Manager

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Email: [jane.lillystone@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:jane.lillystone@cheltenham.gov.uk)

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

### **London 2012 Olympics Update**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

- 1.1 Development work for the Olympic Torch Relay and a series of initiatives to celebrate the Olympic year have been underway for some time. This discussion paper is intended to bring members up to date on these plans.

#### **2. Summary of the Issue**

- 2.1 The London 2012 Olympics will take place between July 27<sup>th</sup> and August 12<sup>th</sup>, with the Paralympics following from August 29<sup>th</sup> to September 9<sup>th</sup>. This will be the first time the Olympics has been held in the UK since 1948, and only the third time ever, and represents an opportunity to inspire current and future generations to take part in sport and physical activity.
- 2.2 Ahead of the Games, a 70 day Torch Relay will travel around the length and breadth of the UK, and will visit Cheltenham on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May, with a major celebration event being held at Cheltenham Racecourse.

#### **3. Summary of evidence/information**

##### **3.1 Torch Relay**

Planning for the Torch Relay has been underway for some time, both at a county level and local level, although it has been hampered by restrictions placed upon local authorities by the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) in respect of not being able to announce detailed information to the general public. This has prevented us from being able to speak openly to organisations and community groups about celebrating the passing of the Flame. It is now understood that the street level detail and timings for the route are likely to be announced in late March.

- 3.2 LOCOG announced publicly in November 2011, that on the afternoon of Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May the Olympic Torch Relay will travel from Swindon, via Cirencester, Stroud, Painswick, Brockworth and Shurdington before reaching Cheltenham, where it will eventually arrive at Cheltenham Racecourse for the culmination of the Evening Celebration stage show event, which runs from 5pm – 7.30pm. Throughout the entire section of its journey through Cheltenham the Torch will be carried on foot, by nominated Torchbearers who have been selected by LOCOG.

- 3.3** We are currently working closely with the Police, GCC and Gloucestershire Highways to develop a Transport Management Plan, which is likely to include a series of rolling road blocks, road closures and parking restrictions to enable to secure passing of the Torch Relay. Once the route is publicly announced and the Transport Management Plan is finalised, we will work closely with schools, businesses and media colleagues to ensure that the general public are given as much information as possible to help them plan ahead and to limit the inevitable disruption that individuals and services may face as the Torch arrives and passes.
- 3.4** It is also envisaged, and positively welcomed, that local community groups and geographical communities will wish to organise road side celebrations to mark the occasion as the Torch passes. Despite the restriction on releasing details we are already starting discussions with potential community groups to help build a picture of local activities that may be organised along the route, so that both CBC and the police can develop robust Event Management Plans and ensure the public safety of people lining the route. This safety planning process will be greatly aided once the restriction on sharing the detail of the route has been lifted.
- 3.5 Celebration Event – Cheltenham Racecourse**
- The Evening Celebration Event will feature a 2½ hour stage show provided by LOCOG which will feature entertainment acts provided by the 3 national sponsors Samsung, Lloyds TSB and Coca Cola who will supply a live music act. Based on information supplied by Coca Cola and LOCOG, and the operational plans being developed by Cheltenham racecourse, it is currently agreed with the police that the event will be non ticketed. The event must also be free of charge to attend.
- 3.6** Immediately before and after the LOCOG stage show, the event at Cheltenham Racecourse will include an extended event showcasing artistic talent, local performers and an interactive Sports Village. In its entirety the Racecourse event will therefore run from approximately 3pm to 9pm.
- 3.7** Invitations have been sent to each of Cheltenham’s twin towns across the world, inviting representatives from each town to visit Cheltenham to coincide with the Celebration Event. To date a number have already indicated a desire to attend, with two towns also planning to bring dance groups to perform at the evening event.
- 3.8 Other Related Development Initiatives**
- 3.9** The **Summer of Sport** programme will again run during the summer school holidays with an extended programme of coaching courses being delivered in conjunction with local clubs, and a series of informal Sport In The Park events taking place in communities across the Borough. The programme has been successfully recognised by the InspireMark scheme, which enables all related publicity materials to carry the Olympic logo.
- 3.10** In January the Sports Development Team organised a disability sports festival event at Leisure@, in conjunction with the **Cheltenham & District Sports Association for the Disabled** and a number of local sporting organisations. The event was well attended and received extensive media coverage. The C&DSAD organisation will now continue to oversee the running of a ten week programme of weekly sessions, and a further celebration event linked to the Paralympic games in August/September.

- 3.11** The Sports Development Team are working closely with the county sports partnership and the local School Sport network to support the **School Games** programme which is a national initiative that forms part of the governments Olympic Legacy programme. The culmination of the county programme will see a multi sport competitive sports festival take place from a number of venues on June 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>.
- 3.12 Gloucestershire NHS** have recently confirmed that match funding will again be provided to enable a small grants scheme to support a range of community projects. The NHS have stipulated that this years money should be focused on projects that help to deliver the Olympic Legacy of encouraging more people to lead healthy active lifestyles. Discussions are underway to develop the funding criteria and process.
- 3.13 Malawi Training Camp** – we are awaiting confirmation from the University of Gloucestershire regarding the arrival dates and specific training requirements of the Malawi athletes, but it is still envisaged that a number of athletes will be using local training facilities to prepare for the Games. A working group is looking at a number of ways to links the athletes in with local clubs, schools and community organisations to raise the profile of their stay, raise funding to support them, and to help build local links.

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1** Significant work will continue to take place over the coming weeks and months with a wide range of partners including LOCOG, Police, Cheltenham Racecourse and local community groups to prepare for the Torch Relay celebrations. We will also work closely with the local media to prepare for the release of key information to support the planning processes.
- 4.2** The Sport, Play & Healthy Lifestyles Team will also continue to explore available opportunities to develop and support a wide range of local initiatives that seek to engage people in healthy active lifestyles, and make the most of the opportunity the Olympics present to encourage a more active and inclusive society.

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<b>Background Papers</b>	Social & Community O&S report, 11 <sup>th</sup> July 2011
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Craig Mortiboys, Healthy Communities Partnership Manager, 01242 775121, <a href="mailto:craig.mortiboys@cheltenham.gov.uk">craig.mortiboys@cheltenham.gov.uk</a>
<b>Accountability</b>	Cllr Andrew McKinlay
<b>Scrutiny Function</b>	Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny

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## Housing & Homelessness Strategy

- National Priorities:
  - Welfare Reform
  - Supporting People
  - Affordable Rents & the Housing and Communities Agency
  - HRA Self-financing



## Housing & Homelessness Strategy

- Local Priorities:
  - Cheltenham Needs Analysis: Partnerships' Priorities
  - CBC Corporate Outcomes and Objectives
- Emerging Trends:
  - An increase in private rented accommodation
  - An increase in homelessness and affordability issues



## Our Vision:

'To enable residents to access and maintain suitable, affordable accommodation within communities that are safer, stronger and healthier.'



## Our Outcomes:

- To enable people to live independently for longer and to lead more healthy lives
- To maximise housing opportunities for those in housing need, whilst maintaining balanced communities
- To reduce homelessness
- To reduce carbon emissions within housing stock
- To reduce fuel poverty
- To improve the quality and safety of our homes
- To strengthen neighbourhoods and make them safer



## Our Priorities:

- To increase the provision of affordable housing
- To make best use of existing housing stock
- To improve access into suitable, affordable accommodation and helping households to stay in their homes for longer
- To tackle the causes of homelessness
- To revitalise our neighbourhoods



## Priority 1 – Increasing the Provision of New Affordable Housing

- Joint Core Strategy
- Accessing future funding streams
- Maximising Delivery



### Priority 2: Making Best Use of Existing Housing

- Improving energy efficiencies
- Improving Health & Safety Standards
- Improving Decent Homes Standards
- Tackling Empty Homes
- Programme of External Works
- Review of some sheltered housing units
- Prioritising the most vulnerable in the private sector



### Priority 3 – Improving Access into and Maintaining Suitable Accommodation

- Reviewing Gloucestershire Homeseeker – choice based lettings allocation scheme
- Improving access into the private rented sector:
  - Reviewing role of the Housing Options Service: tenancy management services?
  - Expanding Gloucestershire Homeseeker to include private sector housing
  - Supporting the development a Gloucestershire-wide Private leasing Scheme



### Priority 3 - Improving Access into and Maintaining Suitable Accommodation

- Adaptations and Lifeline Alarm Service
- Review of Sheltered Housing and Services to Older People
- Making best use of Supported Housing and Floating Support Services



### Priority 4 – Tackling Homelessness

- Responding to the welfare reform
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  - The Role of the Advice and Inclusion Service
  - Tackling Under-occupation within social housing
- Tackling Rough Sleeping and those with complex needs
- Tackling youth homelessness
- Supporting Existing Initiatives
- Working in Partnership



### Priority 5 – Revitalising our Neighbourhoods

- Ensuring Housing Services contribute towards the emerging Cheltenham Priorities
- Targeting investment in areas of deprivation
- Tackling child poverty
- Promoting cohesion and inclusion
- Building Safer Estates
- Safeguarding
- Increasing Opportunities for Community Participation and Engagement



### Tenancy Strategy

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- Potential impact of fixed term tenancies:
  - More homes?
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  - Enforceable?
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## Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017

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- Increasing Opportunities for community participation and engagement

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Outcomes Framework  
Appendix 2 – Tenancy Strategy and Affordable Rents Statement  
Appendix 3 – The Housing Renewal Policy  
Appendix 4 – Action Plan  
Etc.

# Part One – Housing in Context

## Chapter One – Setting the Scene

### 1. The Impact of Housing

The provision of suitable housing, both in the social housing sector and in the private sector, is at the heart of achieving social, economic and environmental well-being. It shapes a community and creates a sense of place. It is so much more than simply the provision of 'bricks and mortar.'

Its impact can be felt on:

#### 1.1 Individuals

Poor quality housing can affect an individual's health, their ability to live independently, and to cope financially. When individuals live in unsuitable locations, it can lead to a breakdown in their social and support networks and create social isolation. Inadequate housing can place severe strains on family relationships, jeopardising the life chances for young people, leading to poorer educational attainment and in the worst cases, homelessness.

#### 1.2 Communities

Community impacts can also be far reaching. Inadequate housing can break down community resilience and its sense of community cohesion, creating an environment that is more susceptible to anti-social behaviour, crime and the fear of crime.

#### 1.3 The Economy

Unaffordable housing leads to reduced spending power, which affects the local economy; whilst the provision of new housing can boost the economy by creating jobs and developing the skills of local people.

#### 1.4 The Environment

Poor quality housing uses fuel inefficiently, resulting in costs to the environment in terms of higher carbon emissions.

### 2. Community Needs Analysis

The Cheltenham Community Needs Analysis 2011, provides details of our local needs. These are summarised below, with full details available at [\[website\]](#).

#### 2.1 Levels of Deprivation

The indices of deprivation 2010 identified parts of St Pauls, St Marks and Hesters Way as falling within the 10% most deprived areas nationally; with income deprivation affecting children in some parts of St Pauls falling within 1% of the most deprived areas in the country.

Some of the priorities identified for our most deprived communities include the need to:

- Build stronger communities to improve perceptions of people getting on well together
- Improve community safety, particularly in response to relatively high levels of acquisition crime
- Reduce levels of child poverty
- Help people into employment to increase household income

## **2.2 Housing and Housing Support Needs**

Fordhams Housing Needs Assessment 2009 (revised in 2010) identified 2686 (5.3%) households in the Borough living in unsuitable housing; of which 1,915 would need to move home due to the unsuitability of their existing home.

The report also identified that we have an ageing population, and that a range of groups have poor health, where additional housing support is needed. The groups identified were: the frail elderly, those with medical conditions, individuals with physical, learning or sensory disabilities, and those with mental ill-health.

These housing support needs are also considered within Gloucestershire's Supporting People Strategy 2011-15, which sets out Supporting People's priorities for providing housing-related support, against a diminishing budget.

## **2.3 Other Identified Needs**

The Cheltenham Community Needs Analysis also recognises the need to improve the life chances of children and young people, and to tackle issues affecting some older people, such as social isolation, perceptions of safety and fuel poverty.

## **2.4 The Role of Housing Services**

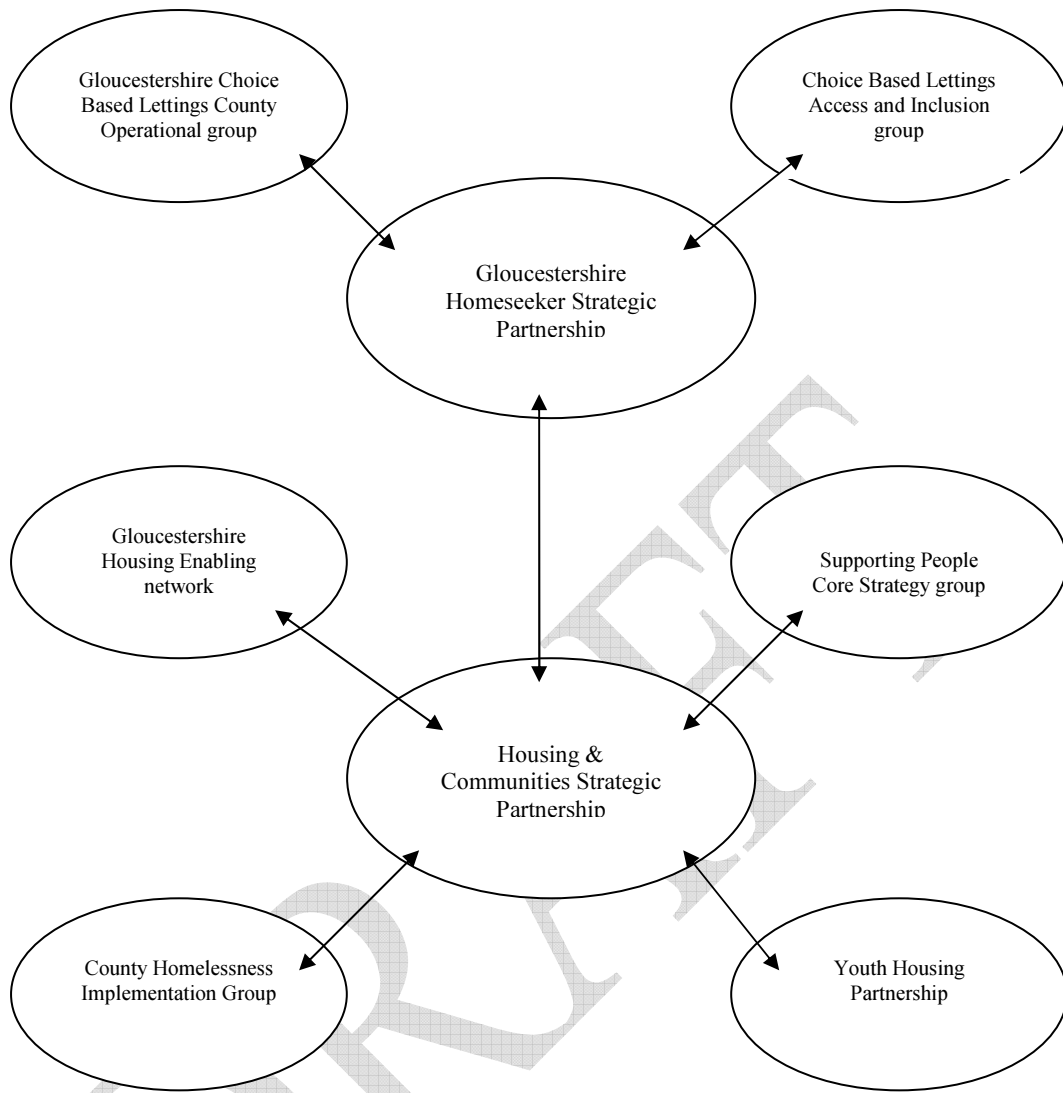
In view of the interdependency between housing and individuals, communities, the economy and the environment; housing services will, in partnership with others, play a vital role in supporting Cheltenham's Priorities, as identified from the Needs Analysis, and in meeting our corporate outcomes, as highlighted in Section 5 of this Chapter.

# **3. The Partnerships**

## **3.1 Housing Partnerships**

Within Cheltenham, our main housing partnership is the Housing and Support Forum. This partnership of voluntary and statutory sector organisations is comprised of housing related support services, advice organisations and housing providers. It considers the needs and issues arising for Cheltenham; and in this way helps to inform future strategic direction and potential commissioning opportunities. In addition, it provides an opportunity for related agencies to share best practice and information about new and emerging housing-related services.

We also have a number of housing partnerships within Gloucestershire. A summary of some of these partnerships are provided in the diagram below, with more detailed information available in Appendix x.



These partnerships enable related issues, which are experienced across the county, to be considered within a wider context; with a view to exploring joint working and commissioning opportunities.

### 3.2 Cheltenham Partnerships

The Cheltenham Partnerships have recently undergone a review, with more emphasis now placed on achieving outcomes, using the Cheltenham Needs Analysis as the critical starting point.

There are 4 partnerships, each with a specific role to play in ensuring that identified needs and gaps are translated into strategic priorities: the Cheltenham Priorities.

In summary, the partnerships are: the Positive Participation Partnership, the Positive Lives Partnership and the Positive Development Partnership; with the Strategic



Leadership Group being the overarching partnership to ensure effective coordination in the delivery of Cheltenham’s Priorities and the overall vision.

Cheltenham Borough Council’s strategic housing responsibilities, alongside the delivery arm of Cheltenham Borough Homes, means that we will play an important part in supporting these Partnerships.

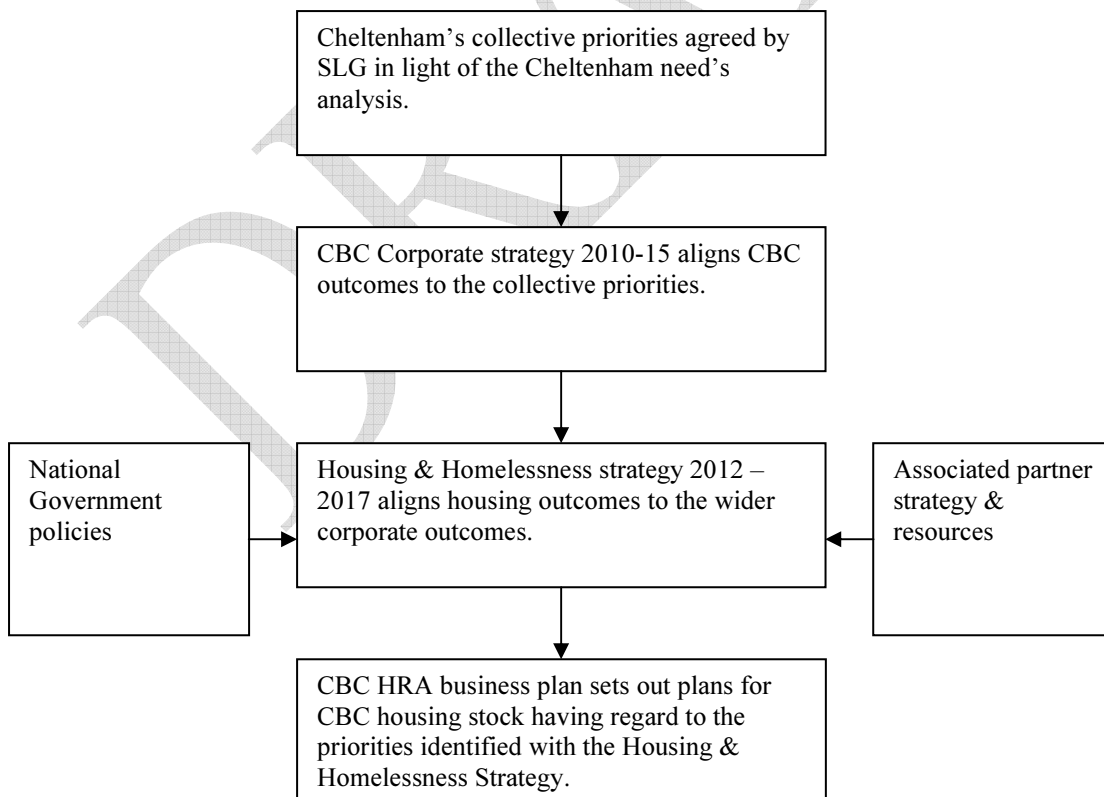
### 3.3 Gloucestershire Partnerships

There are a number of Gloucestershire Partnerships, specifically: Leadership Gloucestershire, the Health & Wellbeing Board, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Safer Stronger Justice Commission and the Children’s Partnership.

Strategic housing professionals across the county will continue to review the circumstances when housing services can support the wider aims of these partnerships and to seek to ensure that appropriate channels of communication to these partnerships remain open.

## 4. Factors Influencing the development of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy

The way in which housing services are influenced by local, regional, national needs and priorities are summarised below:



## 5. Cheltenham's Strategic Outcomes and Objectives

The Council's strategic outcomes and objectives are identified within our Corporate Strategy 2010-15. It is clear from the table below that housing services have the potential to support many of our corporate outcomes and objectives.

Corporate Objectives	Corporate Outcomes	Do Housing Services have a role in supporting these outcomes?
Enhancing and protecting our environment	<p>Cheltenham has a clean and well-maintained environment etc, etc.</p> <p>Cheltenham's natural and built environment is enhanced and protected</p> <p>Carbon emissions are reduced and Cheltenham is able to adapt to the impacts of climate change</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
Strengthening our economy	<p>Cheltenham is able to recover quickly and strongly from the recession</p> <p>We attract more visitors and investors to Cheltenham</p>	<p>✓</p>
Strengthening our communities	<p>Communities feel safe and are safe</p> <p>People have access to decent and affordable housing</p> <p>Our residents enjoy a strong sense of community and are involved in resolving local issues</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
Enhancing the provision of arts and culture	<p>Arts and culture are used as a means to strengthen communities, strengthen the economy and enhance and protect our environment</p>	

## 6. Our Vision, Outcomes and Priorities for Delivering Housing Services for Cheltenham

### 6.1 Our Vision

Our vision is for residents to be able to access and maintain suitable, affordable accommodation within communities that are safer, stronger and healthier.

### 6.2 Outcomes

By implementing this Strategy, we will:

- Enable people to live independently for longer and to lead more healthy lives
- Maximise housing opportunities for those in housing need, whilst maintaining balanced communities
- Reduce homelessness
- Reduce carbon emissions within housing stock
- Reduce fuel poverty
- Improve the quality and safety of our homes
- Reduce the number of empty homes
- Strengthen neighbourhoods and make them safer

### 6.3 Priorities

These outcomes are underpinned by 5 Priorities identified below, and which are detailed within Part 2 of this Strategy: 'Meeting our Outcomes'

- **Priority 1:** To increase the provision of Affordable Housing (Chapter 4)
- **Priority 2:** To make best use of existing housing stock (Chapter 5)
- **Priority 3:** To improve access into suitable, affordable accommodation and helping households to stay in their homes for longer (Chapter 6)
- **Priority 4:** To tackle the causes of homelessness (Chapter 7)
- **Priority 5:** To revitalise our neighbourhoods (Chapter 8)

For a summary of the outcomes identified for individuals and communities alike, along with the underpinning principles which support them, please refer to our Outcomes Framework at Appendix x.

## Chapter Two

### National Priorities - Local Impact

#### 1. The Localism Act

##### 1.1 Background

For the government, the Localism Act goes beyond just reforming the way councils work. It lays out its philosophy about the relationship between the state and the citizen.

The intention of the Act is to see a radical shift in the balance of power and to decentralize power to the lowest possible level, including individuals, neighbourhoods, professionals and communities as well as local councils and other local institutions.

A summary of most relevant housing-related provisions are detailed below, coupled with the potential challenges and opportunities that come about as a result of these changes.

