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1.0 Introduction

Housing within the private sector in Thanet has acute problems in common with a number of deprived coastal towns across the country. It has a large private rented sector and poor housing conditions, which are closely linked to levels of deprivation.

This strategy sets out Thanet District Council's plans for improving the quality of the district's private sector housing stock. It identifies priorities for action and sets out how the Housing Improvement Team intends to deliver the vision of 'decent quality housing' for all of Thanet's residents. [Corporate Plan 2007-2011]

The main driving forces behind this strategy are

1. Improving the quality of housing in the rented sector and assisting owner-occupiers in releasing the potential within their own homes.
2. Tackling fuel poverty linked to high levels of deprivation and low incomes in Thanet.
3. Re-balancing the housing market within key areas such as the renewal area to create more sustainable neighbourhoods and communities.

It is now well documented that poor housing conditions can have an adverse effect on the health, safety and welfare of the occupants. Therefore, this strategy reflects policies relating not only to housing conditions but also health and welfare issues at a national, regional and local level, whilst contributing to the Council's wider Housing Strategy.

2.0 Strategic context

This strategy reflects and has regard to policies at national, regional and local levels.

2.1 National Approach

A number of documents have been consulted in preparing this strategy and the key message is to provide quality and choice for residents through housing in the private sector.

The national agenda suggests that there is a need for a stronger more strategic role across a number of disciplines in order to raise standards in the private sector and to have a significant impact on housing conditions and health.

The aim is to have well managed rented accommodation and a healthy private sector, with everyone entitled to a decent home. [Quality and choice: A decent home for all. The way forward for Housing DETR Dec 2000]

In order to achieve this it is necessary to co-ordinate approaches across both private and public sectors and encourage partnership working. These are important aspects in achieving the wider renewal of housing.

Other driving forces are:

- energy efficiency and a reduction in carbon emissions to tackle climate change,

- fuel poverty and the effect that this has on excess winter deaths each year,
- health inequalities being linked to poor housing conditions and deprivation and the lack of housing choice for people with low incomes and the effect this has on the development of affordable housing in key regions.

It is important that strategies within local government take account of the full strategic context and therefore have regard to national, regional and local agendas. This strategy aims to align policies with wider objectives and work closely with local partners. It identifies the needs of the community and the district and attempts to address these issues. It clearly sets priorities for action based around clients, the nature of the housing stock in the private sector and themes established through links with partner organisations within health and community safety. [Doing more with less. Green paper on energy efficiency June 2005 Directorate general for energy and transport European Commission; Government response to the ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the regions Committee report on Decent Homes July 2004; Implementing new powers for private sector housing renewal – report of the initial survey November 2003 ODPM, Housing Renewal Guidance (consultative doc.) ODPM 2002; Addressing the needs of run-down private sector housing ODPM 2002]

The white paper for health '*Our health, our care, our say; a new direction for community services*' makes specific reference to the way in which housing and housing related care can impact on and contribute to the agenda of the health service. There is an emphasis on community based care looking towards prevention with resources being directed to this area. This will involve contributions from social care, primary care and community services including housing and transport with the primary drivers being the primary care trusts and local authorities. Private sector housing has a role in providing decent accommodation where public sector stock is limited. It is recognised that housing makes a contribution to social well-being and housing conditions have an effect on health inequalities and deprivation.

The introduction of the housing health and safety rating system under the Housing Act 2004 also offers an avenue to allow vulnerable people to live in their own homes for longer by addressing health and safety in the home. It is also intended that rented accommodation is improved to a decent standard to offer choice within this sector.

Specifically in relation to private sector housing, this strategy shows how the Housing Improvement Team intends to improve conditions for vulnerable households in private accommodation; and how it will ensure all tenants, both social and private, get an excellent service from their landlord. It also shows how it can ensure that all communities have a clean, safe and attractive environment; and ensure better use of existing housing stock including empty homes.

In order to achieve this, this strategy links with as many agendas as possible. The Housing Improvement Team will be developed to ensure it provides a valuable service that has a significant impact on health, housing and the environment.