##### 1.2 Reform of the Planning System

###### 1.2.1 Abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies

The Localism Act has abolished regional housing targets identified by the previous administration, in favour of locally determined targets. Local Planning Authorities will still be required to produce a plan for their administrative area, but beneath this, there may be a series of Neighbourhood Plans – in effect, a new planning tier led by the community – but which would still need to be in general conformity with the Authority's plan and local area vision. These changes will be underpinned by a National Planning Policy Framework.

###### 1.2.2. Reform of the Community Infrastructure Levy

The Act requires Local Authorities to allocate a proportion of Community Infrastructure Levy revenues back to the neighbourhood from which it was raised. This will allow those most directly affected by development to benefit from it.

These changes will require co-ordinated planning; both at the county and district levels, in order to ensure the necessary infrastructure requirements are identified and implemented for the benefit of those communities; thereby ensuring there continues to be sustainable development.

###### 1.2.3 Reform of the Local Plan

The intention is to give Local Authorities and communities greater choice and control of their areas by removing the ability of the Planning Inspectorate to re-write local plans, as well as removing procedures on timetabling and monitoring. Again, these changes will be underpinned by a National Planning Policy Framework.

It is intended that by increasing community involvement and ownership of local development plans, this will bring about more positive engagement with communities of new developments.

Alongside this, however, is a risk that communities will fail to support development at all, which in turn might limit opportunities for growth as well as economic development.

There will also be challenges in ensuring that the required infrastructure is developed to support this reform, and whether sufficient capacity is there to further develop community engagement.

### **1.3 Social Housing Reform**

#### **1.3.1 Reform of Housing Allocations Schemes**

- **Open/Closed Waiting Lists**

The Act gives Local Authorities the freedom to decide who should qualify to go on their housing waiting list. Rules around the housing rights of people from abroad will continue to be set centrally.

It may be that removing from the housing list those households with little or no perceived housing need could reduce the administrative burden on housing services. However, this needs to be balanced against the likely consequences of removing households from these lists, which may lead to appeals and challenges against such decisions; potentially increasing the administrative burden on the Housing Services.

Furthermore, if households believe that the only mechanism by which to apply for social housing is by worsening their housing circumstances, this may create a perverse incentive for them to do just this.

Many households who are considered to be 'adequately housed' apply for social housing because they are struggling to meet the financial costs of where they are currently living, and are often occupying relatively insecure housing in the private rented sector. Closing the lists to these households could lead Local Authorities to lose sight of the full scale of need for affordable housing.

- **Transferring Tenants**

The Act also intends to make it easier for existing social tenants to move, by giving Local Authorities the option of removing transferring tenants from the scope of the allocation rules. This would mean that they would no longer have to compete with those on the waiting list in housing need; thereby enabling existing tenants to move more easily, freeing up their homes for other households in housing need.

The Local Authority, when considering these options, will need to ensure there continues to be a balanced approach to prioritising the housing needs of both existing tenants and other households on the housing list, for the purposes of allocating and making best use of housing stock.

- **National Homeswap Scheme**

The Act includes a measure for creating a single National Homeswap Scheme. This will ensure that a number of currently competing National Homeswap providers are

linked, so that tenants can access information more easily about the potential availability of a wider range of properties within the areas in which they wish to live.

### **1.3.2 Ending the Statutory Homelessness Duty**

The Act gives Local Authorities the flexibility to end their full homelessness duties to homeless households by offering suitable accommodation in the private rented sector, provided these tenancies run for a minimum of 12 months. The duty would be likely to recur if, within 2 years, the applicant, having accepted the tenancy, becomes homeless again through no fault of his or her own.

Whilst this option is likely to have a benefit to Local Authorities in that this may help to alleviate pressures on social housing and reduce use of temporary accommodation for those becoming homeless, the ability to use the private rented sector is likely to become increasingly difficult when set against the backdrop of welfare reform, and in particular the Local Housing Allowance changes. These changes are resulting in the private rented sector becoming less affordable for households on a low income, and some landlords may perceive such households to be a greater financial risk as tenants.

The availability of private rented accommodation for homeless households to access and maintain is likely to be reduced in light of these changes. More details of the impact of the welfare reform on housing is considered at Section 3 below.

### **1.2.3 Social Housing Tenure reform**

Generally, Registered Providers (RPs) are currently only able to grant lifetime tenancies; although usually RPs do offer new tenants a Introductory Tenancy in the first instance. The provisions within the Act will enable RPs to grant tenancies for a fixed term if they wish (with the minimum length being five years, or two years where an RP can show exceptional circumstances). RPs will still retain the power to grant lifetimes tenancies where they consider it is appropriate to do so.

The Localism Act places a duty on Local Authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy for RPs to have regard to when formulating their own policies on whether to grant a fixed term or not.

Our Tenancy Strategy is provided within Appendix x of this Strategy.

## **2. The Affordable Rents Programme 2011-2015**

The Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme requires RPs to set an 'affordable rent' on almost all new build and will be able to convert a percentage of their existing stock from social rent to affordable rent. The affordable rent can be set at up to 80% of the market rent and RPs will be able to determine themselves the proportion of their existing stock that is to be converted to affordable rent tenure, based on their future development aspirations as defined within their business plans. In order to maximise grant funding from the HCA, RPs will need to show that they are maximising their revenues – where it is viable to do so - through the setting of Affordable Rents. Local Housing Authorities should support the implementation of Affordable Rents – where it is considered to be affordable for our residents, given that this will maximize the opportunities for the development of new affordable housing in the area.

However, regard will need to be had to the proposed 'welfare benefit cap' which would limit the amount of benefits a household can receive to the 'median household income'. If implemented, this is likely to impact on larger households more. As a result, careful consideration will need to be had when RPs are considering setting Affordable Rents on some of their larger properties, particularly on 4 bedroom (or more) properties.

RPs will also need to give consideration to local areas: i.e. the degree of private rented accommodation against social housing, voids levels in social housing in the neighbourhoods and so on, when they are reviewing their conversion rates on their existing social rented stock. We, as a Local Authority, can play a role in informing RPs of these local issues. Our position statement on Affordable Rents, which RPs should have regard to, is at Appendix x, 'Tenancy Strategy and Affordable Rents Statement.'

### **3. Welfare Reform**

#### **3.1 Background**

The Welfare Reform Bill will legislate for the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. The purpose of the Bill is to make the benefits and tax credits systems fairer and simpler by:

- creating the right incentives to get more people into work by ensuring work always pays
- protecting the most vulnerable in our society
- delivering fairness to those claiming benefit and to the taxpayer.

In summary, the main elements of the Bill are:

- The introduction of Universal Credit to provide a single streamlined benefit that will ensure work always pays
- A stronger approach to reducing fraud and error with tougher penalties for the most serious offences
- A new claimant commitment showing clearly what is expected of claimants while giving protection to those with the greatest needs
- Reforms to Disability Living Allowance, through the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment to meet the needs of disabled people
- Creating a fairer approach to Housing Benefit to bring stability to the market and improve incentives to work
- Driving out abuse of the Social Fund system by giving greater power to local authorities
- Reforming Employment and Support Allowance to make the benefit fairer and to ensure that help goes to those with the greatest need
- Changes to support a new system of child support which puts the interest of the child first.

In addition, the government are making significant changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) scheme, which began to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, with a view

to reducing the overall cost of welfare benefits leading up to the introduction of Universal Credit in October 2013.

The scale of the impacts of the benefit changes in relation to private rented accommodation and social housing in Cheltenham are detailed in Appendix x.

### **3.2 Impact in the private rented sector**

Some of the most significant challenges for tenants in the private rented sector are in relation to changes in the way LHA is calculated against market rents, and the extension of the single room rent to include single people aged between 25 and 35 years:

#### **3.2.1 LHA calculated at 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of market rents**

LHA is now calculated based on the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of market rents – a reduction from 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of market rent, as was calculated previously. This change has been effective from April 2011 for new tenants, and raises challenges regarding the affordability of the private rented sector and the council's ability to access the private rented sector for the purposes of both preventing homelessness and for ending our full homelessness duties.

Those most affected by these changes are families with a 4 and 5 bedroom need, where the new shortfall between rent subsidy entitlement and the market rents is particularly significant. The result is that larger households will be forced into smaller properties in the private rented sector and that there will be an increase in the demand from these families for larger social housing.

#### **3.2.1 Single room rent**

Single room rents have now been extended to include most single people who are under 35 years of age. This means that many more single people are likely to be forced into living together in houses of multiple occupation. This does create a risk in terms of the potential stability of these individual properties and the knock-on effect this can have on the wider community, where this leads to more transitory residents and where risks of anti-social behaviour is potentially increased.

There is also a risk that some under 25s will be squeezed out of the private rented sector, should some private landlords perceive that the over 25s will pose less of a risk to their properties/rental income.

### **3.3 Impact in the social housing sector**

The rules relating to how Housing Benefit (HB) is calculated for tenants of working age, who are under-occupying social housing, is also likely to change. From 2013, social housing tenants of working age will only be entitled to HB for the rooms they are entitled to under the HB regulations. This means that for those tenants who do not meet the HB criteria, in terms of the number of rooms they occupy, they could be deemed to be under-occupying their accommodation. As a result, their HB entitlement could be restricted. This will raise challenges for rent payments and/or debt for tenants and increase movement and pressures within social housing. It is estimated that 15-20% of CBC's 4 bedroom properties are occupied by tenants of working age, who are under-occupying by 2 bedrooms. This equates to



approximately 20-25 households, with more households in 3 bedroom properties also under-occupying.

### **3.4 Cross tenure impact**

The way in which non-dependent deductions are calculated is also changing, meaning that non-dependents lodging with a tenant claiming HB/LHA, will have to pay more to that tenant in order to meet their reduction in HB/LHA entitlement. This will place pressure on households to collect more from their non-dependants to cover household keeping, which in turn can increase family tensions and heighten risks of homelessness.

## **4. Self Financing Housing Revenue Account**

### **4.1 Background**

The previous system for council housing finance was criticised by Local Authorities, tenants and housing professionals for some years. It was based on an impenetrable and volatile subsidy system that was under-funded and redistributive and did not give a stable basis for long term business planning.

The previous Labour Government acknowledged these issues and commissioned a comprehensive review, which culminated in a consultation document entitled, 'A prospectus for the future of council housing.' This proposed the dismantling of the subsidy system and replaced it with a self financing debt settlement. Local Authorities would be required to pay interest to the government on the debt, but there would be an opportunity to borrow against rent revenues to secure additional funding up to a certain limit, known as a 'debt cap.'

Self-financing has now become a reality for Local Authorities, and this creates some real opportunities.

### **4.2 Impact of these changes**

It is estimated that as a result of these changes, Cheltenham Borough Homes will be able to raise an additional £xx million over xx years, which can then be invested into our housing stock and in services which support local communities.

How this extra finance will be used has been influenced by the priorities identified within this Strategy, as well as from consultation with a range of third sector partners and Cheltenham Borough Council tenants. These, in turn, have been used to inform the CBC HRA Business Plan 2012-42.

## **5. Supporting People**

### **5.1 Background**

Supporting People funding pays for much of the housing support that is provided to vulnerable people, in order to help them live as independently as possible. This includes supported housing, sheltered housing and floating support services. (The latter is where support is provided to those individuals who live in their own homes).

The role of Supporting People is therefore to ensure that vulnerable people are able to learn or maintain basic skills, which will enable them to remain in their own homes,

while achieving any aspirations they have to become more active members of their local communities.

Support provision is important, as failure to sustain accommodation due to a lack of basic life skills has considerable social costs, not only in terms of the individual affected, but to the community at large. Accommodation failure can also carry significant costs to the public purse, with a potential requirement for interventions from the Local Authority in terms of housing services provision, and so on.

Despite its importance, the Supporting People Programme is seeing a reduction in funding from Central Government from £20 million to £13 million over a 4 year period to 2015. Clearly, such cuts in funding cannot be met through traditional 'salami slicing'. Instead there will have to be a transformational change in the way services are delivered.

The County Council is the Administering Authority for the programme and leads the Supporting People Partnership Board, which will make recommendations on which services should be commissioned and decommissioned, before these are put to the County Council's Cabinet Members.

The Supporting People (SP) Strategy 2011-15, which has been consulted upon and endorsed by the County Council, specifies the general direction of travel that is to be undertaken.

### **5.2 Opportunities and Challenges**

Whilst this reduction in funding can present opportunities to fundamentally review services and bring about a transformational change in the way some of these services are delivered, there will clearly be some challenges in implementing the SP Strategy.

Our role will be to ensure that this transition takes place as smoothly as possible, through our representation at Partnership Board and other relevant SP partnerships. Critical to all of this will be our need to ensure that the needs of vulnerable people are safeguarded during this transition.

## Chapter Three

### Understanding Our Housing and Support Needs

An understanding of the housing needs within Cheltenham is essential in order for us to inform our decision-making on the provision of new affordable housing within the Cheltenham area.

#### 1. Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is given a specific definition within government guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3).

Essentially, it is made up of social rented, intermediate and affordable rented accommodation, provided by Registered Providers (traditionally known as Housing Associations and Local Authority owned stock).

It is likely that in the future most new affordable housing will be in form of affordable rents, which will generally be set at around 80% of local market rents. More detailed information about affordable rents is contained in Chapter 2 of this Strategy.

#### 2. Current levels of affordable housing

There are around 6,800 existing affordable homes in Cheltenham. This has fallen from approximately 7,000 since 2007 as a result of Right to Buy, demolition, etc. Approximately 4,500 of the affordable homes in Cheltenham belong to Cheltenham Borough Council. These are managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes, an Arms Length Management Organisation. The remaining homes are managed by Registered Providers, the details of which are at Appendix x.

#### 3. How many new affordable homes are needed?

The evidence-base for establishing levels of housing need in Cheltenham is contained within our Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

##### 3.1 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

The SHMA considers many factors, including projected population growth, single occupancy of households, workforce profile, the cost of market houses for sale and the cost of market rents. It estimates the future requirement for housing and the need for affordable housing across Gloucestershire.

In considering this range of factors, the SHMA concludes that:

- The structure of the population will change over the next 2 decades due to falling birth rates, longer life expectancy and the impact of migration, leading to an ageing population.
- One person households are predicted to rise, and as a result there will be an increase in demand for smaller housing units.
- The supply of social housing in Gloucestershire had declined steadily since 1980 due to factors such as social housing tenants exercising their Right to

Buy and the relatively low levels of new build homes being delivered generally.

### 3.2 Affordable housing need

An important part of the SHMA's evidence base is the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) The most recent one undertaken was the 2009 Assessment by Fordham Research (published 2010). This document takes precedence over previous needs assessments within the SHMA.

Housing need is defined in the HNA as the number of households who lack their own housing or who live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to meet their housing needs in the market.

A key part of the HNA was to look at affordable housing requirements. This was carried out following Communities and Local Government (CLG) guidance which sets out the methods for looking at the backlog of need and future need. In broad terms, the assessment of need can be split into the following categories:

- ▶ **Current affordable housing need (i.e. backlog):** It is estimated that 1,213 households are in current housing need with households in the social rented sector most likely to be in housing need.
  - ▶ **Current available affordable housing stock to offset need:** With only 665 units of affordable housing stock available to meet this need there is a current shortfall of around 548 units
  - ▶ **Future affordable housing need (future need):** The total gross future need for affordable housing is estimated to be 1,473 units per annum
  - ▶ **Future supply of affordable units:** To reduce the current backlog over five years and meet newly arising need for each year, it is estimated that there will be a need for approximately 929 units to be provided per annum.
- **Types of household in need of affordable housing**

About 26% of total gross housing need comes from lone parent families, despite making up just 5.5% of households in Cheltenham. Households with children are overall more likely to generate need than average.

Pensioner households do not generate much of the Borough's gross housing need (5.1%), despite making up more than one quarter (26.5%) of households. This is mostly because they are unlikely to voluntarily move property.

#### 3.2.1 Addressing need

The report considered that balancing the future housing market in the Cheltenham area would be best advanced by a 60%/40% mixture of market and affordable housing with social rented housing making up the bulk of affordable housing. Within the affordable sector (i.e. 40% of the whole), this could be broken down into 30% intermediate rented and 70% social rented making social rented housing 28% of the total construction.

Within the affordable housing requirement, two and three bedroom properties are required almost equally (39% and 36% respectively) with a lesser requirement for one and four bedroom properties (16% and 10% respectively).

### 3.2.2 The needs of particular groups

In addition to the main analysis of housing need, the study addressed particular client groups that may have specific housing requirements. While such groups do not necessarily represent “households in need” as defined by the CLG guidance for assessing affordable housing need, information about these groups is important to inform policy and service provision. This analysis found that:

- Around 13% of households in Cheltenham include one or more members in an identified support needs group (most common were those with a medical condition or had a physical disability, or were and frail and elderly). The most requested types of housing improvements were for lower level shower units or alterations to bathroom/toilet.
- Around 36% of households in Cheltenham contain only older people (defined as people aged 55 and over) and are slightly more likely than average to live in social housing.
- Levels of housing need were much higher than average among BME groups making up 21% of all housing need despite accounting for only 8% of Cheltenham households overall.

Information on the needs of particular groups has been instrumental in informing Gloucestershire’s Supporting People Strategy 2011-2015.

### 3.2.3 Key Messages

The messages from the housing needs assessment are quite stark, Cheltenham needs to build more affordable housing to meet the inherent needs within our communities. This is a challenge being taken up by the Councils of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury in the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), further details of which are covered within Chapter 4 of this Strategy.

## 3.3 The Gloucestershire Affordability Model

The Gloucestershire Affordability Model (GAM) was commissioned by the six Gloucestershire district authorities and the County Council as a means of further informing the decision making process, in terms of the levels of housing which may be required within Gloucestershire for each of the authorities’ development plans.

The Model uses demographic and economic projections to help make forecasts as to how the housing market may look over the plan period. By doing this, it helps to identify issues such as affordability and housing need.

Demographic and economic projections are just part of the suite of evidence which will be used to inform decisions on the level of development required: capacity to deliver new homes has also been assessed via Council monitoring of residential land and analysis via Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments.

Having considered this evidence, a likely estimation of new homes required in the JCS area over the next 20 years is considered to be approximately 36,800, meaning that 1,840 new homes would need to be provided every year until 2031. For the Cheltenham area, this would equate to approximately 11,550 new homes over this period, or around 580 a year. This demographic assessment is just one scenario

tested via the Joint Core Strategy. In total, 4 scenarios for future levels of housing development have been tested, and are covered in more detail within Chapter 4.

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## **Part Two – Meeting our Outcomes**

### **Chapter Four**

#### **Priority 1 - Increasing the Provision of new Affordable Housing**

##### **1. Introduction**

The development of new market and affordable housing is important to Cheltenham Borough's social and economic sustainability. Without both, there would be an imbalance in the housing market generally.

By enabling the provision of a range of property types, sizes and tenures, Cheltenham Borough Council will seek to ensure that more of its residents are better able to find and maintain suitable, affordable housing within and potentially around the Borough.

##### **2. Background**

Under the previous Government, targets for the provision of new housing were set by the government for different regional areas. The housing targets for Cheltenham, and indeed for Gloucestershire as a whole, were set within the Gloucestershire Regional Spatial Strategy. These targets were nevertheless supported by an evidence base of housing need contained within the SHMA, as referred to within Chapter 3 of this Strategy.

The present Government has now abolished these Regional Spatial Strategies, with a view to ensuring that local communities have a much greater say in setting any future housing targets for the area. This is currently being carried out via the Joint Core Strategy Consultation process.

##### **3. The Joint Core Strategy (JCS)**

Each local authority has a statutory duty to prepare a development plan and, in doing so, needs to arrive at the 'right' level of supply and location of housing that best meets the long term needs of communities.

The JCS is currently being developed in partnership with Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council. Its vision is to, 'foster growth in the local economy and provide sufficient homes, including affordable homes, in sustainable locations, without increasing the risk of flooding, or harming high quality landscape, whilst maintaining and enhancing the separate vitality, identity and character of individual settlements.'

Once approved, the JCS will form part of the statutory development plan for Cheltenham, setting out the housing requirements and levels of affordable housing to be delivered. As commissioners and providers, we need to help build strong communities where people live confidently alongside each other in mixed tenure communities that offer a choice of sustainable, quality, accessible and well-managed affordable homes.

A key strategic objective within the JCS is to provide sufficient homes - including affordable homes - on deliverable sites, which are of good quality and are of the right size, type and tenure in sustainable locations that provide good access to jobs and services and protect the quality of the environment. Included within the JCS will be a consideration as to how we would seek to meet the accommodation needs of a range of different groups and communities.

The scale on which we will foster economic growth in the local economy, and provide additional homes, will be informed by public consultation, with the final decision resting with the Council Members and tested via an examination in public under the regulations of the Town and Country Planning Act.

In order to inform this consultation, four Options for future development in the JCS area have been prepared. These Options take into account the estimated need for the provision of new homes and jobs in the JCS area, based upon a dynamic needs assessment (the Gloucestershire Affordability Model), which took into account a wide range of factors that would influence levels of need over the next 20 years; such as demographic and economic changes to the area.

The Options for future development are presented within the Joint Core Strategy Consultation documentation as Scenarios A to D as follows:

- Scenario A – 16,200 new homes across the JCS area
- Scenario B – 33,200 new homes across the JCS area
- Scenario C – 36,850 homes across the JCS area
- Scenario D – 40,500 homes across the JCS area

Scenario A offers the least amount of development over the next 20 years; limiting development to within the Cheltenham urban area and avoiding encroaching across the Cheltenham Borough boundaries. This would equate to approximately 220 new homes a year and, according to the Affordability Model, would fall far short of the 580 new homes required each year to meet estimated need.

Scenario D, on the other hand, offers the most amount of development, exceeding the estimated level of need identified within the Affordability Model by 10%, with the annual rate of housing delivery being on a par with the housing delivery rate in Cheltenham over the period 2006 to 2008. (Approximately 640 new homes/year).

The Council agreed in November 2011 to the publication of the JCS - 'Developing the Preferred Options Consultation Document' in order to consult widely on the of 4 potential development scenarios.

To inform the consultation process further, consideration was given to the extent to which each of the 4 scenarios, if implemented, would go towards meeting the key strategic objectives identified within the JCS. These are detailed within the JCS consultation documentation.

The consultation took place between December 2011 and February 2012, the outcome of which was that.....

Following further periods of consultation during 2012 and 2013, followed by an examination by the Secretary of State, the JCS will then be adopted in 2014, with one of the development scenarios A to D potentially being formally adopted by



Council. The JCS therefore has the potential to determine the scope of development of new affordable housing for the next 20 years, and will be a key document within Cheltenham's local plan, replacing the Affordable Housing Policy of the adopted Cheltenham Local Plan (2006).

Should the provision of new affordable housing be considerably lower than market requirements, then there will be a risk that pressures on existing housing will become increasingly strained, with the result that this will impact on housing waiting lists, increase homelessness and the use of emergency and other temporary accommodation; as well as adversely impacting on our ability to develop and maintain sustainable communities.

#### **4. The Gloucestershire Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople Communities**

The housing needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities differ significantly from those requiring traditional 'bricks and mortar' accommodation. Every local authority has a statutory duty to make provision for meeting the housing needs arising from this community group.

In 2007 the six Gloucestershire District Authorities, along with the County Council, commissioned an accommodation needs survey of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, in order to find out how many residential and transit pitches would be needed over the next five years. This resulted in the Gloucestershire Gypsy & Traveller Assessment (GTAA), which forms part of the overall evidence base within the SHMA.

The GTAA estimated that an additional 187 residential pitches and 35 transit pitches were required in Gloucestershire to meet the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople. It recommended that 4 of the residential pitches and 1 transit pitch should be provided within Cheltenham.

Following this, a 'call for sites' was undertaken for the JCS area. (A call for sites is a request to landowners within the area to put forward any available potential sites for consideration as to their suitability as sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople communities). No sites were submitted within the boundary of Cheltenham Borough, and many of the sites that were submitted outside our boundary were located in areas that would be considered to be unsuitable from a planning perspective. Clearly, even if all of the sites submitted were allocated for the travelling communities, there would still not be enough provision for all of the need as identified in the 2007 GTAA.

In considering the availability of suitable sites, it will be important that recognition is given to the particular accommodation needs of the different travelling communities, as for instance, travelling showpeople have different site design requirements for accommodation than other travelling communities.

The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is due for renewal in 2012. This assessment will provide us with more up to date information on current needs, with further consideration then being given to how some (if not all) of the estimated needs can be met for the area. **See Action x**

## 5. Existing New Affordable Housing Commitments and Plans

### 5.1 Background

In 2011, Cheltenham had 116,200 households. Over the period April 2006 to April 2011 the town delivered 2,100 new homes, with an average annual delivery of 430 dwellings.

Given that our Housing Needs Assessment estimates a requirement of 929 new affordable homes to be delivered every year (see Chapter 3), housing need in Cheltenham is more than twice as high as the actual supply of all new homes.

In terms of new affordable housing provision, since 2007 Cheltenham has delivered 283 affordable housing units. However, when taking into account the loss of affordable housing as a result of right to buy, demolition, etc. the total number of affordable housing for Cheltenham has in fact fallen from 6974 in 2007 to 6827 in 2010. Should the number of affordable units in Cheltenham continue to decrease, this will inevitably place even greater pressure on existing housing to meet housing needs.

### 5.2 The Role of Cheltenham Borough Homes

The HRA freedoms and flexibilities have enabled the Council, following consultation, to determine what its spending priorities are with the projected additional investment opportunities that the HRA freedoms will bring. Among the priorities identified, the Council has recommended that some emphasis is placed on the provision of new affordable housing.

CBH has already made some in-roads into this, having successfully delivered its first new homes development of 16 units at Brighton Road, all of which were built to Code 4 Standard for Sustainable Homes, thereby increasing energy efficiencies.

CBH is also on site with a further 48 new units being developed in St Pauls. Despite the setback of CBH not gaining any grant subsidy from the HCA to help finance the development of these new homes, we and CBH both remain committed to delivering the balance of the regeneration scheme at St Pauls (Phase 2) and concluding the redevelopment of Cakebridge Place.

Further ahead, there are currently four garage sites with planning consent for redevelopment under the garage site rationalisation programme. This has the potential to deliver a **xx new** affordable homes.

To facilitate the development of additional affordable housing, CBH will seek to liaise with developers to consider the viability of developing on other CBC land assets. **See action...**

### 5.3 Other Proposed New Affordable Housing Provision

In addition to the above, should larger schemes that are currently in the pipeline be delivered, a further 211 affordable housing units are anticipated over 2012-14. This, however, falls well short of recent new affordable housing provision in Cheltenham, and is a fraction of Fordhams estimated affordable housing need requirements.

## 5.4 Tackling Climate Change

In view of our commitments to tackling climate change, it is important that we have regard to the Code for Sustainable Homes levels to maximise energy efficiencies – Level 3 currently being the norm in the building industry. It is our aspiration that new homes are built to Code Level 4, however, this aspiration must be set in the context of economic viability and the ability to deliver this at this standard, without affecting the provision of new affordable housing.

## 5.5 Building for Life

Good quality housing design can improve social wellbeing and quality of life by reducing crime, the fear of crime and improving public health and easing transport problems. In addition, by designing new homes in such a way as to enable them to be more easily adapted in the future – should the need arise - this will increase opportunities for individuals to live independently for longer; thereby supporting one of our key outcomes.

We will therefore continue to seek to achieve a high Building for Life target on new housing developments.

## 6. The Future Delivery of New Affordable Housing post 2014

Given the uncertainties around what the Preferred Option for growth will be within the JCS, alongside other uncertainties, such as planning consents, viability of potential sites and the economic climate in general, it is difficult to predict what the future delivery of affordable housing will be beyond 2014.

The JCS will clearly provide the blueprint for the potential provision of new affordable housing for the next 20 years. Whichever of the four Preferred Options are adopted, it will be crucial for the Council to maximize the provision of affordable housing on new sites in order for at least some housing need to be met. There are a number of potential challenges and opportunities that must be considered in order for us to achieve this:

### 6.1 Reviewing the Threshold Levels for Triggering the Provision of New Affordable Housing

In current Local Plan Policies, a number of smaller sites across Cheltenham have delivered just under the 15 dwelling threshold and have therefore not been required to contribute towards meeting the identified affordable housing need. It may be that the identified shortfall in affordable housing provision across Cheltenham could be reduced if more (i.e. smaller) sites were required to make an affordable housing contribution, by lowering this threshold, where it is viable to do so.

It is fully intended to subject the potential lowering of the threshold to viability testing as part of the preferred JCS document in 2012. This will be carried out alongside the review of the implications of changes to infrastructure funding and the viability of the proposals in the JCS as a whole. Consultation is currently underway to consider whether new thresholds could be set. **See Action...**

### 6.2 Maximising Funding Opportunities

The housing market, and the economic climate in general, have been important factors in leading to the stall in the provision of new affordable housing in recent years.

This, combined with the Government's austerity measures, resulting in a reduction in the availability of grants from the HCA to subsidise the provision of new affordable homes, means that the market will continue to be challenging, unless potential funding streams are more effectively utilised.

### **6.2.1 The Homes and Communities Agency**

The HCA has a crucial role in supporting the development of new homes, new jobs and boosting economic growth. It will also continue to play a role in subsidising new affordable housing developments (albeit with reduced funding) for Registered Providers.

With the reduction in the potential availability of subsidies to support new developments, the HCA are focussing more on supporting those development opportunities that bring with them real prospects of economic growth and job creation (including skills development), in addition to the provision of new affordable homes.

Our role must therefore be to ensure that our affordable housing development priorities are, wherever possible, also aligned to supporting economic growth, where subsidies are required from the HCA to get our development priorities off the ground.

### **6.2.2 The Local Enterprise Partnership**

The Gloucestershire LEP is a partnership between the Local Authorities and businesses. It plays a central role in determining local economic priorities, and it undertakes activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs. It will also make decisions on how funding streams can be used to support these aims.

The government's view is that with economic growth and the creation of more jobs, comes the need for more housing. Given that emphasis within the JCS includes increasing the economic competitiveness of the JCS area, there are clear linkages and opportunities which can mutually benefit both the LEP's and the JCS's visions for the area.

In particular, the JCS has the potential to support the LEP by seeking to identify and deliver a supply of employment land within central areas and on the periphery of the urban areas to improve the economic resilience of the JCS area. In turn, the LEP can play a role in supporting the implementation of the JCS through its access to potential funding streams.

The degree to which this potentially mutually beneficial relationship will be able to develop, will be determined by the decisions made by the Council on which of the Preferred Options it wishes to adopt for the JCS.

### **6.2.3 The Local Investment Plan (LIP)**

The Local Investment Plan sets out areas of potential investment required for Gloucestershire. The HCA requires Local Authorities to produce these plans in order to inform potential funding discussions. The investments set out in the LIP are those required to deliver the agreed economic, housing and environmental ambitions for Gloucestershire. The LIP identifies the priorities that need to be addressed, based on

robust evidence from local strategies, including the Sustainable Communities Strategy, Local Development Frameworks and infrastructure planning work.

Given that the HCA is now prioritising its funding arrangements for new affordable housing, where this contributes to the wider outcomes around supporting economic growth, Cheltenham Borough Council will need to review its priorities within the LIP on a regular basis, in order to be satisfied that these priorities can also be shown, wherever possible, to support economic growth in our area - where subsidies are required from the HCA in order to deliver the required levels of affordable housing.

By aligning our priorities within the LIP in this way, we will ensure that the LIP falls in line with the overall vision for the JCS and the LEP, thereby maximizing the opportunities for funding to support appropriate development in the future. **See Action...**

#### **6.2.5 Associated Infrastructure**

In the same way, Infrastructure Plans supporting the LIP and other strategic sites identified within the JCS consultation documentation ought to be prioritised according to whether the sites can deliver economic growth and housing. **See Action x.**

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## Chapter Five

### Priority 2 - Making Best Use of Existing Housing

#### 1. Introduction

Improving the condition and use of our existing provision of housing, both in the private sector and in the social housing sector is a crucial part of our Housing Strategy. It will support the following outcomes:

- To enable people to live independently for longer and to lead more healthy lives
- To reduce carbon emissions
- To reduce fuel poverty
- To improve the quality and safety of homes
- To reduce the number of empty homes
- To reduce homelessness
- To strengthen our neighbourhoods and to make them safer

#### 2. Housing Across all Tenures

##### 2.1 Energy Efficiency

###### 2.1.1 Climate Change

The UK is at risk of experiencing significant changes in climate over the coming decades, unless there is a collective focus on reducing UK carbon emissions. There is a national target to reduce our emissions by 80% by 2050. We can help to meet this target by improving the energy efficiency of our homes.

###### 2.1.2 Fuel Poverty

Improving the energy efficiency of our homes is important also in terms of helping to tackle fuel poverty. As fuel becomes more scarce, prices will rise further, potentially plunging many more households into fuel poverty and placing the most vulnerable, particularly the elderly, at greater risk – especially in terms of the potential impact on their health and wellbeing.

Our approach to improving the energy efficiency of our homes is covered in Sections 3 and 4 below, along with other key issues affecting both the private and social housing sectors.

#### 3. Private Sector Housing

*Top line issues will be covered here, referring reader to the Private Sector Renewal Policy, for more detailed information (This Policy will be put in the Appendix)*

#### 4. Social Housing – Cheltenham Borough Homes

The freedoms and flexibilities coming from the HRA reform have enabled us to prioritise the works referred to below as key areas of investment, following wide public, tenant and agency consultation, and as outlined within our HRA Business Plan, with a more detailed plan being worked through with CBH over the period 2012-13. **See Action x.**

Our homes currently meet the government's 'decency standard.' CBH successfully completed this multi-million pound project in 2008, two years ahead of the government's target and within budget. We are committed to maintaining this level of decency into the future. Now that the decent homes programme has been completed, future investment will be proactive, identifying and replacing components and maintaining building elements before they fail. These will be identified by the use of developing stock condition software and physical surveys. CBH will investigate retrofitting homes to improve their environmental footprints, taking into account new technologies to reduce energy use. CBH will review the optimum methodology for addressing fuel poverty, including the opportunities provided through the adoption of renewable technologies.

CBH has also an Environmental Improvement Programme of £60k to be spent on physical works to improve the environmental efficiency of housing stock. Activities will be prioritised to ensure this budget is put to best use.

CBH will also continue their Neighbourhood Works Programme, to improve the external communal environments for CBC tenants. This will play an important part in helping to combat anti-social behaviour and to promote community cohesion within some of our neighbourhoods.

Whilst the worst of the non-traditional stock is being addressed through the redevelopment of the Tarran bungalow sites at Brighton Road and Cakebridge Place, there remain a core of 'Cornish' non-traditional properties that will require significant investment within the life of the current investment plan. This is most likely to take the form of a standard works programme for Pre-cast Reinforced Concrete (PRC) homes.

Day to day repairs to properties are undertaken by CBH's in-house responsive repairs team. CBH will review this service to ensure that it continues to provide value for money and is able to withstand the challenges of the external market.

### **4.1 Sheltered Housing**

A few of our current sheltered housing units experience relatively low demand, because as bedsits they are considered too small to meet the needs for some of our residents. Conversion to flats is an expensive option and would result in an overall loss of units. We will therefore carry out an options appraisal in order to seek to address the occurrence of bedsits within three of the sheltered schemes.

In addition, the community alarm equipment within schemes is becoming old, and in the future they may not be able to be maintained or replaced with like for like equipment. We will therefore also consider how we can invest in new technologies to better assist our tenants, with support needs, in sheltered housing.

## **5. Partnership and Monitoring Arrangements between CBC and CBH**

Supporting the delivery of excellent services and maintaining the viability of CBH in the long term is of vital importance. The core services of CBH, which includes the management and reletting of the Council's homes in a timely and cost effective manner, will continue to be of the highest priority. Robust performance monitoring and self assessment, coupled with the involvement of customers to ensure relevant focus and service-user scrutiny will ensure this continues. We will also ensure that we continue to work together effectively through relevant partnership and monitoring arrangements. **See Actionx**

## **6. The Social Housing Sector – Other Registered Providers**

Registered Providers will have their own business plans and targets for improving their housing stock. We will, however, seek to influence RPs, through our partnership arrangements, to ensure consideration is given to the priorities we have identified within this Strategy. **See Actionx**

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## Chapter Six

### Priority 3 - Improving Access to and Maintaining Suitable Accommodation

#### 1. Accessing Social Housing

##### 1.1 Gloucestershire Homeseeker Allocations Scheme

In 2009 the six District Authorities in Gloucestershire implemented 'Gloucestershire Homeseeker,' a county-wide Choice Based Lettings Scheme, to allocate social housing. Whilst this is a Gloucestershire-wide scheme, we are still able to give preference to households with a local connection to Cheltenham.

This Scheme is an improvement on the earlier 'points' based approach to allocating properties, in that it is less complicated, is seen to be fairer and is more transparent. Whilst the Scheme does not create more properties, it does enable households to make more informed choices about where they wish to live and the likelihood of being offered social housing there.

##### 1.2 Reviewing Gloucestershire Homeseeker

As a result of the national changes introduced by the Localism Act and those that are anticipated to come out of the Welfare Reform Bill, we will review our Allocations Scheme. As this is a Gloucestershire-wide Scheme, any review will need to be undertaken in full agreement of the 5 other District Authorities within Gloucestershire.

The issues to be reviewed are as follows:

###### 1.2.1 'Open' versus 'closed' housing lists

Restricting access to the housing list for those households with a clearly defined housing need may bring about some benefits. However, there may also be some potentially unintended consequences, as detailed in Chapter 2 of this Strategy. Full consideration will be given, through the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Partnership, to the opportunities and challenges such restrictions are likely to bring, before making any recommendations to change our existing Policy. **See Action x**

###### 1.2.2 Social Housing Tenants seeking to Transfer

Local Authorities can, if they wish, remove from the Allocations Scheme existing social housing tenants who are seeking to move to alternative social housing; thereby freeing them up from having to compete directly with non-social housing tenants in housing need.

Again, this opportunity can bring about some unintended consequences. Gloucestershire Homeseeker Partnership will therefore also give careful consideration to this option, before making any recommendations to change our Allocations Scheme. **See action x**

###### 1.2.3 'Room' Entitlement - Housing Benefit Eligibility Criteria

Gloucestershire Homeseeker will review the bedroom entitlement it currently offers to households on the housing list, with a view to aligning it to the proposed Housing Benefit requirements. Currently, there are no Housing Benefit restrictions on social housing tenants under-occupying their accommodation; but this is likely to change. As a result, it will be necessary to ensure that households are not inadvertently placed in accommodation they cannot afford to maintain, because of these newly proposed Housing Benefit restrictions. **See action x**

#### **1.2.4 Families leaving the Armed Forces**

Cheltenham Borough Council has signed up to an Armed Forces Community Covenant, alongside other District and Public Authorities within Gloucestershire. (Please see Appendix x) As part of our commitment to this covenant, we will, when reviewing our Homeseeker Allocations Scheme, consider the housing needs of households leaving the Armed Forces. **See action x**

#### **1.3 The Access & Inclusion Group**

This group is a subgroup of the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Partnership, tasked with reviewing the ability of vulnerable people to access the Choice Based Lettings Scheme and, where shortcomings are identified, to take appropriate steps to address them. It is comprised of District Authorities and third sector organisations representing the interests of vulnerable people.

We will continue to provide representation within this group as a means of ensuring that the needs of vulnerable people are heard and that appropriate activities are undertaken to ensure there is more equitable access to Gloucestershire Homeseeker. **See Action x.**

### **2. Accessing the Private Rented Sector**

The growth in the 'buy to let' market by private investors, combined with the cost of home ownership, has led to an increase in the demand for and in the supply of private rented accommodation in Cheltenham.

In Chapter 5, we referred to the challenges this growth in the market presents in terms of the Local Authority being satisfied that this stock meets the required health and safety and decent home standards. However, this increase also creates opportunities by opening up more housing options for low-income households who might otherwise have had to rely solely on social housing to meet their needs.

In addition to this increase in private rented accommodation, the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance also made it easier to access the private rented sector, in that on the whole, it offered more generous calculations of benefit entitlement compared with the previous HB calculations. It also opened up more choice for low-income households seeking accommodation.

The welfare reform will to some degree limit the ability of low-income households to access and maintain accommodation in the private rented sector. Our role will therefore be to seek to minimise this impact. We will do this by:

#### **2.1 Reviewing CBC's Housing Options Service**

Traditionally Housing Options Services have tended to focus on providing services for those at risk of homelessness or in housing need. A focus for the future provision of the housing options service will be to develop services for private landlords, including potentially tenancy management services. **See Action x**

We will also undertake a commissioning review of our Housing Options Service, to ensure we are maximising efficiencies and to determine whether any added value or other benefits can be derived from commissioning this service to Cheltenham Borough Homes. **See Action x**

### **2.2 Widening the scope of Gloucestershire Homeseeker Choice Based Lettings Allocations Scheme to include private landlords**

Currently, the Choice Based Lettings Scheme advertises only social rented properties. If private rented properties were also advertised through this Scheme, this would extend the range of options open to private landlords to advertise their properties, and serve as a mechanism by which we could build a stronger partnership between these landlords and the Local Authority.

By combining such an initiative with Private Sector Housing Service's 'Fit for Rent' Accreditation Scheme, this could also serve as an opportunity to raise housing standards in the private rented sector.

Gloucestershire Homeseeker Partnership will therefore explore the option of widening the scope of the Scheme to include the private rented sector, and consider how this could be linked to the county-wide Accreditation Scheme. **See Actionx.**

### **2.3 Supporting the development of a Private Leasing Scheme**

Private Leasing enables landlords to lease their properties to a managing agent for an agreed number of years. During that period the landlord receives a guaranteed rent, and at the end of the term the property is returned to the landlord in the same condition as it was taken on.

These schemes can be attractive to those private landlords who do not wish to manage their properties themselves and who are looking for a guaranteed rental income. The trade-off is that these guaranteed rents are usually lower than what might otherwise be received on the open market.

We are currently working with partners, including the Probation Service and other District Authorities, to ensure that a Private Leasing Scheme can be set up within Gloucestershire. Particular emphasis will be placed upon supporting the needs of vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

By working in conjunction with Private Sector Housing Services, we will also ensure that we make use of this opportunity to raise housing standards within the private rented sector. **See Action x**

## **3. Accessing Shared Ownership and Related Schemes**

These schemes can provide choice for households who cannot afford to buy a property outright, but who have sufficient means to step onto the property ladder by purchasing part of the property initially.

There are a range of products available, which are accessed via South West Homes, a 'not for profit' organisation. We will therefore remain working closely with South West Homes to ensure households, who can afford such schemes, are made aware of what is available.

## **4. Maintaining Independent Living**

One of our outcomes is to support independent living. We will seek to achieve this through:

### **4.1 The Provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and other Adaptations**

#### **4.1.1 Mandatory DFGs**

These grants are means-tested, and enable individuals to live independently for longer, by financing the adaptation of their homes to better meet their needs. The Local Authority receives a cash grant from the government each year towards the funding of DFG's. As the population ages, the demand for DFGs is likely to increase. We will therefore seek to ensure that cases continue to be prioritised appropriately, dealt with according to need and that adaptations are carried out cost effectively.

We will also work with CBH to ensure that where relatively minor adaptations are identified, these works can be carried out without the need for our tenants to go through the DFG application process.

#### **4.1.2 Adaptation support grants**

This is a discretionary grant available to a disabled person who has been referred to the Local Authority for assistance by an Occupational Therapist. The categories of work covered include:

- Essential repairs associated with any required adaptations
- Relatively minor adaptations, or where
- Adaptations need to be carried out very quickly

We will continue to exercise our discretion in determining when the use of this grant will be the most appropriate option for those wishing to remain in their homes, with a view to maintaining value for money for the Local Authority.

#### **4.1.3 Relocation grants**

This is another discretionary grant designed to assist with relocation costs and/or purchasing costs of a new property where adaptations to an existing property are considered inappropriate or too costly, and where a more cost-effective option would be to assist households with re-housing. We will exercise our discretion in using this grant to ensure we make best use of Local Authority finances.

## **4.2 Lifeline Alarms**

The Lifeline Alarm Service can benefit people of any age who are vulnerable and/or have a disability. It enables clients to contact someone quickly and easily via a

control centre 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in the event of an emergency, such as a fall or sudden illness.

In addition, it offers reassurance to users and their families that this service is available, should such an emergency arise. This in turn gives individuals (and their families) confidence that they are better able to live independently for longer.

This service also provides a further benefit in that it generates an income for the Local Authority.

We will actively promote the service through multi media sources and attending community events throughout the Borough. In addition, we will also embrace new technology and where practicable offer this as an extra service to our customers.  
**See Action x**

### **4.3 Sheltered Housing and Older People**

Sheltered housing plays an important part in meeting the needs of some of our older people. This is demonstrated by a recent survey by CBH on our sheltered housing residents, which showed very high satisfaction levels; not least with the role that Supported Housing Officers play in helping to enable our tenants to lead more active and fulfilling lives. The quality of the service was also recently reviewed by the Supporting People Inspectorate, which delivered a resounding 5 A rating (the highest rating available).

Despite these successes, there are gaps - in particular for older people not living in sheltered housing. CBC and CBH are therefore working through a number of options currently, as identified in CBH's Housing Support Service Business Plan, to consider how we can better meet the support (and potentially other) needs of the wider population of older people, whilst still maintaining high quality services for our sheltered housing tenants. **See Action x.**

We will also work with Supporting People, to ensure that our priorities can be aligned as far as possible to the priorities identified for older people within the Supporting People Strategy. **See Action x.**

### **4.4 Supported Housing**

#### **4.4.1 Review of Supported Housing Services**

Supported Housing is accommodation based support for those who need to acquire the necessary skills to enable them to live independently. This support is financed by Supporting People.

The reduction in Supporting People funding is likely to mean that the provision of Supported Housing will change, with emphasis placed on the provision of accommodation-based support for those with higher support needs; whilst more flexible support service provision is delivered to those with lower support needs, via 'floating support' services.

Should these changes be implemented, our responsibility will be to ensure that any necessary 'transition' takes place smoothly, and that any potentially negative impact on vulnerable residents is avoided. **See Action x**

#### **4.4.2 More Equitable Access to Supported Housing Services**

Supporting People have identified, through their needs analysis, that there is a lack of accommodation-based support for rural districts, and that accommodation-based support within urban districts should be opened up more equitably than is perceived at present.

For Cheltenham, the impact is likely to be minimal as there are no restrictions currently for those seeking to access supported housing within Cheltenham from outside our area. Indeed, numbers accessing supported housing within Cheltenham from outside the area is relatively low.

Nevertheless, whilst it is fair and reasonable for there to continue to be equitable access into supported housing in Cheltenham (which is financed by the county), it is also appropriate that individuals who do access these facilities from outside the area are supported in returning to those areas where they have their connections, provided it is appropriate to do so, once they are ready for move-on from supported housing.

We are therefore committed to ensuring that a Reconnection Policy is agreed and implemented effectively across the county. **See Actionx.**

#### **4.4.3 Gateway Assessments into Supported Housing Services**

Supporting People are proposing to develop and implement a Gateway Assessment Service, with a view to providing an online preliminary assessment of the support needs of those looking to access supported housing. It will also measure the outcomes of those who subsequently proceed to go through supported housing on their pathway to independent living and provide a useful tool for monitoring the effectiveness of the proposed Reconnection Policy.