2.2 Regional Approach

The Regional Housing Board brings together the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), the Housing Corporation, South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and English Partnerships. The Regional Housing Board's role is to ensure that high level strategies in the region are consistent and support the development of sustainable communities and the wider objectives of sustainable development. The Regional Housing Board has taken on the responsibility for the preparation of a regional housing strategy. This strategy forms the basis of advice to government on strategic housing issues in the South East. The strategy will be developed to such an extent

that it forms the basis of resource allocation and it is expected that local strategies will feed into this overarching strategy.

The current regional housing strategy was published early in 2006 and identifies key priorities which attract funding and investment in the years 2006-2008. In February 2007 a review of these priorities was carried out. The results are due to be published at some point mid-late 2007 (to be updated once confirmation received).

The focus and main priorities of the regional strategy are broad, with three main objectives. These include:

- building more homes,
- ensuring decent housing is in the reach of people on low incomes and
- improving the quality of new and existing housing stock. [Towards the South East Regional Housing Strategy 2006-2009, Consultation Paper, South East Regional Housing Board].

The Housing Improvement Team contributes significantly to ensuring that decent homes are available in the private sector and that improvements are made to the quality of the existing housing stock.

In addition to the regional housing strategy, this strategy aims to compliment the objectives of the health service. Kent and Medway strategic health authority make reference to housing within the Local Delivery Plan 2003-2006. The Housing Act 2004 allows the Housing Improvement Team to positively influence factors such as the promotion of independent living for older people, and reductions in unscheduled hospital admissions by reducing accidents in the home. It can assist with reducing health inequalities for children and their development by improving substandard housing, which in turn can have an affect on the child's well-being, development and social acceptance. Certain housing conditions have been shown to have a detrimental effect on health such as damp and mould growth exacerbating respiratory problems and excessive cold temperatures leading to falls, heart attacks and strokes. By improving such elements within the living environment some impact can be made on such health conditions.

2.3 Local approach

On a local level this strategy aims to link into and compliment a number of strategies. These include:

- Thanet District Council and East Kent Triangle Homelessness Strategy 2003-2006,
- TDC 2002 Housing Needs & Private Sector Stock Condition Survey Cross analysis August 2003
- TDC Corporate Plan Annex Action Plan 2003/2007
- TDC Corporate Plan 2003/2007
- TDC Draft Corporate Plan 2007-2011
- Thanet Local Strategic Partnership Community Strategy for Thanet 2003

- TDC 2002 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey August 2003
- Crime and Disorder Audit Thanet Crime and Disorder Strategy - From Audit to Action 2005-2008
- TDC Housing Strategy 2006-2010
- Empty Property Strategy July 2003
- TDC Racial Equality Scheme 2004
- TDC Anti-poverty Strategy March 2001
- Renewal Area Delivery Plan
- East Kent Health improvement and modernisation plan
- East Kent Coastal Primary Care Trust Health Profile
- The Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy 2005-2008
- The key aims being to improve choice, supply, quality and accessibility of housing in Thanet, as well as improving the health and safety of the community as a whole.

The Housing Act 2004 provides the Housing Improvement Team with a number of legislative tools and it is the way in which the team envisage using these tools which will impact on each of these local plans and strategies. The focus on health and safety means that intervention by the team can impact on local health targets, fuel poverty, the availability of safe and decent housing, facilitating independent living and ensuring that suitable accommodation is available. By utilising local data captured by the Council and supplied by partner organisations this strategy targets resources to achieve the maximum impact on the aims of each of the strategies mentioned above.

Private sector housing also impacts on the overarching housing strategy. The housing strategy links closely to those aims described in the Regional Housing Boards strategy, described in paragraph 2.2. The main focus is to provide the type and tenure of housing that best meets the main needs identified by the population of Thanet. This heavily relates to the socio-economic make up of the district and social needs of the residents. A large proportion of vulnerable people live in a poor standard of accommodation, this leads to a high dependency on the Council to provide public sector housing, which in turn puts a strain on the council's resources. It is not always possible to build enough new, appropriate houses and often the emphasis is on the improvement of the existing stock and bringing back into use those properties that would otherwise remain vacant or derelict.

3.0 Statutory Obligations

3.1 Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act 2004 received royal assent in November 2004 and replaced the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) on the 6th April 2006.