Our role within the development of the Gateway Assessment Service will be to ensure that it is implemented in a way that ensures the needs of those residents who have the greatest requirements for supported housing are most able to access this accommodation. **See Action x**

#### **4.4.4 Move-on into Private Rented Accommodation**

Cheltenham Borough Council currently administers the county-wide Deposit Loan Scheme, which enables households within supported housing, who are ready for move-on into independent accommodation, to access the private rented sector more easily. This scheme will also remain available for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and who can live independently but with the provision of some floating support. The Housing Options Team is committed to running this scheme for the county, so long as funding from SP continues to remain available, and we will periodically review the effectiveness of the scheme for Supporting People. **See Action x.**

## Chapter Seven

### Priority 4 - Tackling Homelessness: Our Homelessness Strategy

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the levels and likely future trends in homelessness in Cheltenham. In doing so, it sets out the activities that have contributed to our success in reducing homelessness as a result of the previous Homelessness Strategy in 2008. It also highlights the challenges facing Homelessness and Housing Advice Services, and identifies the steps that we need to take in order to meet those challenges.

#### 2. Review of Homelessness

Since the last Homelessness Strategy, our approach to tackling homelessness has transformed the way in which the Housing Options Service has delivered its service, creating more opportunities for partnership working and resulting in good outcomes for many who have approached the service as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

##### 2.1 Current Trends

The table below illustrate the trends on homelessness since 2008

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12 (first 9 months)
Homelessness Approaches	295	235	288	203
Homelessness Preventions	151 (+ 95)	267 (+123)	267 (+59)	181 (+31)
Homelessness Acceptances	95	11	23	34
Households in Temporary Accommodation as at 31 <sup>st</sup> December	46	30	18	13

The number of households approaching the Local Authority as homeless or threatened with homelessness has remained fairly constant at just below 300/year. Approaches in 2009/10 are recorded as lower, because many households who were presenting as being at risk of homelessness were having their homelessness prevented before the need to make a homelessness approach.

Homelessness 'prevention' is defined as, 'casework carried out by the Local Authority which is likely to result in a household's homelessness being prevented for a period of at least 6 months.'

The Local Authority contracted out its advice and assistance function to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, for homeless households deemed not to be in 'priority need', as defined by the Housing Act 1996. The figures in brackets in the table above show the number of homelessness preventions carried out by the Citizens' Advice Bureau over the same period.

Homelessness 'acceptances' are defined as those households for whom the Local Authority is satisfied it has a statutory duty to house because they are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need for housing, not homeless intentionally and have a local connection to this Authority.

Following the implementation of the 2008 Homelessness Strategy, the figures show that there has been some considerable success in preventing homelessness, with the result that fewer households have been accepted as statutory homeless in recent years. The consequence of this for the Local Authority is that we have seen fewer homeless households being forced into temporary accommodation, such as Bed & Breakfast.

These outcomes not only benefit the Local Authority in terms of reduced costs incurred in keeping families in Bed & Breakfast and other forms of temporary housing, they have significant benefits for the households themselves, as a result of reduced stress and disruption to their lives, and they have wider benefits to communities as a whole, as households are more able to stay connected with their existing support and social networks.

### **2.2 Emerging Issues/Trends**

It is noted that the following trends are appearing or are likely to appear in light of changes taking place nationally. Our priority will therefore be to seek to mitigate against the potential impact of these changes, in addition to attempting to tackle some longstanding issues identified within Cheltenham.

#### **2.2.1 Low Income Households**

There are current proposals within the Welfare Reform Bill to abolish elements of the discretionary social fund and council tax benefit, replacing both with localised schemes run by Local Authorities. In addition, it is proposed that Housing Benefit/LHA, a current Local Authority responsibility, should be centralised within the Universal Credit. The government believes that the integration of housing costs into a centralised Universal Credit will be a major simplification that will greatly help claimants to take responsibility for their finances. Those at greatest risk are those households who are more vulnerable and who do not have the skills currently to take on these financial responsibilities effectively.

#### **2.2.2 Families**

Since 2009/10, when homelessness acceptances were at an all time low and homelessness preventions an all time high, some patterns have begun to emerge in terms of who are becoming homeless and the reasons why.



The vast majority of households considered to be statutory homeless have been families with children, usually with a need for 2 or 3 bedrooms, although a small number of larger families require at least 4 bedrooms.

The main cause of homelessness is the loss of private rented accommodation, followed by those losing accommodation from friends and family.

The increase in the loss of private rented accommodation comes as no surprise, given the challenging financial climate and the reduction in Local Housing Allowances for low-income households. Also not surprising, is that it is becoming more difficult to re-house these households in the private rented sector. This is leading to increases in homelessness acceptances and a reduction in homelessness preventions. These trends are likely to worsen, as the full impact of the benefit changes are felt.

Whilst we are currently maintaining relatively low levels of temporary accommodation, the pressure on temporary housing for the homeless is likely to increase significantly in the future, if steps are not taken to mitigate against the impact of the welfare reform.

### **2.2.3 Single People under 35**

The changes to the LHA will have a significant impact on single people who are under 35, in that their LHA entitlement will be restricted to the 'single room rate'. In practice this means that single under 35s will, in most cases, if relying on LHA, be required to house/flat share or live in cheap bedsits at the lower end of the housing market, if they wish to continue to rent privately.

These changes, along with the changes to the underoccupation rules in social housing, may lead to some under 35s moving back to living with family members, whilst others may be forced to live in less secure accommodation, sharing with friends, etc.

An indirect impact of these changes may be on under 25s, as the 25-35 year age group compete for the same properties – if private landlords perceive the older age group as being less of a risk.

### **2.2.4 Households who have complex needs**

There are a small group of individuals with complex needs, for whom the provision of housing (whether supported housing or independent accommodation with current support arrangements attached) is not enough. Usually, these needs involve high levels of substance dependency and/or mental ill-health. Although the number of individuals with highly complex needs is comparatively low, they do take up disproportionately high levels of resources across all agencies, such as health, police and housing services.

### **2.2.5 Rough Sleepers**

Cheltenham Borough Council has recently commissioned 2 rough sleepers counts: one in November 2010 and the most recent in October 2011. The first count identified 1 rough sleeper, and the second 3 rough sleepers. Rough sleepers are often those who have complex needs and who have been unsuccessful in either accessing or maintaining suitable accommodation previously.

### 3. Tackling Homelessness - Our Outcomes

The potential impact of the welfare reform has driven our priorities for this Strategy in terms of tackling homelessness. As a result, the outcomes that we wish to achieve have been set in order to mitigate against any negative impacts that these welfare changes are likely to bring. These outcomes are as follows:

- To prevent homelessness
- To reduce unmanageable debt, which if left unchecked can lead to homelessness
- To improve the financial capability of households
- To maximising incomes
- To ensure that vulnerable people are adequately supported through the welfare reforms.

### 4. How we will achieve these outcomes

#### 4.1 Responding to the Welfare Reform

##### 4.1.1 Introduction

In 2008 we put together a 3 year Benefit Take-Up Strategy. This was in many ways a sister strategy to the 2008 Homelessness Strategy. Now, more than ever, the issues around welfare benefits are so inextricably linked to the potential causes of homelessness that it is appropriate for the priorities and outcomes that we wish to achieve through Benefit Take-Up to be incorporated within this Housing & Homelessness Strategy.

We will, however, in partnership with other organisations, continue to have a role in promoting the uptake of Benefits generally for those who are not claiming them, particularly amongst those groups where there has traditionally been under-claiming, specifically older people and carers. Last year alone we raised over £800,000 for clients who were failing to claim all their benefits. **See Actionx**

For more information about the more generalist Benefit Take-Up work achieved over the period of the Benefit Take-Up Strategy, please see Appendix x.

##### 4.1.2 The role of the Housing Options Service: Supporting Tenants

In addition to tackling homelessness and assessing housing need, one of the roles of the Housing Options Service will be to ensure that existing tenants who are affected by the changes to welfare benefits over the coming years are given adequate advice, assistance and support.

We know that the number of households affected by the changes to the LHA alone is significant (well over 1000). Our role will be to ensure that those in the private rented sector who are at risk of losing their accommodation as a result of these changes are supported appropriately.

In the first instance, we will consider whether households' existing accommodation could become affordable, by:

- Negotiating with the landlord to reduce the monthly rent, in return for direct payments of LHA to the landlord.
- Assessing whether households are receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled, thereby maximizing household incomes
- Considering how current outgoings can be reduced
- Considering whether households have existing debts, and if so, whether they might benefit from specialist advice and support
- Reducing financial exclusion, and linking households to the Credit Union and/or to high street basic bank accounts
- Considering whether households have more general support needs, and ensuring they are referred into relevant agencies, such as Floating Support Services

We will also apply this approach to all households presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

For households who do have to move to more affordable accommodation, we will help them to do this via either a Deposit Bond Scheme, coupled with a 2 month Rent Guarantee, or through our traditional Deposit Loan Scheme.

In addition, we will ensure that the Housing Benefits Service applies their Discretionary Hardship Fund (for as long as it is available) for anyone who has been genuinely unable to move into more affordable accommodation before their LHA on their existing property is reduced - the aim being to prevent these households from falling into rent arrears with their current landlords.

Given that we are seeking to take a proactive approach to supporting those households who are likely to be affected, we expect to be able to avoid using this additional Fund, except in the most exceptional circumstances.

#### **4.1.3 The Advice & Inclusion Service**

The Single Advice Contract with the Citizens' Advice Bureau expired on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, with a new Advice and Inclusion Contract replacing it. CCP was successful in the tendering process and the service will operate from Cheltenham First Stop, alongside the Housing Options Service and other related support services; thereby bringing about a true one stop shop service for residents with benefit, debt and/or housing needs.

The outcomes highlighted in Section 3 above are mirrored within the specification for this contract, thereby ensuring we develop common aims and objectives, and maximising the opportunities for partnership working.

We will support CCP in integrating this service within CFS, and in ensuring the outcomes identified within the contract are being met. **See Action x**

#### **4.1.4 Tackling underoccupation within social housing**

Whilst the review of 'room entitlement' for families applying for social housing via Gloucestershire Homeseeker's Allocations Scheme (referred to in Section 1.2.3 of the preceding chapter) will ensure that new households seeking to access housing are not offered accommodation that is deemed too large for their needs for HB purposes,

a number of existing tenants will nevertheless be affected. The anticipated HB restrictions will mean that they could end up occupying accommodation that they can no longer afford.

In the main, households who are affected by these changes are likely to wish to remain in their existing homes, if they believe they can still afford to do so. But for those who do choose to stay, comes also the risk that they will fall into rent arrears and be subsequently evicted.

Our focus will be to support these households to see whether their homes can be made more affordable, through measures to improve the financial inclusion and financial capability of these tenants, where this is both relevant and appropriate.

We will therefore work with CBH in supporting the delivery and implementation of their Financial Inclusion Strategy. This Strategy will result in improving access to financial services that are available to low income households, and will offer a targeted approach to improving the financial capability of those affected. We will also encourage other RPs to take a similar approach to tackling this issue. **See Action x.**

In addition, we will support any measured increase in investment in rent arrears prevention by CBH, should further resources be required in the future.

For those residents who are underoccupying and who do wish, or need, to move to smaller accommodation, we will seek to support them in this by:

- Ensuring Gloucestershire Homeseeker gives sufficient priority to those under occupying. **See action x**
- Promoting the expansion of Tenants Incentive Schemes, to enable the practical and financial issues around moving are given adequate consideration by RPs. We will, in particular, support CBH in using some of the HRA flexibilities to enable such moves to take place more easily. **See Action x**
- Promoting and supporting tenants in identifying a potential move through the Homeswap Scheme. **See Action x**

#### **4.1.5 Financial Inclusion Partnerships**

The Housing Options Service will remain committed to working in partnership with agencies with similar priorities in tackling financial exclusion and in improving the financial capability of households who might otherwise become homeless through debt.

We will remain part of Cheltenham Borough Homes' Financial Inclusion Working Group, in addition to the county-wide Financial Inclusion & Capability Forum and Benefit Take-Up Forum. **See Action x**

#### **4.1.6 Crisis Loans for Living Expenses and Community Care Grants**

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) has announced a proposal to transfer its funding currently allocated to the above, to go to Local Authorities to administer.

Cheltenham Borough Council sees this as an opportunity for this funding to be resourced according to local priorities.

Should, following consultation, the DWP proposals go ahead, Cheltenham Borough Council will decide how the service will be run, following consultation with the Housing & Support Forum and other relevant partners. **See Action x**

#### **4.2 Tackling Rough Sleeping and Addressing the Support Requirements of Individuals with Complex Needs**

Whilst our official counts reveal that the number of rough sleepers in Cheltenham at any given time is relatively low, there is nevertheless a group of individuals for whom existing service provision does not work for them. Our challenge is therefore to work through how we can collectively better serve the needs of rough sleepers, as well as those at risk of rough sleeping in the future, as a result of their highly complex needs, thereby supporting a range of strategies, including the county's Reduction in Re-offending Strategy, improving Health and Wellbeing, and so on.

Working within our housing partnerships across the county; and more locally, through organisations represented within the Housing and Support Forum, we will consider how we can best meet the needs of this group, with a view to drawing in potential funding opportunities from other key commissioners. **See Action x**

#### **4.3 Youth Housing (including under 35s)**

Preventing youth homelessness remains a priority for Cheltenham. We will seek to alleviate the pressures on under 35s – in particular those who will be forced to move from their existing accommodation to more affordable private rented accommodation, with the assistance of a newly proposed Deposit Bond Scheme. In addition to guaranteeing the deposit to the landlord, this will be combined with a 2 month rent guarantee for the first 12 months. We will also scope out how we can make this scheme even more attractive to landlords by considering offering a range of tenancy management services, both for the tenant and the landlord. **See Action x.**

In view of the indirect impact on under 25s, We will work with the Districts and the County to ensure that we have a robust county-wide Youth Housing Strategy, to help alleviate some of the housing need for the younger age group. **See Action x**

In addition, the CLG has awarded the county £80,000 to deliver further initiatives on youth homelessness prevention. We will therefore seek to agree how this can best be used to minimise the risk of young people becoming homeless. **See action x**

#### **4.4 Existing Initiatives**

The success we have seen in recent years in reducing homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation is in no small part due to the range of initiatives implemented during the period of the 2008 Homelessness Strategy. We will therefore support these initiatives, while they continue to contribute effectively towards meeting our outcomes; subject to resources permitting.

##### **4.4.1 Cheltenham's Deposit Loan Scheme**

This Scheme allows for a cash sum to be loaned to a tenant, on an interest free basis, to cover part of the cost of moving into the private rented sector. Households

who wish to be considered for the Scheme are given an affordability assessment to ensure they can afford to meet their repayments on this loan.

In 2010/11 alone, of the £13,541.25 loaned out to households, we have recouped £8,796.40.

#### **4.4.2 Sanctuary Scheme**

The Sanctuary Scheme enables households who are, or are at risk of, experiencing domestic abuse from perpetrators who live outside the family home, to be able to remain in their existing homes if they wish to, by having their properties made safe against potential threats. This may be as simple as having better security locks on the property or it could involve an entire 'safe room' being created within the property.

Our aim over the course of our Strategy will be to ensure the Sanctuary Scheme is promoted more effectively to external agencies, and longer term, to consider whether any potential economies of scale could be achieved through the development of a county-wide scheme. **See Action x**

#### **4.4.3 Young People's Family Mediation Service**

One of the main causes of homelessness at the time of our 2008 Homelessness Strategy was youth homelessness; particularly from young people having to leave their parental home due to family breakdown.

CBC led a sub-group of the Youth Housing Partnership to develop a service model for a new type of mediation service that better meets the needs of young people than more traditional mediation services. As a result, a young people's family mediation service was developed, with CCP being commissioned to deliver this service for Cheltenham. They have subsequently developed this service further, which now includes the provision of training to partner organisations. This service is open to young people between the ages of 11 and 19 and their family members.

CBC is committed to investing in early intervention prevention, thereby reducing the risk of issues between child and parent becoming entrenched and potentially leading to homelessness when they get older.

We will work closely with CCP to ensure that it adapts to any changing needs and requirements, as appropriate. **See action x**

#### **4.4.4 The Southwark Protocol**

The Southwark Protocol is an agreement between the District Authorities within the county and the County Council on establishing joint practices for assisting 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless.

Signed off at CEO/Strategy Director level, Cheltenham Borough Council played an important part in putting the Protocol together. Crucially, the Protocol recognises the responsibilities that both the County Council and Local Housing Authorities have in working with 16 and 17 year olds, and it ensures that emphasis is placed on preventing young people from becoming homeless in the first place.

It will therefore remain critical for the effectiveness of this Protocol to be monitored, and where necessary developed, over the lifetime of this Housing and Homelessness Strategy. **See action x**

#### **4.4.4 Nightstop**

Gloucestershire Nightstop provides an alternative to Bed and Breakfast for young homeless people up to the age of 25. The accommodation provided is generally short term, and involves placements of young people within a family environment, with hosts offering rooms on voluntary basis.

CBC sees Nightstop Services as important in providing a real alternative to emergency housing provision for those who might otherwise be forced into Bed & Breakfast, or worse, have nowhere to go at all. The service can be a place of short term respite for the young people concerned, as well as potentially providing a link into other services, such as Mediation and Supported Housing. Facilities there also enable young people to start trying to get their lives back on track again, through access to education, training and employment. Monitoring of this contract has shown some positive outcomes that have helped turn the lives around of a number of young people.

The focus for CBC in the future will be to ensure that there are more hosts available in Cheltenham and that the average length of stay within Nightstop services is increased. This will ensure that more time is spent with young people to focus on improving their outcomes. **See Action x**

#### **4.4.5 Homelessness fund – Housing & Support Forum**

Cheltenham Borough Council has over the last few years agreed to fund any homelessness prevention initiative, up to the value of £5,000, which is supported by the majority of organisations represented at the Housing & Support Forum.

Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre has been consistently successful in bidding for their initiative, which is to provide individuals, who are ready for move on from supported housing into independent housing, with basic essentials to take with them into their new accommodation at the point of sign-up. The aim of this initiative is to ensure that these tenancies can be sustained and do not breakdown at the outset as a result of the tenant not living there due to lack of essential living items.

CBC remains committed to providing a homelessness fund for the Housing & Support Forum in order to support the needs and priorities, as identified by our partners.

#### **4.4.6 The Mortgage Rescue Scheme**

The previous government launched the Mortgage Rescue Scheme as a national scheme. This is supported by the current government. We will support this scheme by identifying and evaluating the potential suitability of households seeking advice and assistance because of their mortgage arrears.

#### **4.4.7 The Arrears Protection Scheme**

The department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) provided the Local Authority with a small sum of money (£37,000) to offer interest-free loans to households experiencing arrears through no fault of their own; where they fall outside the eligibility criteria for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme. The Housing Options Service will use this fund for households who are experiencing arrears through no fault of their own, provided we are confident that any loan arrangement does not

inadvertently result in any households slipping further into a cycle of unmanageable debt.

#### **4.4.8 Partnerships**

There are a number of other partnerships that can help drive forward our common agendas on tackling:

- youth homelessness,
- the housing needs of ex-offenders and other vulnerable groups,
- domestic violence
- the support needs of vulnerable people

These partnerships, largely at a county level, have enabled us to make some great steps forward in tackling the housing and support needs of households who are, or who might have been, at risk of homelessness in Cheltenham.

These partnerships include but are not exclusively: the Youth Housing Partnership, County Homelessness Implementation Group, Gloucestershire Homeseeker Management Board, Housing & Communities Group, Crime Reduction Partnership, and the Domestic Abuse Forum.

We will remain a member of these partnerships, and seek to ensure they continue to support our outcomes, as identified within this Strategy.

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## Chapter Eight

### Priority 5 - Revitalising our Neighbourhoods

#### 1. Creating stronger, safer and healthier communities

##### 1.1 Background

In Chapter One we highlighted the interdependency between housing and communities. In short, the provision of suitable housing contributes to creating stronger, safer and healthier communities. Such communities contribute towards alleviating housing need by reducing the reasons why individuals and households seek to move homes. By having stronger, safer and healthier communities, we will also ensure that households who do still need to move are not deterred from moving or staying within particular communities because of perceptions about the safety, etc of those neighbourhoods. Such perceptions have the effect of limiting the housing opportunities for those in housing need, which in turn exacerbates housing demand in other areas of Cheltenham. Overall, these perceptions impact on our ability to effectively tackle housing need.

##### 1.2 The Role of the Cheltenham Partnerships

The Cheltenham Partnerships will play a crucial role in helping us to understand Cheltenham's needs and in ensuring that a partnership approach is taken to delivering our priorities. The emerging partnership priorities for 2012 are summarised in the table below:

Partnership priority	What can be done through better partnership working
Ensuring that our young people have access to a suitable range of positive activities	Ensure that the youth development project being undertaken by County Community Projects continues and that partners are ready respond to issues or recommendations arising – either as individual agencies or collectively through a task and finish group.
Building stronger and more resilient communities	Use the opportunity of the Olympics to create an “Olympic legacy” using sport and other community activities to help develop community resilience, support volunteering and to aid healthy lifestyles.
Reducing alcohol and substance misuse	Reinvigorate the Reducing Alcohol Related Violence project group to address the impact of the night time economy and to set up other task and finish groups to address the impact of alcohol and substance misuse on everyone's lives.

Tackling anti social behaviour	<p>Ensure that the current ASB group continues to have a clear work programme and is making linkages back to the Inspiring Families project.</p> <p>The cruiser working group to continue but consideration given to merging with the ASB group if this would make it more effective.</p>
Tackling emerging crime	The burglary task group to continue with linkages to Operation Spa.
Reducing harm, vulnerability and poverty	<p>The Inspiring Families project to continue and a task and finish group should be set up to consider how we might roll out this intensive way of working for vulnerable adults.</p> <p>To bring together housing providers and other housing related partners together to identify how they can collectively work together to support some of the most vulnerable in the community and use our resources to best effect.</p>

The new partnership structures remove the old 'silo' approach to partnerships, and in this way they create a fresh opportunity to review the way we work currently and to rethink the way future proposed activities are delivered on the ground.

Housing services will have a role – alongside our partners – in ensuring that joint working opportunities are explored in delivering these Priorities, particularly where this can bring about efficiency savings and/or other mutual benefits across organisations.

In order to maximise the opportunities for housing to support the Cheltenham Priorities, we must:

- Ensure there is appropriate housing representation available across the new Partnership structures and review this at appropriate times. **See Action xxx**
- Review our relationship with Registered Providers in order to maximise any opportunities they have to support our emerging priorities. **See Action xxx**
- Continue to work closely with Cheltenham Borough Homes to ensure partnership opportunities are also fully utilised. **See Action xxx**

We can further support our Cheltenham Priorities by:

### 1.2.1 Targeting investment in areas of multiple deprivation

Through CBC's HRA Business Plan, CBH will:

- Develop a Neighbourhood Works Programme which includes a targeted programme of external works to our properties, thereby improving the outward appearance of some of our housing stock.
- Seek to invest in community development and involvement activities, with a particular focus on improving outcomes for young people.
- Consider how we can maximise opportunities for older people to be and/or remain supported and involved within their local communities.

CBC has awarded a grant to CCP of £50k to focus on building resilience in Cheltenham's community based youth groups, providing potential opportunities for housing providers and other partners to work jointly in responding to emerging issues and/or making recommendations for improving the range of positive activities for young people.

CBC have also secured funding from the Health & Wellbeing Board to improve outcomes for vulnerable adults. Replicating the Inspiring Families Model (see section 1.2.2 below), we envisage that a partnership approach will be taken to finding innovative solutions for vulnerable adults through accessing this relatively small pot of money. **See Action x**

### 1.2.2 Tackling Child Poverty

- **Inspiring Families**

The Inspiring Families Project has sought to bring about a multi-agency approach to finding practical solutions for families with multiple needs, through the provision of a relatively small pot of money. This project supports the wider aim of tackling child poverty by targeting its work in areas of relatively high deprivation, and coming up with solutions that have the overall aim of breaking down intergenerational poverty. The project will continue to run while resources allow, with a focus on developing more effective referral mechanisms into the project, such as through the Anti-Social Behaviour Group, which comprises housing providers and other key organisations. **See Action x**

- **Financial Inclusion**

A number of organisations within Cheltenham seek to promote financial inclusion amongst those most likely to be excluded. CBH are dedicated to tackling financial exclusion amongst CBC tenants via its Financial Inclusion Strategy, and CBC have given financial inclusion a priority within its Advice and Inclusion Contract which was commissioned to CCP to deliver from Cheltenham First Stop from April 2013.

A priority is to ensure that activities are coordinated via the relevant financial inclusion groups and fed into the Cheltenham Partnerships, where appropriate, so that a broader understanding of needs and potential gaps are more effectively considered. **See action x**

- **Housing links to the County**

CBC Housing is represented on the county's Child Poverty Working Group with a view to ensuring that a coordinated approach is taken to reducing homelessness amongst families and young people across the 6 districts within the county.

We will seek to strengthen a county-wide approach to tackling homelessness through the development of a county-wide homelessness strategy and in supporting the delivery of the county-wide Youth Housing Strategy. **See action x**

### 1.2.3 Promoting cohesion and inclusion

CBC has made some significant headway in improving community engagement with Black and Minority Ethnic groups, creating opportunities for direct liaison between these groups and housing service providers – as well as with other service providers. Some members of these groups are now fully trained Community Ambassadors ('Champs'), providing a conduit for organisations to feed into and receive feedback from the communities they represent.

The West End Partnership, having received some initial financial backing via CBC, has sought to develop Champs further, by expanding the role to include representatives of other communities of interest and to those with good networks within their geographical communities. This is an important initiative, the continued development and success of which will be dependent upon available resources.

CBH have also carried out many community development activities in some of the most deprived areas in the borough. Particularly noteworthy was the development of a Community Hub for Scott and Edward Wilson House, which ran Employment Initiatives as well as a range of community development and involvement activities.

In addition, CBH have had success in launching their Junior Warden Scheme for Hesters Way and St Pauls, which received an award for delivering Best Practice in Youth Involvement.

CBH will continue to work in partnership with others to strengthen communities by:

- Promoting healthy living
- Carrying out projects which support young people, often with support needs
- Improving opportunities to engage with education, training and employment, particularly for young people
- Carrying out projects which support older people, often with health and mobility problems
- Increasing environmental awareness and reducing fuel poverty
- Reducing the impact of the Welfare Reform
- Reducing financial exclusion
- Promoting community engagement amongst hard to reach groups via the development of a new Equality and Diversity Forum.

Opportunities for partnership working to deliver these priorities will be explored via the Cheltenham Partnerships and through regular liaison between CBC and CBH. **See action x**

### 1.2.4 Building safer estates

Improving community safety is an important aim for the Borough.

CBC's Corporate Strategy Action Plan sets out an objective to ensure that communities feel safe and are safe.

We are continuing to develop capacity within communities, so that they are more able to resolve low-level anti-social behaviour, and to promote community safety through a neighbourhood management approach, with Community Protection Officers and Housing Officers being linked into Neighbourhood Co-ordination Group meetings across the borough. In response to national changes, the CBC's Community Safety Team are seeking to review our framework for tackling anti-social behaviour, with a view to developing closer working relationships with relevant organisations, including housing services. **See Action x**

CBH will also review their Safer Estates Service, with increased emphasis on preventative work – particularly for those experiencing mental ill-health and for those requiring additional family support. **See Action x**

### 1.2.5 Safeguarding

Safeguarding the needs of children and young people, and of vulnerable adults, is important to CBC, CBH and our partners. A Safeguarding Forum has been recently set up to enable organisations who deal with vulnerable adults and young people, to highlight issues of concern and to ensure that there is a consistent approach to meeting the needs of these individuals through appropriate safeguarding procedures. We will work in partnership with other agencies via this Forum as well as internally through our network of Delegated Safeguarding Officers to ensure this remains a priority for relevant organisations working with vulnerable adults and young people within Cheltenham. **See Action x**

We will also, via Gloucestershire's Affordable Housing Landlords Forum, seek to ensure there is a senior housing representative on the County's Safeguarding Board. **See Action x**

### 1.2.6 Increasing the opportunities for community participation and engagement

Engaging with our communities enables us to gain their views, which in turn can help shape and improve our services to better meet local needs and aspirations.

CBH plays a crucial role in understanding the needs and aspirations of our communities, through its engagement and involvement activities. These activities will be delivered through CBH's Community Engagement Strategy.

Finally, following the implementation of the Localism Act, social housing regulation will be far less dependant on government inspections and guidance. Instead, it will be essential that the development of self-assessment continues and that CBC tenants are involved in the review and monitoring of our housing services.

CBH will therefore integrate a customer excellence group within their governance structure to ensure that:

- There is a high degree of customer scrutiny;
- Services meet customers' need;
- Decisions are made with customers' input; and
- Activities are accountable to customers. **See Action x**

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Tenancy Strategy and Affordable Rent Statement

### 1. Introduction to the Tenancy Strategy

The Localism Act 2011 requires Local Authorities to set out in this Strategy:

- The types of tenancies we will grant
- The circumstances in which we will grant tenancies of a particular type
- If tenancies are granted for a fixed term, the length of those tenancies, and
- The circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.

Registered Providers with social housing within the Cheltenham Borough must have regard to this Strategy when setting out their own Tenancy Policies.

The Registered Providers which provide independent accommodation within Cheltenham detailed at Appendix ...

Their Tenancy Policies can be found on their websites or can be made available on request. Information about the tenancies they provided by Cheltenham Borough Homes are contained in their Tenants' Handbook.

In putting together this Strategy, consultation has been carried out with the Registered Providers with accommodation within Cheltenham and across the county, the 6 District Authorities within the county, representatives of Cheltenham's Housing & Support Forum, and our Members who sit on the Housing Review Group.

### 2. The types of tenancies we will grant and the circumstances in which they will be made available

#### 2.1 Temporary Tenancies ('Part VII' Tenancies)

Temporary tenancies can be offered to households who have applied to this Local Authority as homeless, where we have reason to believe they are homeless and in priority need, as defined by the Housing Act 1996.

These non-secure temporary tenancies run on a four-weekly periodic basis, and will continue to run until our homelessness duties come to an end.

A temporary tenancy may also be granted to homeless households owed a full housing duty, but who are excluded from the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Allocation Scheme because of serious antisocial behaviour or serious rent arrears, as detailed in the Allocations Scheme. These tenancies are reviewed every 6 months. Provided there are no ongoing concerns in relation to anti-social behaviour or rent arrears, these tenants will be offered an Introductory Tenancy.

#### 2.2 Introductory Tenancies

We will offer Introductory Tenancies to all new tenants housed via Gloucestershire Homeseekers Allocations Scheme. This is in effect a 'starter tenancy' that will be converted to a full Secure Tenancy after 12 months, provided the tenancy is conducted in a satisfactory manner.

An Introductory Tenancy can be extended by a further 6 months, if at any time during the first 12 months there are some concerns over how the tenant has conducted his/her tenancy.

### **2.3 Secure Tenancies/Tenancies for Life**

These will be offered at the end of an Introductory Tenancy, where that tenancy has been conducted in a satisfactory manner.

Tenants will be able to occupy that accommodation for life, provided there are no breaches of the conditions of their tenancy which would entitle us to obtain possession of the property via the courts.

### **3. Flexible/Fixed Term Tenancies – Our Position Statement**

Cheltenham Borough Council has considered the use of fixed term tenancies. However, we have decided not to offer tenants fixed term tenancies, as an alternative to some lifetime tenancies, at this time.

### **4. Rationale for our approach.**

In arriving at this decision the options detailed below were considered. We believe it may be helpful for Registered Providers to have regard to our reasoning when considering whether or not to renew any fixed term tenancies they have offered their tenants.

#### **4.1 Under-occupation**

We recognise that a balance needs to be struck between ensuring that communities continue to remain sustainable, whilst at the same time making best use of our existing social housing stock.

For Cheltenham, the areas where we have the greatest number of social housing are also within some of our relatively more deprived parts of our town. We believe that by failing to allow some under-occupation, it will result in more densely-packed communities in these areas, which in turn runs the risk of negatively impacting these communities. Furthermore, some degree of under-occupation is perfectly normal, and we wish to preserve this sense of balance within our social housing communities.

Where there is under-occupation of social housing by at least 2 bedrooms or more, the case for ending the tenancy is clearly much stronger, in view of the limited availability of social housing stock, particularly in respect of 4 bedroom accommodation. At the time of writing, approximately 18% of our 4 bedroom properties are understood to be under-occupied by adults of working age. This equates to about 24 properties.

Households most likely to be under-occupying in this way are those who have lived in their homes for a significant number of years, where their children have now grown up and left the family home.

Whilst there is a case for ending future tenancies where the occupants are under-occupying in these circumstances, we consider that on balance it would be

undesirable to do this, given that the potential outcome is that these tenants could be left homeless or forced to move to accommodation away from their support networks of family and friends.

We do however see the value in seeking to release under-occupied accommodation, provided it is done so on a voluntary basis. Our emphasis, through Cheltenham Borough Homes, will therefore be to support those households who are under-occupying accommodation to move of their own volition to smaller accommodation. This could be done through a variety of measures, such as:

- Ensuring sufficient priority is given to these households on Gloucestershire Homeseeker
- Maximising opportunities for those wishing to consider mutually exchanging to smaller properties
- Considering incentivising such moves through the expansion of Cheltenham Borough Homes' Tenants Incentive Scheme

Notwithstanding our preference to support those households who wish to move on a voluntary basis, we recognise – as detailed in Chapter 2 of the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017 – that the welfare changes will put pressure on some of those households who are of working age and who are underoccupying accommodation, to move because they may no longer be able to afford to remain in those properties. This is going to be more likely for those who are underoccupying accommodation by 2 or more bedrooms.

We intend to be proactive in identifying those households who will be affected by these reforms and in the first instance we will seek to support households to stay-put in their existing homes, if they wish to, through CBH's financial inclusion work. But for others, they will decide that they need to move to smaller, more affordable accommodation; and we will support them in doing this.

Where RPs do choose to end a fixed term tenancy as a result of underoccupation, we request that those RPs offer sufficient assistance to enable those households to be offered suitable alternative accommodation, rather than placing these households (who have potentially been longstanding, good tenants) at risk of homelessness.

#### **4.2 Anti-social behaviour, rent arrears or other breaches of tenancy.**

All tenants are assessed for eligibility for housing before they are considered for accommodation. Where there has been a history of serious anti-social behaviour or rent arrears in the past, which is still considered to be relevant, then they will be excluded from the housing list, in accordance with Gloucestershire Homeseekers Allocations Scheme.

For those who are accepted onto the housing list and subsequently offered CBC accommodation, new tenants will be offered an Introductory Tenancy for the first 12 (or sometimes 18) months, as referred to in Section 2.2 above. If, during this time, they fail to conduct their tenancy satisfactorily, then the tenancy may be brought to an end.

We believe that Introductory Tenancies are a sufficient safeguard in themselves to capture those new tenants who refuse to engage with support services and who continually breach the conditions to their tenancy. Should anti-social behaviour/rent arrears occur once a Secure Tenancy has been granted, then the option is open for



us to seek possession of that tenancy through the courts, where all other options to avoid eviction have been explored.

Given that these resources are currently available to end tenancies for those who are unwilling to follow the conditions of their Tenancy Agreements, we consider that it is unnecessary for fixed term tenancies to be used as a mechanism for ending a tenancy as a result of anti-social behaviour, rent arrears or other breach of tenancy.

We would therefore urge Registered Providers not to refuse to renew tenancies on these grounds, unless normal possession proceedings are already underway.

### **4.3 Household Income**

RPs are unable to accept households as new tenants where their incomes are so high that it would affect the RP's charitable status. RPs therefore currently carry out these checks prior to tenancy sign-ups. CBC, however, is not affected by these rules. We do not therefore intend to exclude tenants from our stock – or end their tenancies on this basis. We believe that mixed incomes creates balanced communities and that to end a tenants, without being able to offer reasonable alternatives, could act as a disincentive for those households who might otherwise seek to improve their financial status.

Our understanding is that RPs' charitable status is not affected where that households' income changes during their time as tenants, but we acknowledge that some RPs have stated in their existing tenancy policies that a fixed term tenancy could be terminated on this basis.

Where RPs do chose to review a household's income as part of the review of the fixed term, we again urge RPs to support tenants into considering alternative options, such as low-cost home ownership schemes, and to not potentially make these tenants homeless.

### **4.4 Ending Fixed Term Tenancies**

Should an RP decide not to renew a fixed-term tenancy, we request that the RP notifies our Housing Options Service at the time of the decision not to renew a tenancy, i.e. at least 6 months prior to the ending of the fixed term tenancy.

RPs should also seek to meet jointly with a member of the Housing Options Team personnel and the tenant to consider what rehousing options are available.

When a tenancy is not renewed, the Council expects that the RP advice and assistance services are fit for purpose. It would not be appropriate, for instance, for an RP to end a tenancy on expiry where there would then be a duty on the council to provide accommodation, except where there is an agreed plan of action.

## Affordable Rent Statement

### 1. Introduction

This Statement sets out Cheltenham Borough Council's requirements that need to be met in order that an RP's affordable housing investment plan can be supported.

In this Statement the Council acknowledges that RPs will be required to implement the use of Affordable Rent tenancies, given that this can generate funding to support the provision of more affordable housing, both directly in terms of ongoing revenues and also indirectly in terms being better placed to secure subsidy agreements from the HCA.

The HCA have made clear in their 2011-15 Affordable Homes Programme – Framework, that it expects RPs to consider setting rents at 80% market rents in order to maximise revenues for financing new build:

*'While offers which include Affordable Rent for new supply and/or conversions at less than 80% of market rent will be considered, it is expected that providers will utilise the flexibility to charge rents up to 80% of market rents to maximise financial capacity.'* (para 3.10 2011-15 Affordable Homes Programme – Framework).

In terms of the delivery of social rented housing, the Framework identifies that social rent provision will only be supported in limited circumstances with a strong case needing to be made, 'to demonstrate why Affordable Rent would not be a viable alternative.'

We therefore acknowledge that Affordable Rents will be the main type of low cost new supply, with the higher rent levels cross subsidising the development of new social housing in place of the higher grant levels that were available previously.

The HCA also identifies that they intend:

*'...to focus our efforts in ensuring that local authorities are able to shape the new Affordable Homes Programme to respond to the housing needs of their communities.'* (Para 2.41 of the Framework)

And that:

*'The scope for individual providers to generate financial capacity through conversion of re-lets will not be uniformly distributed between areas...A requirement to ring fence capacity for reinvestment in new supply within a particular area would not allow the new model to work in practice.'* (Para 2.41 of the Framework).

However, the Framework also identifies that:

*'Our clear intention is that financial capacity generated through the flexibilities available to providers and the new delivery model will be applied effectively to support local authority priorities.'* (Para 2.46 of the Framework).

## **2. Our Statement**

This Statement is set within the context of the above.

### **2.1 Investment in New Affordable Housing for the Borough**

Affordable Rent is intended to meet identified local housing needs. Local housing needs are defined by strategic housing authorities; with strategic direction being set within the context of wider corporate objectives which help to sustain the current and future economic base.

Cheltenham Borough Council is the strategic housing authority for the Borough, and it is our view that RPs should not agree investment plans to develop or convert existing social rent stock to Affordable Rent with the HCA without the support of this Council. This means that the Council will only support RPs as developers or section 106 partners where there is a clear commitment to invest in the Borough and to provide affordable housing to meet the Borough's housing needs.

Cheltenham Borough Council expects RPs to agree any investment plans with the Council that either involve new development, relet of existing social rented housing on Affordable Rent terms and/or any form of disposal of their social rented stock within the Borough.

Gloucestershire's Local Investment Plan (LIP) sets out our funding, development and refurbishment priorities, and how we wish to see affordable housing delivered within the Borough. RP investment plans must therefore demonstrate how they meet the priorities set out within the LIP.

### **2.2 Rents and Affordability**

A balance needs to be struck between Affordable Rents being affordable and RPs optimising re-investment potential. However, rents set must also be reasonable and set with regard to the total welfare cap that will be put in place from April 2013.

In this respect, Affordable Rent should continue to be seen as housing for low income households.



**CHELTENHAM**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Housing Renewal Policy

## 2011 – 2015

1. Introduction

1.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 came into force on 18th July, 2002, repealing much of the prescriptive legislation governing the provision of previous housing assistance and replaced it with new wide ranging powers to provide assistance for housing renewal significantly based on local needs and the achievement of strategic objectives.

1.2 The increased flexibility on offer allowed for new and innovative approaches to housing renewal and will require regular review in the context of the council's overall Housing Strategy. The council is however continuing to be mindful of the resourcing implications of this policy, both for itself and partner organisations and expenditure priorities outlined. It will therefore be reviewed regularly, having regard to community and corporate priorities.

1.3 This Housing Renewal Policy is effective from 1st May, 2012 and will be revised when significant changes occur, minor changes to the policy will be made by the Private Sector Housing Manager (or equivalent) in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Deputy.

1.4 This policy document limits itself principally to consideration of works of repair, improvement or adaptation etc. rather than to enabling housing provision in the first place which is considered separately through the Housing Strategy.

1.5 Extracts from central government publication:

*"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 homeowners to maintain their own property. However, the government is committed to improving housing quality across all tenures including the owner occupied sector and fully accepts that some homeowners, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable, do not have the necessary resources to keep their homes in good repair. Local authorities therefore have an important role to provide assistance in these cases".*

*"The Government would consider that an authority was failing in its duty as a housing enabler and in its responsibility to consider the condition of the local private sector stock if it did not make some provision for (private sector housing) assistance."*

*"Authorities must avoid fettering their discretion to provide assistance. They may legitimately turn down an application that falls outside their policy, but cannot refuse to consider an application, or refuse an application that is outside policy without there being a mechanism in place to determine such cases. The mechanism should ensure that exceptional cases that fall outside policy are individually considered on a sound and informed basis and approved where appropriate".*

*Source: Housing Renewal  
Guidance - June 2002*

The Cheltenham context (statistics from Private Sector House Condition Survey 2011 unless otherwise stated)

- 1.6 Cheltenham, with a population of over 110,000 is one of the eleven major urban centres in the south-west region. Together with Bishop's Cleeve and Woodmancote in the Tewkesbury Borough Council administrative area, Cheltenham is one of the two principal urban areas in Gloucestershire.
- 1.7 The Borough of Cheltenham contains 44,510 private sector dwellings. At the time of survey, 42,126 dwellings were occupied (94.6%); the remaining 2,384 dwellings were vacant (5.4%). The majority of vacant dwellings – 2,044 dwellings or 86% - are transitional in nature and are expected to return to occupancy in the short-term. Long term vacancy is estimated at 340 dwellings representing less than 1% of private sector housing stock. Nationally, 4.6% of private sector dwellings were vacant in 2009 (English Housing Survey, dwelling sample).
- 1.8 Private sector housing in Cheltenham is representative of all building eras; 15,628 dwellings (35.1%) were constructed pre-1945. Within this group, 11,786 dwellings (26.5% of all private sector dwellings) were constructed pre-1919; 3,842 dwellings (8.6%) in the inter-war period (1919-1944). 28,882 dwellings (64.9%) were constructed post-1944 with 9,672 dwellings (21.7%) constructed post-1981.
- 1.9 Nationally, 24.5% of private housing was constructed pre-1919 compared to 26.5% in Cheltenham. However, whilst 40.3% of private housing nationally is of post 1964 construction within Cheltenham over half (50.3%) of all dwellings were built after 1964.
- 1.10 The proportion of pre-1919 housing is significantly higher in St. Paul's (69.2%) and significantly lower in the Outer survey zone where less than ten percent of private sector dwellings are of pre-1919 construction. Conversely, the vast majority of dwellings in the Outer survey zone are of post war construction, with 41.7% of all private sector dwellings in this area built since 1974.
- 1.11 Excluding those properties where tenure could not be determined, the rate of private-rental in Cheltenham, at 22.2%, is above the national average; 19.3% of all English private sector dwellings in 2009 were privately-rented (EHS).
- 1.12 Significant differences in the age and house type characteristics of the main tenure groups are apparent. Private-rented dwellings exhibit a concentration in the pre-1919 terraced housing and converted flat markets but also exhibit a polarisation with a heavy concentration in more modern (post-1981) purpose built flats. The owner occupied sector in contrast demonstrates a broader distribution by both type and age. However, owner occupation dominates the semi-detached and detached housing markets.
- 1.13 Geographically rates of private-rental are above average in the St Paul's and Inner Area survey zones where 46.1% and 31.3% of all private sector housing respectively are within the private-rented market.
- 1.14 Houses and bungalows comprise 32,773 dwellings (73.6%) with the remaining 11,737

dwellings (26.4%) in flats. Houses and bungalows offer a range of terraced, semi-detached and detached configurations with flats predominately in converted buildings or purpose-built blocks.

1.15 Allowing for vacancy and multiple occupation the private sector housing stock contains an estimated 45,272 households and a household population of 94,828 persons. Average household size is 2.09 persons.

1.16 The most common household types in Cheltenham are:

- ◆ **Elderly:** **13,181 households - 29.1%;**
- ◆ **Two Person Adult Non Pensioner:** **9,834 households - 21.7%;**
- ◆ **Single Person Non Pensioner:** **9,220 households - 20.4%; and**
- ◆ **Small Family (up to 2 children):** **8,075 households - 17.8%.**

1.17 19,290 households (42.6%) have a head of household aged 55 years and over; 12,144 households (26.8%) have a head of household aged 65 years and over. In 10,751 households (23.8%) the head of household is aged under 35 years. Significant differences exist in the social characteristics of the main private sector tenure groups. The private-rented sector exhibits a strong bias towards younger single person households as opposed to the owner occupied sector which exhibits a more mature family orientated household structure. Thus:

- ◆ **42.6% of private-rented households are single person in size, compared to 31.4% of owner occupied households.**
- ◆ **20.6% of private-rented households are headed by a person aged under 25 years compared to 1.5% of owner occupied households.**
- ◆ **38.9% of private-rented households are single person non pensioner in type compared to 13.3% of owner occupied households.**

In contrast to the private-rented sector, 37.5% of owner occupied households are elderly in type; 29% comprise three or more persons and 55.1% are headed by a head of household aged 55 years or over.

1.18 9,534 households (21.1%) have sufficient bedrooms to meet their family needs. 34,963 households (77.2%) have more bedrooms than required and are under-occupying, while 775 households (1.7%) have insufficient bedrooms to meet their family needs and are overcrowded. High levels of under-occupancy are not surprising against generally small household sizes and a significant housing stock of 3 and 4 bedroom configurations. Levels of overcrowding in the Borough at 1.7% are just below the national average for private housing (2% in 2007/08 to 2009/10) (EHS Household Report 2009-10).

1.19 28,162 households (62.2%) have a head of household in full or part-time employment. In 638 households (1.4%) the head of household is unemployed, in 434 households (1%) the head of household is permanently sick/disabled and in 13,692 households (30.2%) the head of household is economically retired. The Borough houses a relatively large student

population within the private housing sector; estimated at 1,749 households (3.9%).

- 1.20 Applying the Decent Home Classification, 7,433 private sector households (16.4%) are economically vulnerable. Rates of economic vulnerability in the Borough at 16.4% are slightly below the national average for private housing in England (18% in 2009) (EHS Headline Report 2009-10).
- 1.21 Rates of economic vulnerability are higher for households living in the private-rented sector (29.9%), in pre-1919 housing (22.4%) and in the terraced housing sector (21.2%). Household's resident in St. Paul's are significantly more likely than households elsewhere in the Borough to be economically vulnerable; over half of private sector households in this area are in receipt of one of the principal means tested benefits.
- 1.22 Average annual net household income for private sector households is estimated at £27,122 per household. Low income households in the UK are normally defined as having a net income that is 60% or less of the median British household income that year. Using this definition, 3,637 households (8%) in Cheltenham are on low incomes.

## 2. Consultation and Cheltenham's Sustainable Community Strategy

- 2.1 The sustainable community strategy has been prepared by Cheltenham Strategic Partnership (CSP) which brings together core partners, thematic partnerships, community and voluntary sectors. The aims of the CSP are:
- To be the partnership of partnerships for Cheltenham, providing strategic co-ordination, ensuring linkages with other plans and bodies established at the regional, sub-regional and local level;
  - To develop and drive the effective delivery of the community strategy action plan through effective performance management and holding delivery partners and partnerships to account
- 2.2 There is well-established relationship between the strategy, the local development framework (LDF) and the emerging Joint Core Strategy, which will guide development proposals and deliver the priorities and ambitions of this community strategy in partnership with service providers.
- 2.3 The CSP has prepared an aspirational long-term vision that sets out a course of action for all partners to work towards over the next twenty years. This is supported by three underlying principles that will underpin everything the Council does:
- The principle of community engagement and participation;
  - The principle of tackling inequalities and promoting cohesion; and
  - The principle of tackling climate change.
- 2.4 Having consulted widely with the community, the following longer-term ambitions were identified, where, over the next twenty years, concerted and coordinated action will be taken through both partnership working and the local development framework to turn vision



into a reality:

- Promoting community safety;
- Promoting sustainable living;
- Promoting a strong and sustainable economy;
- Building healthy communities and supporting older people;
- Building stronger communities and supporting housing choice;
- A focus on children and young people;
- Investing in environmental quality;
- Investing in travel and transport;
- Investing in arts and culture

2.5 For each of these nine ambitions, the strategy sets out what the current situation is, what community views are, what our ambitions are, and where we feel that partnership working and the local development framework can make a difference.

2.6 Private sector renewal grants and loans often improve the fabric of buildings preventing dilapidation of Cheltenham's housing stock and associated deterioration of the environment.

2.7 Private Sector renewal grants and loans also help safeguard the health and safety of some of Cheltenham's most vulnerable people.

The Private Sector Renewal Policy makes a significant direct contribution to:

Promoting Sustainable Living

The policy contributes significantly towards the identified needs of tackling fuel poverty, increasing the energy efficiency of the private sector residential stock and promoting carbon reduction with the Borough

Investing in Environmental Quality

Protecting and improving the quality of Cheltenham's built environment.  
Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping adapt to climate change.  
Improving energy efficiency and encouraging renewable energy

Building strong communities and Supporting Housing Choice

Promoting a balanced and sustainable housing market  
Increasing the supply of affordable housing  
Increasing the quality and choice of housing

Promoting Community Safety

Reducing number of unsafe and long-term empty homes  
Providing safe homes for Cheltenham's vulnerable households

2.8 In addition the policy contributes towards:  
Being an Excellent and sustainable council

Improving our capacity to deliver

Ensuring continuous improvement in the delivery and efficiency of services

Supporting the business change programme in delivering excellent services

Promoting and protecting Cheltenham's quality of life through working with regional and local partnerships.

- 2.9 Historic consultation in developing this policy has taken place via a county group of housing officers and locally, by customer survey and close co-operation with the local home improvement agency. A draft of the proposed policy was initially published on the council's web-site, with the facility to provide consultation responses electronically. Further consultation has taken place as the policy has developed over the years.
- 2.10 Organisations formally consulted about the initial development of this policy include:-
- Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Primary Care Trust;
  - Care and Repair (Cheltenham) Ltd;
  - Gloucestershire NHS Trust;
  - Gloucestershire Social Services.
- 2.11 The current development of this policy has also taken account of Government cutbacks in Private Sector Renewal funding.
- 2.12 The council has also reviewed all of its services having regard to our legal obligations under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act. Consideration has been given to the extent to which the services contained in this policy can contribute to a reduction in crime.
3. Policy implementation
- 3.1 The policy will cover a four year period prior to any major review. Minor changes to the policy will be made by the Private Sector Housing Manager (or equivalent Manager) in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member.
- 3.2 Where any planned amendment will produce a significant change to service provision, it will require the approval of the council's cabinet before the operational policy is changed. Such changes are most likely to arise following the Private Sector House Condition Survey and where there is an update to the council's housing needs information.
- 3.3 Other factors that may affect the review of this policy include:
- changes to corporate capital spending plans;
  - significant changes in local circumstances (e.g. housing need);
  - national policy/legislative changes;
  - Local Strategic Partnership priorities.
- 3.4 In implementing this policy, the council will have due regard to relevant national legislation and related guidance including in particular that related to housing renewal, enforcement (including houses in multiple occupation), the health and safety rating system,

neighbourhood renewal assessment and disabled facilities grants (DFG's).

4. Private housing standards in Cheltenham

- 4.1 Housing conditions have a direct effect on the health of their occupants. As the fabric of properties naturally deteriorates with time, the need for intervention is on-going and action and financial support to those on low incomes is necessary to prevent an increase in the number of unsafe properties.
- 4.2 The council carries out a sample survey of the conditions in the private housing sector once every five years to inform its strategy for intervention in relation to energy efficiency, adaptations and where the market is failing to address problems of disrepair and safety. The results of the last survey were published in 2011.

Decent Homes (statistics from the 2011 Private Sector House Condition survey)

- 4.3 The 2005 Private Sector House Conditions Survey reported that a total of 10,600 dwellings in Cheltenham, are non decent, representing 23.3% of the stock. The 2011 survey recorded that 10,942 dwellings in Cheltenham were non-decent representing 24.6% of the private sector stock.
- 4.4 The majority of dwellings that fail the Decent Homes standard are non decent due to disrepair and the presence of a category 1 hazard. The largest population, 5115 (46.7%) fail due to disrepair.
- 4.5 In Cheltenham non decent dwellings are most associated with pre 1919 properties, the private rented sector, converted and purpose built flats and with occupiers on the lowest incomes. Non decency is also particularly associated with heads of household aged 75 and over and with heads of household between the ages of 16 & 24.
- 4.6 To remedy all the items that make dwellings non decent in Cheltenham would cost an estimated £62.7 million, an average of £5,734 per non decent dwelling.
- 4.7 Cheltenham was just short of the overall target for 2006/07 of 65% of vulnerable occupiers in the private sector living in decent dwellings with a figure of 62.1%, which equated to 290 dwellings. In 2011 only 59.2% of all private sector dwellings occupied by vulnerable households were decent. It follows that 3032 dwellings in the private sector occupied by vulnerable households are non-decent. 1795 of these dwellings are in the private rented sector. The falling percentage levels reflects the deteriorating property conditions in Cheltenham and a lack of necessary investment.
- 4.8 There are significant differences between the general rate of non decency in owner-occupied dwellings (20.7%), which is much lower than in the privately rented sector (38.3%).
- 4.9 Where financial resources can be identified Cheltenham will promote and finance works towards the achievement of the Decent Home Standard in its stock and will use Housing

Act powers to improve properties towards the Decent Home Standard. Financial resources are limited due to the recent government cutbacks in Private Sector Renewal funding.

### The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

- 4.10 Individual unsafe properties as measured by the HHSRS, will continue to be identified for interventionary action by a variety of means including:
- surveys following enquiries to the Private Sector Housing division
  - complaints about poor housing conditions by tenants
  - our five yearly sample private sector stock condition survey
  - inspections pursuant to the council's vacant property strategy
  - proactive enforcement activity in the private rented sector (e.g. HMO Licensing scheme)
  - referrals from other agencies (e.g. social services, Safe at Home, Citizen's Advice Bureau)
  - assessments of private housing resulting from enquiries to the housing options team of the Council
  - surveys following planning and building control contraventions
- 4.11 7.5% of the private sector stock contain a category 1 hazard representing 3352 dwellings. This percentage rises to 15.7% of the private rented stock containing a category 1 hazard. This represents 1470 private rented dwellings.
- 4.12 The pre-1919 stock, along with privately rented dwellings and converted flats, has the highest levels of category 1 hazard.
- 4.13 Priorities for action should logically follow from the dwellings in poorest condition, through to those with fewest problems.
- 4.14 The Council has a statutory duty to deal with category 1 hazards.

## Key facts from Private Sector Stock Condition Survey – 2011

Characteristic	Owner occupied	Privately-rented	Tenure unknown	All private sector	RSL
<b>Dwellings</b> <i>Per cent of all private sector</i>	32,757 73.6%	9,368 21.0%	2,384 5.4%	44,510 100%	1,800
<b>Non decent (HHSRS)</b> <i>Per cent of tenure stock</i>	6,785 20.7%	3,589 38.3%	568 23.8%	10,942 24.6%	514 28.6%
<b>Category 1 Hazards</b> <i>Per cent of tenure stock</i>	1,871 5.7%	1,468 15.7%	14 0.6%	3,352 7.5%	189 10.5%
<b>Mean SAP</b>	65	68	61	65	72
<b>Decent with vulnerable occupier</b> <i>Per cent of vulnerable households</i>	2,471 66.6%	1,929 51.8%	--	4,400 59.2%	797 77.0%
<b>Non-decent with vulnerable occupier</b> <i>Per cent of vulnerable households</i>	1,237 33.4%	1,796 48.2%	--	3,033 40.8%	238 23.0%
<b>Category 1 hazard with vulnerable occupier</b> <i>Per cent of vulnerable households</i>	269 7.3%	1,254 33.7%	--	1,523 20.5%	88 8.5%
<b>In Fuel Poverty</b> <i>Per cent of households</i>	2,714 8.3%	2,608 21.0%	--	5,322 11.8%	505 28.1%
<b>Residents over 60</b> <i>Per cent of households</i>	14,072 42.9%	905 7.3%	--	14,977 33.1%	835 46.4%

## 5. Sustainability and energy efficiency Improvement

- 5.1 The Home Energy Conservation Act 1996 (HECA) required the council to set out measures which will lead to a significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in the borough. The council supports the government's view that improving the energy efficiency of residential accommodation is important for sustainability reasons, to help combat global warming and to help ensure that every household has access to affordable warmth.
- 5.2 The council is working with a wide range of organisations to promote energy efficiency in residential property and has signed up to a Gloucestershire-wide affordable warmth strategy. The council working in partnership have prepared a Climate Change Strategy. Both of these documents set out targets for improvements to residential property.
- 5.3 The council identified measures which when compared with the situation on 1st April 1996,

would if undertaken result in a 30% improvement in the energy efficiency of the stock. The Act did not set any deadline for the achievement of the saving, but the government expects that substantial progress will be made towards this target over a ten to fifteen year period and the council has signed up to this objective.

5.4 The current (2011) SAP rating per private sector housing in Cheltenham measures at 65.1 significantly above the 2011 national average of 51.4 for all private housing in England (ECS2009). Average CO2 emissions total 4.92 tonnes per annum, significantly better than the national average of 6.4 tonnes for all housing in England (EHS2009). The investment Cheltenham has made in energy efficiency measures in the private sector stock over the past ten years will have contributed in this respect. The Warm and Well Scheme has delivered 13,235 energy efficiency measures to 6,450 homes since 2001. 1-5% of Cheltenham's private dwellings however, have SAP ratings of less than 35.

### 5.5 Strategic energy efficiency objectives

- to improve the baseline information on the energy efficiency of the housing stock across all tenures to help inform and prioritise investment decisions;
- access to affordable warmth for all residents in the borough within ten years, combating fuel poverty and associated health problems;
- minimisation of the environmental damage associated with the use of fuel in the home, including the promotion of both energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies;
- to reduce fuel costs by means of an effectively targeted programme of housing
- improvements combined with the provision of advice on how dwellings may be heated in an energy efficient manner;
- to integrate improvement of the housing stock with other initiatives in order to maximise opportunities for improving energy efficiency at marginal cost;
- to minimise the environmental damage associated with the use of fuel in dwellings by improving energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, thereby reducing carbon dioxide emissions;
- to facilitate changes in behaviour and investment by householders in terms of the efficient use of energy, by promoting the financial benefits and pay-back periods for a range of domestic energy appliances and measures;
- to educate the public in general and schoolchildren in particular, including raising awareness of global warming and encouraging sustainable energy use in the home.

### Promoting domestic energy efficiency

5.6 A key challenge is to ensure a wide public understanding of environmental issues and an awareness of the environmental impact of actions and proposals in relation to energy use, including global warming.

5.7 In the absence of regulatory controls, it is recognised that the extent of domestic energy efficiency improvements required will require significant co-operation from householders. Where the council and its partners have direct control of the energy efficiency of residential dwellings, every effort will be made to implement cost effective improvements within available resources. In the privately owned and residential sectors, we will seek to promote

and encourage improvements through a process of awareness raising, education and incentives. Where appropriate, we will promote local and national grant schemes and savings to householders through bulk purchasing schemes.

- 5.8 The council provides financial support to the Gloucestershire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (part of the charity known as the Severn Wye Energy Agency) which is part of a national network supported by the Energy Saving Trust. The advice centre actively promotes domestic energy efficiency and provides free home energy advice to householders, referring enquirers to schemes that result in the installation of energy efficiency measures.

### Affordable warmth and the 'Warm and Well' scheme

- 5.9 Ensuring that all residents have access to affordable warmth is a significant strategic objective. Whilst the actions necessary to achieve this objective are not always complementary to combating climate change, ensuring that energy is being used as efficiently as possible in the residential sector is important.
- 5.10 The six Gloucestershire local authorities and South Gloucestershire unitary authority have worked together to formulate a strategy to tackle the related issues of affordable warmth and fuel poverty in a co-ordinated way across the county. Gloucestershire was the first county in England to produce such a strategy, which was launched in September 2001.
- 5.11 The strategy was developed in consultation with a wide range of relevant organisations and individuals. The process was guided by a steering group which included the HECA officers from all seven authorities, Gloucester Health Authority, Gloucester Social Services, National Energy Action and Severn Wye Energy Agency (SWEA), a local environmental charity.
- 5.12 To support the Affordable Warmth Strategy the six authorities of Gloucestershire set up the 'Warm and Well' scheme, led by Cheltenham Borough Council, with support from the national HECAAction fund.
- 5.13 The Private Sector Housing Condition Survey 2011 indicates that 92.4% of dwellings in Cheltenham have central heating and as the vast majority of council-owned homes now also have central heating. There has been significant progress in this area since 2006.

### The Warm and Well Scheme

- 5.14 The Gloucestershire Warm and Well Scheme remains part of Cheltenham's Private Sector Renewal Policy. We will continue to work with Warm and Well to identify fund raising streams to tackle properties that have not taken advantage of previous energy efficient grants, particularly properties that are hard to treat. The scheme is governed by a steering group made up of representatives from each of the local authorities involved and representatives from the health sector locally. This group meets regularly throughout the year and help decide on grant eligibility criteria and future focus. The criteria are deliberately set to fill the eligibility gap by helping people on low incomes who are excluded

from other schemes because they do not receive income related benefits. The scheme aims to improve energy efficiency and reduce the levels of associated health risk through:

- Raising awareness of the issues and encouraging appropriate action, both physical and behavioural;
- Providing specific and appropriate advice to each household that comes into the scheme;
- Enabling physical measures to be installed through referrals to grants and discounts

The central issues addressed by the Scheme are the links between energy efficiency and affordable warmth, cold living conditions and health, for example through:

- Cardiovascular illness;
- Condensation damp;
- Respiratory illness and allergic conditions;
- Ventilation and carbon monoxide risk

The warm and well scheme targets:

- Owner occupiers and tenants of private rented housing in Gloucestershire with members of the household who are vulnerable to health problems associated with or exacerbated by low indoor temperatures;
- Owner occupiers and tenants of private rented housing in Gloucestershire likely to be living in fuel poverty, and unable to afford adequate heating in the home;
- The general public in Gloucestershire, to promote awareness of energy efficiency and the related issues of adequate ventilation, the avoidance of condensation damp and the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

In previous financial years the local authorities in Gloucestershire, that form part of the scheme, have contributed money from their central government PSR funding through the Gloucestershire Energy Efficiency Grant (GEEG). This funding has now ceased but for the next two financial years (2012/13 and 2013/14) funding for Warm and Well will be paid from the Performance Reward Grant allocated to the Council. They also make use of funding from Warm Front and fuel suppliers via their Carbon Emissions Reduction Target commitment (CERT)

Warm and Well provides energy efficiency measures to those living in privately owned or privately rented homes. The measures available under GEEG are as follows:

- Loft insulation
- Cavity wall insulation
- Draught proofing
- Hot water tank jackets
- Boiler replacement
- Full central heating systems



The linked Rent Warm Rent Well programme targets private sector Landlords and offers them grants in order to encourage installation of energy efficient measures. Grants are also available for renewable energy installations through the Gloucestershire Renewable Energy Grant (GREG).

#### Energy from renewable sources

- 5.15 Simply improving the energy efficiency of existing and new buildings is unlikely to lead to a significant reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases which are contributing to climate change.
- 5.16 The promotion of renewable energy is a key element of the Cheltenham climate strategy. Whilst seeking to use energy as efficiently as possible, the council and its partners will also work to encourage and promote the generation of energy from renewable sources both locally and further afield to help meet Cheltenham's energy requirements. Where legislation and technology permits, we will seek to ensure that Cheltenham meets and where practicable exceeds national targets.
- 5.17 Our initial analysis suggests that the scope for renewable energy generation locally is likely to be focused on photovoltaics (PV), but opportunities for exploiting renewable energy from other sources such as bio-mass, heat pumps, wind power and any new technologies will also be explored.
- 5.18 In the absence of legislative requirements, we will seek to implement showcase projects to demonstrate what can be achieved in renewable energy terms. These will be used to encourage private developers to develop the market for renewable energy technologies and to lobby for appropriate changes to planning and building regulations.

#### 6. Personal circumstances

- 6.1 The council recognises that the personal circumstances of certain households require special consideration when exercising its duties in connection with private sector renewal. Lack of adequate income means that some households cannot afford to maintain or improve their homes, or to heat them to an adequate, safe and comfortable level. The same lack of income also prevents these households from undertaking cost-effective improvements to the energy efficiency of their properties. Low-income households therefore require support to provide them with the necessary improvements.
- 6.2 Even householders on moderate incomes living in energy inefficient houses will have difficulty in heating them to an adequate level. We will, therefore, prioritise those properties with the poorest energy efficiency standards for any improvement work. In doing so, it is acknowledged that in general such properties will provide the greatest scope for cost-effective energy efficiency improvements.
- 6.3 It is also recognised that some households have other special needs relevant to the delivery of services. These needs arise as a result of old age, disability, the presence of

young children, language and cultural differences and hearing and vision impairment. Elderly people, those with disabilities and families with young children often spend longer periods at home than the rest of the population. These needs must be taken into account when delivering, or enabling the delivery of services.

- 6.4 Particular consideration will be given to elderly, ethnic minority and vision and hearing impaired households when delivering advice, information, promotional material and education services. We will work to ensure that the most vulnerable households are targeted for assistance which is appropriate to their needs.

### 7. Adaptations to meet the needs of disabled residents

- 7.1 The Council's private sector house condition survey 2011 identified 6576 households with an illness/disability of which 2308 of those households were living in un-adapted dwellings and therefore form the target market for support. At sectoral level these households are concentrated in the owner occupied sector and at household level, elderly households exhibit the highest support requirement.
- 7.2 The provision of disabled facilities grants is an important area of partnership working and impacts on the targets of other agencies, in particular social services and health. The council recognises these links and seeks to co-operate, for example in fast-tracking clients awaiting adaptations to facilitate hospital discharge and prevent bed-blocking.
- 7.3 The newly formed countywide home improvement agency, Safe at Home, which is provided with financial support by the authority, runs a number of services of assistance to the elderly and disabled. As well as providing a full project management service to assist clients with major works to their properties, Safe at Home also operate a handyman service for minor repairs and adaptations.
- 7.4 In the private sector, disabled facilities grants are currently adapting only around 70 properties per year. As more people are expected to be maintained in, or moved back into the community and the elderly population continues to increase, a growth in demand for DFG's would appear inevitable and the council recognises that this demand will need to be taken into account in future planning.

### Mandatory disabled facilities grants

- 7.5 The existing statutory framework governing the required provision by local authorities of mandatory DFG's is to continue for the foreseeable future, with continued resources available from central government. The council receives a cash grant from the government each year towards the funding of DFG's. It is likely, however, that an increasing elderly population will result in a higher demand for grants and the Council is required to bridge the gap between total expenditure on DFG's and the funding from central government.
- 7.6 The Council will actively promote the availability of mandatory DFG's and will seek to work in partnership with the welfare authority, Safe at Home and other agencies to deliver a streamlined service where adaptation of a property is reasonable and practicable. As far as

possible, similar services will be made available to residents regardless of their form of tenure.

- 7.7 As DFG's are mandatory, they will continue to receive some priority in the allocation of funding and the council will work with the welfare authority to ensure that cases are effectively prioritised and dealt with according to need. Where resources are insufficient to meet demand, the council will seek to deal with cases equitably regardless of tenure.
- 7.8 Adaptation of a property may not always be the most appropriate solution to housing need. The council will seek to advise and assist clients with alternative arrangements to meet their housing needs where this is considered to be a more practicable or reasonable solution to the individual circumstances of a client. For example, financial and practical assistance with moving to a more suitable property.

#### Discretionary assistance

- 7.9 Appendix 5 sets out details of a new form of discretionary grant assistance, Adaptation Support Grant (ASG), which will complement mandatory disabled facilities grant.
- 7.10 Discretionary assistance will be considered in exceptional circumstances, to provide additional assistance or top-up to the maximum available mandatory DFG of £30,000. Such cases will be determined on a case by case basis and will be subject to ratification by the relevant Cabinet deputy (under delegated authority) or the Cabinet as appropriate.
- 7.11 Appendix 6 sets out details of a new form of discretionary grant assistance, Relocation Grant (RG), which will complement mandatory disabled facilities grant.
- 7.12 Discretionary assistance in the form of a loan will also be considered in exceptional circumstances where additional assistance is required to complement a disabled facilities grant when works are in excess of £30,000.

This would become a legal charge on the applicant's property and be repayable to the Council on the sale of the property or death of the applicant or the last of those persons named in the loan agreement. See appendix 7.

#### 8. The private sector stock and enforcement

- 8.1 The council recognises the importance of the asset value of Cheltenham's private sector housing stock and the contribution which its condition makes to the well-being of the town and its inhabitants.
- 8.2 In terms of enforcement action, the council intervenes in the private housing sector where it considers such intervention to be in the public interest. Generally, this will be as the result of a complaint by a member of the public or because it is evident from inspection that a property or group of properties are vacant or unsafe in terms of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

8.3 The council will ensure that it meets its statutory obligations in respect of the enforcement of safety standards in housing and the remedy of statutory nuisances including where necessary undertaking work in default of owners.

8.4 All enforcement action taken by the council will comply with the Council's enforcement policy which encompasses the principles of openness, proportionality, consistency, accountability, transparency and helpfulness. The policy reflects the Cabinet Office enforcement concordat and the dti good practice guide.

### 9. The owner-occupied sector

9.1 Owner occupation is the preferred form of tenure for the majority of the population. Investment in a home is the most significant financial investment most people will ever make and the principal responsibility for repairing and maintaining that asset lies with the householder.

9.2 Owner occupation is the predominant form of private tenure accounting for 32,757 dwellings (73.6%). Dwellings rented from a private landlord account for a further 9,368 dwellings or 21.0%, whilst tenure was unrecorded for 2,384 dwellings, primarily due to vacancy at the time of survey.

9.3 It was reported in the 2011 Private Sector House Condition Survey that the cost to repair dwellings in this sector to meet the Decent Home Standard amounts to £23 million with a total cost to meet decency standards of £41 million. This averages £6,050 per dwelling across all non-decent owner occupied dwellings.

### 10. The private rented sector

10.1 In 2005 13.5% of the private sector stock in Cheltenham was rented. In 2011 this figure had risen to 22% representing 9368 dwellings.

10.2 Housing conditions within the private-rented sector are generally worse than the Cheltenham average on all main indicators. In particular, rates of non-decency in the private-rented sector are significantly higher at 38.3%, compared with 24.6% for all private sector dwellings.

10.3 Whilst the rate of non-compliance with the decent homes minimum standard in Cheltenham is below the national average, rates of non-compliance with respect to disrepair are significantly higher. Within England, 9.4% of privately-rented dwellings failed the decent homes repair criteria during 2009, compared with 27.9% in Cheltenham in 2011.

10.4 Economically, Cheltenham has a thriving private rented sector but there are still problems of disrepair, poor amenities and lack of fire safety precautions in many properties. The council recognises that the condition of the private rented sector is very important to the success of local educational establishments, in particular the University of Gloucestershire, in attracting students to the town.

- 10.5 The council will work with landlords seeking advice from the authority to help them to meet their obligations and will develop the information available on its web pages ([www.cheltenham.gov.uk/regeneration](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/regeneration)) in order to facilitate better conditions in the private rented sector. The Council will continue to encourage landlords to join the countywide 'Fit to Rent' property accreditation scheme.
- 10.6 The council will continue to respond actively to complaints from tenants about poor conditions in the private rented sector and will use the full range of its enforcement powers to provide remedies for their protection. It is viewed that due to the continuing increase in private renting, combined with a continuing deterioration in property condition, there will be an increasing need for enforcement action.
- 10.7 Increasing numbers of complaints from private tenants about their housing conditions is likely to reveal deterioration in property conditions, especially in those HMO's not subject to mandatory licensing

#### Houses in multiple occupation

- 10.8 Cheltenham has a significant privately rented sector, with a large proportion of converted flats. The authority is obligated to tackle certain problems, once identified, through encouragement, but ultimately enforcement where this fails.
- 10.9 Cheltenham has in the region of 3,500 HMO's representing 7.8% of all private dwellings compared with 3% nationally.
- 10.10 Cheltenham have worked together with the other Gloucestershire district councils to introduce one licensing scheme for the whole of Gloucestershire with one application form, licence fee and conditions. In addition there is a single website for landlords to access and this provides consistent advice and downloads for use across the county. A formal agreement with the Gloucestershire Fire Authority has also been signed with regard to the national protocol for fire risk in HMO's. There are 250 mandatory licensable HMO's in Cheltenham.
- 10.11 The council will ensure that it meets its mandatory duties in respect of HMO licensing and will periodically survey areas to ensure compliance with the scheme.
- 10.12 The council will look to prioritise areas of Cheltenham with high levels of houses in multiple occupation for targeted action to improve housing conditions.

#### 11. Vacant private sector property

- 11.1 Given the demand for properties of all types in Cheltenham and the pressure on the council to make additional housing provision, it is unacceptable for existing properties to be kept vacant unnecessarily for extended periods.
- 11.2 The council has for many years had a pro-active policy of making contact with the owners of long term vacant properties to seek their co-operation in bringing them back into housing

use. There have been many notable successes that have had a positive impact on the town's appearance, as well as making better use of these wasted assets. In the past grant and loan aid has been used as an incentive to encourage owners to bring vacant properties back into use although government cutbacks means that this will no longer form part of this policy. In total, the council currently 'encourages' around 60 long term vacant properties back into use per annum.

- 11.3 Compulsory purchase action has been used in several cases as a last resort to secure the improvement and re-use of long term vacant properties. The Council has a list of properties that despite long endeavour to engage with the owners have been empty for some considerable time or are the subject of ongoing complaints regarding their impact on the neighbourhood. With reduced financial incentives to encourage re-occupation of vacant properties, this list will continue to lengthen without increased enforcement action by the Council.
- 11.4 The authority will continue to target long term vacant and underused commercial property, including vacant space above commercial premises (including shops), with a view to helping enable better use to be made of the existing built environment. Where appropriate, consideration will be also be given to the use of compulsory purchase powers to regenerate run-down commercial areas. Partnership arrangements with the private sector will be considered where the council has insufficient monies to fund the acquisition of such properties from within its own resources. The use of previously allocated renewal funding may also be used to facilitate compulsory purchase bridging the gap between expenditure incurred and receipts from sale of properties.
- 11.5 Cheltenham's vacant property strategy / framework forms Appendix 8 of this policy.
12. Area regeneration
- 12.1 The council's established approach to area regeneration has been based on the principle of co-ordinated public investment boosting the confidence of the private sector to fund improvements in run down areas on an on-going basis. The council also looks to provide or enable wider support to the community to help ensure that both regeneration and local communities are sustainable.
- 12.2 There are now few, if any areas of Cheltenham where the private housing sector could be viewed as failing. There are no clearly identifiable low demand areas. Private investment in property is taking place across the town and isolated areas of vacant or difficult to let property are more likely to be associated with ineffective management, a surplus of student accommodation, anti-social behaviour or poor environmental conditions (e.g. proximity to major roads or junctions) than with poor physical property conditions.
- 12.3 The council aims for Cheltenham to be the most attractive town in the country and to this end, there are still areas of the town that would benefit from a co-ordinated approach to improving the local environment, including rationalising commercial land holdings to attract inward investment and promote sustainable communities.

- 12.4 In addition to the physical environment, there is evidence of continued social exclusion in communities in various parts of the town. Effective regeneration needs to address physical, social and economic deprivation.

#### Cheltenham Borough Homes

- 12.5 The council has recently transferred the management of its own housing stock, comprising approximately 5,100 dwellings, to an Arms Length Management Organisation known as Cheltenham Borough Homes.
- 12.6 The council recognises the need for substantial investment in order for all dwellings to meet the government's decent homes standard by 2010 and is aware that some redevelopment will be necessary to deliver sustainable investment. Capital investment will be linked to neighbourhood management and major decisions will be based on the detailed financial and socio-environmental appraisal of available options.
- 12.7 Whilst the council is mindful of the demand for affordable housing in the town, redevelopment of blocks of flats at lower density will still be considered where this contributes to the creation of better balanced and sustainable communities.
- 12.8 In view of the difficult financial climate within which local authorities are now operating, the council will continue to work with other registered social landlords and private developers where such partnerships can deliver strategic housing objectives cost effectively.
- 12.9 The council will also seek to ensure that area regeneration initiatives are as far as possible 'tenure blind' and that support is provided to owner occupiers to assist with repairs and improvements where such works are being carried out to the council's own stock (for example, St Paul's 2011 transformation grants). In meeting this objective, the council will seek to work closely with Cheltenham Borough Homes and our other development partners.
- 12.10 Although Cheltenham, as with most District Authority areas in Gloucestershire have recorded almost total compliance towards the Decent Homes Programme target for social housing set for 2010, Cheltenham will continue to work with our Arms Length Management Organisation to make further improvements to existing social housing stock and maintain the Decent Homes standard.

#### Mobile home sites

- 12.11 At 1st April 2012, there were 13 licensed mobile home sites in the borough comprising 369 units. Considerable progress continues to be made in improving standards on Cheltenham's mobile home sites and the council will continue to seek improvements, particularly on the change of ownership of individual units to ensure that all existing contraventions are eventually eliminated.
- 12.12 The establishment of new mobile home sites is currently constrained by local planning policies and it is not proposed that this will change in the foreseeable future.

13. Financial Assistance

13.1 Discretionary financial assistance is made available by the Council, subject to resources, in the form of grants and loans to:

- Assist vulnerable householders to live in safe and decent homes
- To encourage energy efficiency of the Private Sector housing stock
- Support disabled persons living in their homes

The eligibility criteria for the different types of financial assistance are contained in appendices 1 to 8.

In addition Mandatory DFG grants continue to be made available to eligible applicants.

DRAFT



**Health and Safety Loan**

**Appendix 1**

Purpose

Where funding remains available to facilitate the improvement of houses for those most in need in the Borough, where repairs are essential to protect the health and safety of the occupant(s).

Health and Safety loan

The Health and Safety loan is available to cover the cost of eligible works up to £20,000. Eligible works will include those works necessary to rectify category 1 hazards, as assessed under the Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), provided that the carrying out of works is the most appropriate course of action when following such assessment.

The Health and Safety loan will cover the cost of eligible works, administration costs and related professional fees. The loan is subject to a maximum of £20,000 in any 7 year period, at the discretion of the Council. The loan is interest free.

The loan will become a legal charge on the property repayable to the Council on the sale of the property or vacation of the property for a period of 6 months in any 12 month period or on death of the applicant or the last of those persons named in the loan agreement provided that immediately prior to death they were occupying the property as their main or principal dwelling.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include those persons who have been owner occupiers of the house subject of the applications for a period of more than one year and who are classified as 'financially vulnerable as defined by Department for Communities and Local Government "A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation June 2006 - Update". Applicants have to be in receipt of a relevant means tested benefit set out in the definition. As stated in the guidance, this definition may be subject to change and the Council's policy will be amended accordingly.

Other relevant factors

In determining whether the giving of a Decent Home loan is appropriate to the case in question regard will be had to the following factors:

- The property must be within Council tax bands A to D (inclusive);
- whether any category 1 health and safety risks (assessed under HHSRS) will remain on completion of the proposed works subject of the loan. Loans will not normally be given in cases where such risks will remain on completion of proposed works. There is a statutory duty for the Council to take action in respect of such health risks;
- the outcome of any neighbourhood renewal assessment;
- whether Housing Act or other enforcement action has been instigated or is being considered in respect of the property;
- whether the applicant is considered able to remain living in the property without additional support from the statutory agencies and, if additional support is needed, whether that can be provided or facilitated at an acceptable cost;
- the wishes of the occupier;
- the equity the applicant has in the property. A Health and Safety loan will only be

given, subject to Council's discretion, if there is sufficient equity to secure the loan;

- whether the applicant or any occupier wishes to be re-housed and whether re-housing of the applicant in supported or other suitable accommodation is likely or desirable;
- how fully the property is occupied; and
- where the value of applications for loan assistance exceeds the available discretionary budget, the assessed priority of the application when compared to other applications received.

Where a loan is refused on the basis of eligibility of the applicant or of the proposed works, then the applicant may appeal to the Private Sector Housing Manager. The Private Sector Housing Manager will take account of exceptional circumstances, and may refer the case to the relevant cabinet member for a final decision where this is deemed appropriate or necessary.

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**Emergency Health and Safety Grant**

**Appendix 2**

**Purpose**

Where funding remains available to facilitate the improvement of houses (or mobile homes) for those in most need in the Borough, where repairs are essential and pose an imminent risk to the health and safety of the occupant(s).

- This emergency health and safety grant will cover the cost of eligible works and related professional fees up to, but not exceeding £5000.
- An emergency health and safety grant cannot be given more than once to an applicant (including the applicants' family) in any 2 year period or exceed £5000 in any 5 year period with respect to an individual property. For this purpose 'families' has the same definition as that contained in section 113 Housing Act 1985.
- The grant is only given to rectify those hazards which pose an imminent risk of serious harm to the occupants.

**Eligibility**

Eligible applicants include those persons who have been owner occupiers of the house or owns and occupies a mobile home on a registered site subject of the applications for a period of more than one year and who are classified as 'financially' vulnerable as defined by Department for Communities and Local Government "A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation June 2006 - Update". Applicants have to be in receipt of a relevant means tested benefit set out in the definition which, as stated in the guidance, may be subject to change and the Council's policy will be amended accordingly. **In addition, the applicant must be ineligible to apply for a Health and Safety loan to qualify for the grant.**

Only works to properties falling within Category 1 under the government's housing health and safety rating system and which pose an imminent risk of serious harm to the occupant will qualify for an emergency health and safety grant.

**Other relevant factors**

In determining whether the giving of an Emergency Health & Safety grant is appropriate to the case in question, regard will be had to the following factors:

- the wishes of the occupier;
- whether the applicant is considered able to remain in the property without additional support from statutory agencies and, if additional support is needed, whether that can be provided or facilitated at an acceptable cost;
- in the case of mobile homes, the consent of the site licence holder is required;
- whether Housing Act or other enforcement action has been instigated or is being considered in respect of the property;
- whether the applicant wishes to be re-housed and whether re-housing of the applicant in supported or other suitable accommodation is likely or desirable;
- the circumstances of any other joint owners of the property;

- where the value of applications for grant assistance exceeds the available discretionary budget, the assessed priority of the application when compared to other applications received;
- how fully the property is occupied; and
- the property must be within Council tax bands A to D (inclusive).

DRAFT

**Government definition of vulnerable****Appendix 3**

(Extract from the Department for Communities and Local Government “A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation June 2006 - Update”)

Vulnerable households have been defined for the purposes of the Decent Homes standard as a whole as those in receipt of at least one of the principal means tested or disability related benefits. For the purpose of establishing the national 2001 baseline from the English House Condition Survey the benefits taken into account were:

- income support;
- housing benefit;
- council tax benefit;
- disabled persons tax credit;
- income based job seekers allowance;
- working families tax credit;
- attendance allowance;
- disability living allowance;
- industrial injuries disablement benefit;
- war disablement pension;
- child tax credit;
- working tax credit;
- pension credit.

The detailed definition of qualifying benefits used to define vulnerable will be subject to change. The last three qualifying benefits have been introduced since 2001 and they have different qualifying thresholds.

This is the definition of vulnerable which all local authorities should use to establish a baseline and monitor progress towards the Decent Homes standard. It should be noted that this definition is used for national monitoring purposes. Local authorities have flexibility in providing discretionary assistance for repairs under the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) (Housing Assistance) Order 2002. It is for the local authority to decide the circumstances in which to give assistance and the form that assistance may take.

### **The Warm and Well Scheme**

The scheme is governed by a steering group made up of representatives from each of the local authorities involved and representatives from the health sector locally. This group meets regularly throughout the year and help decide on grant eligibility criteria and future focus. The criteria are deliberately set to fill the eligibility gap by helping people on low incomes who are excluded from other schemes because they do not receive income related benefits. The scheme aims to improve energy efficiency and reduce the levels of associated health risk through:

- Raising awareness of the issues and encouraging appropriate action, both physical and behavioural;
- Providing specific and appropriate advice to each household that comes into the scheme;
- Enabling physical measures to be installed through referrals to grants and discounts

The central issues addressed by the Scheme are the links between energy efficiency and affordable warmth, cold living conditions and health, for example through:

- Cardiovascular illness;
- Condensation damp;
- Respiratory illness and allergic conditions;
- Ventilation and carbon monoxide risk

The warm and well scheme targets:

- Owner occupiers and tenants of private rented housing in Gloucestershire with members of the household who are vulnerable to health problems associated with or exacerbated by low indoor temperatures;
- Owner occupiers and tenants of private rented housing in Gloucestershire likely to be living in fuel poverty, and unable to afford adequate heating in the home;
- The general public in Gloucestershire, to promote awareness of energy efficiency and the related issues of adequate ventilation, the avoidance of condensation damp and the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The local authorities in Gloucestershire that form part of the scheme contribute money from their central government PSR funding through the Gloucestershire Energy Efficiency Grant (GEEG). They also make use of funding from Warm Front and fuel suppliers via their Carbon Emissions Reduction Target commitment (CERT)

Warm and Well provides energy efficiency measures to those living in privately owned or privately rented homes. The measures available under GEEG are as follows:

- Loft insulation
- Cavity wall insulation
- Draught proofing
- Hot water tank jackets
- Boiler replacement
- Full central heating systems

The linked Rent Warm Rent Well programme targets private sector Landlords and offers them grants in order to encourage installation of energy efficient measures.

Grants are also available for renewable energy installations through the Gloucestershire Renewable Energy Grant (GREG).

### **Adaptations Support Grant (ASG)**

This discretionary grant is available where works are identified by an Occupational Therapist as “necessary and appropriate”, or are required in association with such works to meet the needs of a disabled person.

#### **Eligible applicants**

- Owner occupiers or private tenants who are disabled and referred for assistance by an Occupational Therapist of the County Social Services department.
- Are in receipt of a means-tested benefit, and or
- Are 60 or more years of age and having completed a Test of Resources form for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant are assessed to be a “nil contributor”.

**Note:** Where an applicant has a calculated contribution but has made a financial contribution towards the DFG, they would be considered a “nil contributor” for the Adaptation Support Grant, unless they have savings in excess of £16,000.

#### **Eligible works**

1. Essential repairs related to the health and safety of the occupants necessary for the adaptation work (whether via DFG or ASG) to proceed. (The most common example of this would be rewiring of a dangerous electrical installation)
2. Minor adaptations (for example the provision of a handrail costing £500.00). In these cases it would be more cost effective to provide an ASG than a more administratively complex DFG.
3. Where a speedy response is required, for example repairs to an existing stairlift and again, it is quicker to process an ASG than a DFG.
4. Where an applicant has a life interest rather than a full owners interest in a property and is therefore not eligible to for a DFG.

#### **Maximum grant**

The maximum grant payable in any one year is £5,000.

## Relocation Grant (RG)

This discretionary grant is designed to assist with relocation costs and/or purchasing costs of a new property where adaptations to existing accommodation are considered less appropriate or too costly and a cheaper option is to assist with re-housing and if necessary, to assist with carrying out adaptations to an alternative property.

### Eligible applicants

- Applicants who are disabled or a member of their family living with them is disabled and has had an assessment of their needs carried out by an Occupational Therapist of the County Social Services department and adaptations to their current home identified
- Applicants can be owner occupiers, private tenants, or council tenants.
- Applicants will have to complete a Test of Resources form for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and will qualify for assistance if they have a calculated contribution between £0-£15,000.

NOTE: Families with a disabled child are not subjected to a means test.

- Applicants must currently live within Cheltenham Borough Council boundaries and be looking to relocate also in Cheltenham.

### Eligible Work

1. Removal costs. An applicant will be required to provide two estimates for removal costs, the amount of grant approved will be based on the lowest estimate provided. A list of approved removal firms will be provided to each applicant.
2. Legal and other fees, including legal and survey fees, housing agents' fees and mortgage redemption fees.
3. Resettlement costs. This will include works such as fitting curtain rails or shelves and any other items covered by Safe at Home handyman service. Only work carried out by Safe at Home handyman service will be considered for grant assistance.
4. Fees charged by Safe at Home associated with facilitating this work.

**Note:** Applicants moving into council accommodation will only qualify for assistance towards items 1, 3 and 4.

### Eligible amount

There is no upper limit to the Relocation Grant but what will need to be considered is the cost to adapt an applicant's existing home set against the cost to re-house and if necessary, carry out adaptations to their new home. As long as this remains a more affordable option and represents value for money for the council the Relocation Grant will be considered. Please note that since the maximum grant limit for a Disabled Facilities Grant is £30,000, the grant assistance given for the Relocation Grant plus any adaptations at the new property will be less than this amount.



### **Discretionary assistance in the form of a loan**

This discretionary loan assistance will be considered in exceptional circumstances where works are identified by an Occupational Therapist as being necessary and appropriate, or are being required in association with such works to meet the needs of a disabled person and to allow them to stay in their own home.

### **Eligible applicants**

- Applicants who are disabled or a member of their family living with them is disabled and referred for assistance by an Occupational Therapist of the County Social Services department and adaptations to their current home identified.
- Applicants will have completed a Test of Resources form for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and will qualify for assistance.

NOTE: Families with a disabled child are not subjected to a means test.

- Applicants must live within the Cheltenham Borough Council boundaries.
- The equity the applicant has in the property must give sufficient security for a loan to be given, subject to the Council's discretion.

### **Eligible Work**

Only mandatory and other works deemed necessary by an Occupational Therapist from the County Council Social Services Department will be considered. The works must be both necessary and appropriate.

### **Eligible amount**

There is no upper limit to the Discretionary loan, but consideration must be given to whether the adaptations are deemed practicable and appropriate and where more cost effective alternatives can be identified.

Where a loan is refused then the applicant may appeal to the Private Sector Housing Manager. The Private Sector Housing Manager will take account of the circumstances of the case and may refer to the relevant cabinet member for a final decision where this is deemed appropriate or necessary.

## Cheltenham Borough Council Vacant Property Strategy / Framework

### 1. Introduction

Empty properties are a wasted asset not only for the owner but also the surrounding community, especially in a time of housing need. Often unsightly in appearance, properties left unoccupied can cause blight to an area and distress to neighbours, attracting crime and anti social behaviour.

The key aim of this strategy is to encourage owners to bring their properties back into use and ultimately to deter them from leaving their homes empty.

### 2. Strategy Aims and Objectives

- To maximise the re-use of empty homes and other buildings
- To minimise the need for the future development of greenfield sites and protect the environment
- To improve and conserve the existing built environment
- To help provide good quality affordable housing
- To ensure programmes meet a range of housing needs, whilst providing a choice of accommodation and neighbourhood
- To raise public awareness of the issue of empty homes
- To maintain robust records on empty properties and to monitor trends.

### 3. Problems associated with empty homes

It is important to consider the community damage that empty properties do to local areas. The Association of Chief Police Officers has referred to empty properties as “honey pots for crime”. The longer a property is left unoccupied the greater the risk of vandalism and anti social behaviour which could reduce the property to a dilapidated eyesore. Dealing with the associated problems of an empty property can result in an avoidable burden on the resources of the Police and Fire Services as well as local authorities.

Empty homes cost their owners money in council tax, insurance, repairs and security and yet produce no income. It has been estimated that keeping a family-sized home empty costs an average of £10,000 a year (including lost rental income).

Empty properties are also subject to other problems:

- The fabric of an empty home deteriorates faster than an occupied house
- They become targets for vandals, arsonists, squatters and fly-tippers
- They attract vermin
- In June 2003 'Home Track' produced a survey, which showed that empty properties devalue the neighbouring properties by as much as 18%

Bringing an empty property back into use may assist in improving the general streetscape of an area and reduce anti-social behaviour as well as providing a valuable source of urgently needed accommodation.

In 2009 the Empty Homes Agency reported that 651,993 homes stood empty in England. In 2010 Shelter advised that there were 80,000 registered homeless households awaiting decent housing with a further half a million households living in overcrowded conditions, highlighting the importance of the empty homes statistics.

Finally, by re using empty properties councils are promoting sustainable development and helping to protect the environment. In the March 2008 report 'New Tricks with Old Bricks' research carried out by the Empty Homes Agency and The Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF) found that 'reusing empty homes could make an initial saving of 35 tonnes of carbon dioxide per property by removing the need for the energy locked into new build materials and construction.' By recycling empty properties councils can assist in reducing the need for building new homes on Greenfield sites and make a contribution to reducing CO2 emissions.

Any market will always have some degree of empty homes such is the nature of market transactions. It is normally accepted that between 1% and 2% of the housing stock are empty at any time for refurbishment and between occupiers (transactional voids). However, when homes are left empty for years, they can undermine communities, be a magnet for crime and a waste of a valuable housing resource.

In the Government's response to the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee's report on Empty Homes March 2002 it stated that :

*'Empty homes are at best a waste of resources, and at worst a blight on the lives of individuals and whole communities. The Government is determined to grapple with the various causes of empty homes.'*

#### **4. Benefits to having a Empty Homes Strategy**

- Helps meet the needs of local people
- Helps reduce the need to build new dwellings on greenfield sites
- Prevents empty properties becoming the focus of anti-social behaviour and attracting adverse comment from the wider community
- Good for public relations as it gives greater visible evidence of a local authority's strategic policy in areas of decline
- Promotes the enabling role of the local authority
- May contribute to affordable housing provision
- Removes empty property making the locality a more attractive place to live
- Helps improve the local environment by attracting investment into the area
- Can help revitalise the local economy and employment opportunities

#### **5. Why do properties become empty?**

There are a number of reasons why properties become empty:

- Inability to afford the work necessary to make the property habitable.
- Repossession – properties that have been repossessed can often remain empty for long periods of time due to complex legal issues,
- Property is being kept empty for use of owner or a member of his or her family at some unknown time in the future,
- Owner moved to be cared for,
- Potential planning problems/ redevelopment – planning permission for large sites earmarked for redevelopment can often take a considerable length of time to gain planning consent,
- Inheritance – Properties that are inherited are often left empty for a considerable amount of time whilst awaiting the outcome of probate or legal issues,
- Tied properties – certain properties most commonly tied to agriculture or the armed services become empty as the number of workers reduce or bases close,
- Buy to Leave- properties are bought for capital appreciation and left for a sustained period of time.
- Space above shops – due to properties having no or shared access to flats above shops properties are sometimes left vacant
- Family break ups

## **6. Tackling Empty Homes**

### **6.1 Identifying Empty Homes**

There are two main ways of identifying empty properties. Complaints can be received relating to properties (rubbish, nuisance, vermin etc) from a variety of different sources (members of the public, councillors, council officers, police and fire services). When investigated it will become apparent whether the property is unoccupied or not. Complaints may also be received about properties being left empty especially from neighbours or a member of the community.

The Council will encourage members of the public to report any properties that they think are unoccupied. Details that are given to the Vacant Property Officer will be followed up and the officer will attempt to contact the owner to confirm the property is empty and give advice on what options are available to re occupy the property.

The council tax database can also be used to identify those properties receiving a void property discount.

The Council will determine which properties are causing problems and need targeting. Properties that have become long term empty (over 6 months), are detrimental to the neighbourhood and have little prospect of become occupied are made a priority.

### **6.2 Corporate Approach**

The issue of empty homes impact on almost all departments within the Council. In particular

- Planning and Conservation
- Environmental Health
- Housing
- Local Taxation
- Building Control
- Forward planning

The Council will ensure that departments work together effectively to reduce the number of empty homes in the Borough.

### **6.3 Working in Partnership**

It is necessary to build links and develop relationships with external agencies that can assist in delivering the strategy including the following

- Private landlords via expo, forums, newsletters
- Estate agents, letting agents and developers
- Local businesses
- Community organisations
- The Empty Homes Steering Group, which is made up of vacant property officers from the Gloucestershire district councils, meet biannually to share information and expertise.

The Council will work with partners to help achieve the strategic aims of the policy.

### **6.4 Raising Awareness**

The Council aims to raise the profile of empty homes both internally within the council and externally. A number of measures can be employed to ensure this

- Use of local media
- Use of Council publications
- Production of publicity materials
- Attendance at private landlord forums
- Information on council and Housing Association websites
- National Empty Homes Week

## **7. Incentives and Powers for Local Authorities**

### **7.1 Advice**

Where possible Cheltenham Borough Council aim to work with owners in a voluntary way by providing free advice and information to owners to assist them in bringing an empty property back into use. The Council will outline what options are available to owners when considering what to do with their empty property.

## **7.2 Deposit Loan/Bond Schemes**

The Council works with private landlords and letting agencies to help fill vacant properties as quickly as possible by providing deposit loans/bonds. The main focus of the schemes is to find suitable accommodation for households looking for long-term lets at or near local housing allowance rates.

## **7.3 Enforcement**

If it is not possible through negotiation to persuade an owner to deal with a feral property the council has the option of implementing a number of statutory powers at its disposal. All options will be considered by the Council subject to the individual circumstances of each case.

### 7.3.1 Housing Act 2004 – Empty Dwelling Management Orders

The most recent measure introduced to help combat empty properties is the Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs). Since 2006, councils have been able to issue Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) as part of their approach to bring homes into use. A council with housing responsibilities can use an EDMO to take over the management of a residential property that has been empty for more than six months. They can only be used after other voluntary options have been offered to the owner and refused. Any renovation costs, management costs, insurance costs etc must be recoverable from the rent over a period of 7 years unless the local authority are prepared to proceed without being able to recover all of its expenses.

### 7.3.2 Law of Property Act 1925 – Enforced Sale

Allows the Council to force the sale of a property where there is a Local Land Charge outstanding on it. It can be used for debts that are up to 12 years old. However, if known, the owner has to be given the opportunity to repay the debt rather than selling the property. The Council does not acquire the property; it is sold to a third party. Any outstanding charges against the property, including any mortgage, are paid following the sale and the money remaining (if any) is put into an account for the owner to claim. Cheltenham Borough Council will consider enforced sale where there is a local land charge outstanding on a property, for example where the property has been secured against unauthorised access in default.

### 7.3.3 Compulsory Purchase Orders

Compulsory Purchase Orders are a last resort after attempts have been made to encourage the owner to take responsibility for maintaining the property and bringing it back into use. They can be pursued under various powers including Housing and Planning Act legislation. Once this course of action has been commenced, many owners will bring the properties back into use voluntarily or will negotiate sale to the Council. Cheltenham Borough Council will consider Compulsory Purchase as a last resort.

### 7.3.4 Other legislation

There is a variety of legislation which can be used to address particular problems which are being caused by an empty property including:

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Provisions in this legislation deal with premises that are having a detrimental impact on the amenity of the area
- Prevention of Damage by Pest Act to deal with rodent infestation with an empty property
- Building Act 1984 – provisions in this legislation can be used to deal with dangerous and derelict property
- Local Government (miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – provisions in this act can be used to board up properties to prevent unauthorised access
- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – provisions in this legislation can be used to deal with fly tipped rubbish and other accumulations within the curtilage of empty property

### Enforcement Action

In the case of empty residential property the Council's priority for intervention is based on the balance of three factors:

- The impact the empty property has on the neighbourhood in which it is situated
- The length of time the property has been vacant
- The owners reluctance to co-operate with the Council's objectives, taking into account the circumstances of the individual case

Any action will be taken in full consideration of the Council's enforcement policy.

## 8. Performance Management

The Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 64 has been previously used to measure performance on empty homes work. It *'measures the number of non local authority owned dwellings returned to occupation or demolished during the year as a result of action by the local authority.'* This performance indicator has now been removed under the Government's review of national performance indicators. However, it will be important to establish a measure that can be used across the county to monitor future performance. The Council continues to use the criteria of the BVPI 64 to monitor performance.

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Social & Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**27 February 2012**

### **Work Planning 2012-2013 - going forward to the new Scrutiny Arrangements**

#### **Background**

- 1.1 In December 2011, Council agreed a set of principles for the new scrutiny arrangements. The new structure supports a move away from the current three committee structure to a new structure based on one overarching committee and task and finish groups. It is not intended that all the work of the existing three committees would be passed over to the new committee but rather that the new committee would set up task and finish groups to do some of the more detailed work.
- 1.2 The next step is to develop the procedures, protocols and constitutional changes required to support those principles agreed at Council. This is being progressed through a series of scrutiny workshops and the constitution working group. A number of members and officers participated in the latest workshop on 20 February. One of the topics discussed was the workplan under the new scrutiny arrangements which would cover both the O&S main committee and all its task groups. The attendees felt that it was very important that all the current scrutiny committees had the opportunity to input to the new combined workplan.
- 1.3 As this is the last meeting of each of the existing O&S committees, members are asked to review their workplan and make suggestions for the following:
  - Which outstanding items on the workplan should be considered for inclusion in the workplan for the new O&S committee? e.g. corporate strategy
  - Which items could be dealt with more effectively by a scrutiny task group i.e. a time limited working group to consider a particular topic and make recommendations at the end? e.g. review of Imperial Gardens at the end of the 2012 season  
*(a list of current working groups and those who have reported in the last 12 months is contained in Appendix 2)*
  - Are there any issues which are periodically considered by this committee which members think should continue to be scrutinised under the new arrangements? e.g. Housing strategy.
  - Are there any regular items which could be dealt with as member briefings in the future? e.g. presentations from an outside organisation where members have a particular interest such as the Everyman Theatre.
- 1.4 Once all three O&S committees have met, it is planned for the chair and vice chairs to meet with Democratic Services in March to finalise their input to the new workplan.



## Page 116

The new O&S committee and the chair and vice-chair will be appointed at Selection Council in May and they will then take responsibility for the workplan and its delivery. They may well want to make changes but the input from the existing committees will provide an excellent starting point.

### Effectiveness of O&S

- 1.5** As this is the last meeting of this committee, it would also be helpful to have feedback from members of the committee on how they view the effectiveness of their scrutiny work overall and are there any learning points which they would want to be taken forward into the new arrangements.

Some questions they may like to consider are:

1. Do they feel they have had the right topics on the agenda?
2. Has the committee been in an effective position to scrutinise the Cabinet?
3. Has information being presented to scrutiny in the right form, and does it enable the right level of discussion?

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<b>Appendices</b>	1. Draft work plan 2012-2013
	2. List of existing Committee and Cabinet Member working groups

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<b>Background Papers</b>	
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager

Item	Purpose	Outcome	What is required?	Lead Officer
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REGULAR ITEMS TO SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE				
Interim Budget consultation	Scrutiny	Review interim budget proposals and comment	Report in November	Mark Sheldon, Director of Resources
Final Budget consultation	Scrutiny	Review final budget proposals 2013-14 and comment	Report in February	Mark Sheldon, Director of Resources
DRAFT Corporate Strategy 2012-13	Scrutiny	Review DRAFT strategy prior to Cabinet	Report in March	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
Art Gallery and Museum	Update	Quarterly review of development scheme and service provision during closure	Quarterly discussion paper	Jane Lillystone, Museum, Arts & Tourism Manager
Leisure@	Scrutiny	Annual performance review	Discussion paper	Stephen Petherick, Commercial Manager – Leisure@
Everyman Theatre	Scrutiny	Annual Review	Presentation	Geoffrey Rowe, Chief Executive
Cheltenham Festivals	Scrutiny	Annual Review	Presentation	Donna Renney, Chief Executive, Cheltenham Festivals
Proscenium Building/Gardens Gallery	Scrutiny	Tri-annual review	Presentation in 2015	Bob Freeman, Chairman-Gardens Gallery
Town Hall and Pittville Pump Rooms	Scrutiny	Annual performance review	Discussion paper	Gary Nejrup, Entertainment and Business Manager
Approval of community grants	Scrutiny	As and when required	Report	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE O&S COMMITTEE WORKPLAN OR SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS OR MEMBERS BRIEFINGS				
Youth and anti-social behaviour	Scrutiny	Update	Verbal update	Cabinet Member Housing and Health

O&S Committee 2012/13 work plan

Item	Purpose	Outcome	What is required?	Lead Officer
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 28 May 2012</b>	
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 16 July 2012</b>	
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 13 September 2012</b>	
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 26 November 2012</b>	
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 21 January 2013</b>	
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 25 February 2013</b>	
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 8 April 2013</b>	
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 3 June 2013</b>	
			<b>MEETING DATE: Monday 29 July 2013</b>	

**O&S COMMITTEE AND RELEVANT MEMBER WORKING GROUPS 2011-2012  
CURRENTLY IN OPERATION AND THOSE REPORTING IN LAST MONTHS**

<b>WORKING GROUP MWG</b> indicates a Cabinet Working Group with scrutiny membership	<b>Type</b>	<b>SCOPE / OUTCOME</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>	<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>ADMIN BY</b>
Cheltenham Festivals (initiated by Soc and Com)	O&S led Soc & Com EBI	Review CF business plan and make recs regarding sustainability and strategic alliance with council	Recs noted by Cabinet 7 Dec 2010 but would consider them again at appropriate time	Duncan Smith Garth Barnes Rowena Hay Lloyd Surgenor	Grahame Lewis	Dem Services
Marketing and Tourism (initiated by EBI)	O&S led EBI	Recommended new strategy and action plan agreed by Cabinet though some to be pursued as part of commissioning reviews	Strategy approved by Cabinet in April 2011	Chaired by John Rawson	Sonia Phillips	Service Area
Community Investment working group (request from Cabinet)	O&S Soc &com	Considered applications and recommended bids to Cabinet which were accepted	Agreed by Cabinet in January 2011	Digory Seacome John Rawson Rowena Hay Cabinet Member Finance and Com Development	Richard Gibson	Service Area
Sustainable management of green space (initiated by Env)	O&S led ENV	Consider potential changes to design and maintenance and recommend sustainable management practices. Consider potential for	Awaiting confirmation from Lead Officer	Nigel Britter Diane Hibbert Paul Wheeldon Penny Hall Vacancy?	Adam Reynolds	Service area

O&S COMMITTEE AND RELEVANT MEMBER WORKING GROUPS 2011-2012  
CURRENTLY IN OPERATION AND THOSE REPORTING IN LAST MONTHS

		changes to all types of green space to encourage biodiversity.					
Climate Change (formerly Internal Carbon Reduction) (initiated by Env)	O&S led Env	Scope to be formally agreed following change of remit, but likely to include the following: Consider and support carbon reduction plans Including, options for renewable energy. Consider potential effects of climate change on Council operations. Work with established groups, e.g. Low Carbon Partnership, to influence other organisations and learn from their experience.	Ongoing	Ian Bickerton Helena McCloskey Paul Wheeldon Penny Hall	Jane Griffiths Gill Morris	Service area	
Public Art Review (initiated by Soc and Com)	O&S led Soc and Com	Examine the processes, policies and procedures associated with delivering public art	Set up in July 2011	Rowena Hay Diggory Seacome	Wilf Tomaney	Service area	

O&S COMMITTEE AND RELEVANT MEMBER WORKING GROUPS 2011-2012  
CURRENTLY IN OPERATION AND THOSE REPORTING IN LAST MONTHS

Joint Airport scrutiny working group (request from Cabinet)	O&S led EBI Env (green issues)	Joint scrutiny working group with Gloucester City to scrutinise issues relating to Glos Airport  Env reviewed green policy in July 2010 and recommended to Cabinet Cabinet received recs from EBI in September 2010 which gave the go ahead for the Airport safety project	Ongoing  Sep 2010	Les Godwin (Chair)	Pat Pratley, Executive Director	Jennie Lewis
Environmental Improvements Fund Panel (initiated by Cabinet)	O&S Env	to scrutinise prioritised bids from Member panel comprising Leader and Cabinet members	Agreed by Cabinet in July 2011	tba	Mike Redman	Service area
Promoting Cheltenham Fund Panel (initiated by Cabinet)	O&S and cross party membership	Allocate Grants	EBI appointed members July 2011	Malcolm Stennett Tim Cooper Cabinet Members ED, Culture, Finance	Mike Redman Richard Gibson	Richard Gibson
Budget Scrutiny (initiated by Council)	O&S led All ctees with Cabinet Member Finance in attendance	Support and improve the budget scrutiny process	Meets every 2 months	Nigel Britter (E) Diane Hibbert (E) Peter Jeffries (EBI) Paul Massey (EBI) John Walklett (S) Duncan Smith (S) John Webster	Mark Sheldon	Dem Services
Waste &	O&S	Monitor implementation of	Ongoing	Nigel Britter	Rob Bell	Service

**O&S COMMITTEE AND RELEVANT MEMBER WORKING GROUPS 2011-2012  
CURRENTLY IN OPERATION AND THOSE REPORTING IN LAST MONTHS**

Recycling <b>MWG</b>	membership	the new waste & recycling scheme		Jacky Fletcher Diggory Secome Roger Whyborn	Area
Built Environment Commissioning Review <b>MWG</b>	O&S membership	Support the development of an initial report to Cabinet (26 July) on results of preliminary needs analysis and scoping and final report to Cabinet (27 September) which will set out the strategic direction for Built environment services	September 2011	Tim Cooper Barbara Driver Bernie Fisher Jacky Fletcher Pete Jeffries Helena McCloskey John Rawson Lloyd Surgenor	Grahame Lewis  Jane G
Leisure & Culture Commissioning Review <b>MWG</b>	O&S membership	Support the development of an initial report to Cabinet (26 July) on results of preliminary needs analysis and agree recommendations for next steps	Ongoing	Garth Barnes Wendy Flynn Rowena Hay Anne Regan Diggory Secome Duncan Smith Lloyd Surgenor	Pat Pratley  Alison
Housing Review <b>MWG</b>	O&S membership	Support the development of a report to Cabinet by October 2011, that will set out the strategic direction for housing in Cheltenham, given the national change to the affordable rent regime, self financing of the HRA, future changes to the planning policy framework and welfare reforms	October 2011	Cllr W Flynn Cllr C Coleman Cllr R Hay Cllr J Walklett Cllr K Sudbury Cllr D Smith Cllr B Driver Cllr J Webster Jane Griffiths Paul Aldridge Paul Stephenson Karl Hemming Martin Stacy	Jane Griffiths or Mike Redman  Jane G

**O&S COMMITTEE AND RELEVANT MEMBER WORKING GROUPS 2011-2012  
CURRENTLY IN OPERATION AND THOSE REPORTING IN LAST MONTHS**

Cross party member working group (initiated by Commissioning programme)	Cabinet and O&S membership	To champion the role of members in the commissioning process	Ongoing	Colin Hay Steve Jordan Tim Cooper Duncan Smith Klara Sudbury	Andrew North	Project Mgmt team
Constitution working group (initiated by Council)	Appointed by Council	Member engagement in any review of the constitution	Ongoing	Colin Hay Les Godwin Duncan Smith	Sara Freckleton	One Legal
Asset Management Working Group	Appointed by Council	To review asset management issues and make recommendations to Cabinet	Ongoing	Chaired by Cabinet Member Built Environment	David Roberts	Democratic Services



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# Briefing Notes

Committee name

Social & Community Overview

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012

Responsible officer: Jane Lillystone,  
Museum, Arts & Tourism Manager

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the Officer indicated.

## Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum Development Scheme Update

Following the last progress report to the Committee (May 2011), there has been significant progress on the scheme:-

1) The Art Gallery & Museum (AG&M) closed to the public from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 for the start of the de-canting programme of the collections / fixtures and fittings within the on-site stores, galleries, visitor facilities and offices – and the move was completed by the end of July 2011. During the closure period the AG&M are using an additional larger store at the Depot and a ground floor retail space, 3 St. Georges Place, now called the Outer Space – for the location of a temporary base for family activities / events, teaching sessions and education loans services (i.e. Museum Take-Away). The AG&M are not being charged rental for these spaces – just covering costs for business rates, heating and security systems – whilst the existing galleries above the Library are being used as a base for the Collections team and additional storage for the bulk of the collections from the Arts and Crafts Movement gallery, roller racking and costume stores.

2) In August, the main contractor, ISG, was appointed and mobilisation of the site commenced from 11 August 2011. Work so far is progressing well, following the achievement of the first major milestone in the completion of the ground works / foundations and the start of construction on building the main concrete frame (you may have noticed a new landmark towering above the town with the installation of the tower crane). Progress on the construction can be viewed on a daily basis via the Art Gallery & Museum Development web cam on [www.cheltenham.artgallery.museum](http://www.cheltenham.artgallery.museum) – and click on the development pages.

3) Fundraising is still ongoing for the remainder of the shortfall. A major public fundraising campaign is being launched (specifically on-line) at the end of February 2012 – and the Development Trust and Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum are pro-actively organising fundraising events throughout the year.

4) A partnership agreement with the University of Gloucestershire (Faculty of Media, Art & Communications) is currently being agreed / drafted, with reference to a collaboration within the new building, of hosting three of their existing touring exhibitions (in the light of the closure of their Summerfield Gallery / Pittville Campus), evening events / workshop sessions for the students - and also offering work / project placements for post-graduate courses. The agreement will be finalised and signed by 31 March 2012.

5) The Art Gallery & Museum is also in discussion with the Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen (currently based in Painswick) to operate their gallery / shop from the ground floor retail area within the new development scheme. The aim will be to create a 'crafts hub' within the new development, linking into the AG&M's nationally designated Arts and Crafts Movement collection,

and in turn, supporting the local economy / creative industries. A draft proposal has been agreed with guild members - and again this will be finalised and signed by 31 March 2012.

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6) A series of off-site exhibitions and projects, under the banner **Off the wall, on the move**, have successfully taken place in and around Cheltenham - in partnership with other organisations / venues, practitioners and artists – since February 2011. The aim was to provide a lively and inspiring programme through which the Art Gallery & Museum could consult, engage and develop new audiences – as well as continuing to engage and interact with current audiences. **Off the wall, on the move** was inspired by the AG&M's collections and Cheltenham's local stories, the programme had three key strands, which were: *Fine Form - the horse in art*, *Stanley's Story* and *Shot in Cheltenham – photographs past and present*. *Fine Form* (including the *Horse Parade* installation of horse sculptures in and around the town during the summer) concentrated on the horse in art, in collaboration with Cheltenham Racecourse and the Summerfield Gallery (Pitville Campus), and the 100th birthday celebrations of the prestigious horse racing event, the Cheltenham Festival. From May onwards, *Stanley's Story* focused on one of the AG&M's most important paintings, *Village Life*, by Stanley Spencer and marked the 70th anniversary of the period he spent in Leonard Stanley (the village where this painting was created) with a varied range of events, from an artist-in-residence programme, drama performances, storytelling / creative writing, film making and the hosting of the Big Draw event in autumn 2011. From July onwards, *Shot in Cheltenham* drew on the AG&M's collection of local photographs with a series of mini touring displays, culminating with an interactive on-line competition – and one of the main partners and venues was Cheltenham Library. More off-site events and collaborations are being planned for this year – still under the banner, **Off the wall, on the move** – particularly linking into the main themes of the Antarctic Centenary, the Olympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. We are also working with Sudeley Castle on hosting an event / art installation linking into the Queen Katherine Parr Quincentenary Festival.

7) Since April 2011, **Off the wall, on the move**, has engaged with approximately 39,635 people – whilst an additional 22,161 people have so far accessed our regular events programme. We are continuing to publish our quarterly events / information leaflet and actively promoting the Art Gallery & Museum / Arts and Crafts Movement websites as 'our window to the world' - featuring key exhibitions / events, progress on the development (and a live web cam of the construction site), information on the fundraising campaign, links to our social media sites (twitter, facebook, flickr and YouTube) and most importantly, images / information on the collections, enabled through our extensive digitisation project. To date (from April 2011), around 128,983 hits have been made on the AG&M / Arts and Crafts Movement collection websites - and we are also proposing to host specific on-line exhibitions (working with digital artists) and a major public fundraising campaign for later in the year.

8) During this period the AG&M have commissioned audience research throughout the touring programme, **Off the wall, on the move**, including extensive consultation prior to the closure of the Art Gallery & Museum (in autumn / winter 2010). This will enable the AG&M to compile quantitative and qualitative information to not only provide a baseline for future audience research – which will allow the benefits / success of the new galleries / public spaces to be assessed – but to also provide information that will shape and form the planning / content of the new galleries, touring exhibitions programme and associated activities / events; building on existing initiatives to widen access to the collections and lay the foundations for the new displays. The AG&M is also keen to engage with local communities, encouraging them to get involved and participate (i.e. 'gain a voice') in the planning and programming of themes / ideas and content for new displays / exhibitions – particularly through the ground floor community gallery and the dedicated young peoples' art space - and currently the AG&M outreach team are based at Hesters way Community Centre for one day a week, and a 'Creative Collective' has also been formed with young people from the University of Gloucestershire. More engagement projects are being planned for later in the year.

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