3.2 Mandatory duties

The Housing Act 2004 provides the means by which the Council can intervene in the private sector. The Act places a number of mandatory duties on the Council which include:

- A duty to review the housing stock
- A duty to intervene where a category 1 hazard exists
- A duty to set up a mandatory licensing scheme
- A duty to issue interim and final management orders when appropriate

In addition to the duties placed by the new Act there are also duties under existing legislation. These include:

- A duty to assist people with disabilities to enable them to live independently within their own home (Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996)
- To report on the standard of energy efficiency throughout the district (Home Energy Conservation Act 1995)
- To adopt a strategy to assist homeowners to maintain and improve their homes. (Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002.)

3.3 Non-mandatory work

In addition to the mandatory work, the council also has an obligation to consider the use of their discretionary powers:

- Power to deal with category 2 hazards
- Power to set up an additional licensing scheme
- Power to set up a selective licensing scheme
- Power to issue empty dwelling management orders.
- Power to issue special management orders

3.4 Enforcement Policy

The Council adopted a private sector housing enforcement policy in March 2007. The policy provides more detail on the enforcement tools available to the Housing Improvement Team for dealing with poor quality housing.

The policy sets out how the team intends to prioritise work, when it is appropriate to take enforcement action and links to procedure document to ensure consistency in our approach to enforcement.

4.0 Thanet District Housing Stock Profile

4.1 Stock size, age, type and tenure

There are approximately 57,330 dwellings in the private sector in Thanet. The following information is based on the findings of the 2002 stock condition survey for Thanet.

- 16.2% are privately rented in Thanet. This is a very high percentage compared to 8% in the South East and 8.9% in England as a whole.
- 70.7% are owner occupied which quite closely mirrors the situation in England but is slightly less than the South East at 77%.
- 7.3% are owned by Housing Associations, which is higher than England at 4.6% and the South East at 6%.
- 935 properties are long term empty. There are approximately 2489 vacant dwellings altogether. (HIP return as at 31st March 2007)

It can be concluded that Thanet has a unique housing make up in that a large proportion of properties are rented and the level of owner-occupation is lower than the rest of the South East. This means that accommodation is often poorly maintained, with responsibility for maintaining properties less likely to be the responsibility of the occupier. In turn this does not generate a sense of pride or a desire to improve living conditions.

32% of the properties in the private sector were built pre1919 and represent the largest group of dwellings. This indicates that a large proportion of the stock is old which will impact on the overall condition of the housing stock. In comparison to the South East figures (21%) and England as a whole (23%), Thanet has a substantial number of older properties.

Thanet also has a large number of converted blocks of flats at 11% of the stock, whilst the South East has an average of 6% and England overall only 4.3%.

4.2 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

The house condition survey shows that there are 2032 HMOs of different types throughout the district. This information is based on categories of HMO as defined by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. Since the introduction of the Housing Act 2004 the definition has been revised and a new definition introduced. The new definition can be found in appendix A. It is not possible to fully extrapolate the information in the house condition survey into the new definition but the following information is an estimation of the percentage of each type of HMO found in the district.

Standard test	10.6%
Self contained flat test	unknown
Converted building test	9.8%

Certain converted blocks of flats 79.6%

These percentages are approximate from the detail provided in the 2002 survey. It should be borne in mind that this sector of housing is fluid and situations change regularly. The data was also collected without knowledge of the new definition. The next house condition survey will provide a far more accurate view.

4.3 Licensing of HMOs

It is estimated that 220 HMOs in the district will need a licence under the mandatory HMO licensing scheme.

The licensing scheme is now in operation and so far 40 properties have been successfully licensed. Through this strategy areas will be identified for the Housing Improvement Team to target in order to identify the remaining HMOs that are predicted to exist across the district.

The Enforcement policy provides more detail on the scope and procedures involved in licensing HMOs.

Following the successful implementation of the mandatory scheme the Council are now researching the possibility of declaring either an additional or selective licensing scheme in the Renewal Area. An additional scheme allows the council to identify a specific area and type of HMO to be licensed over an above the mandatory scheme. A selective licensing can be used in areas of low housing demand and/or where there are extensive issues with anti-social behaviour. This scheme requires all rented accommodation to be licensed. In both cases permission must be sought from the Secretary of State to declare these schemes.

4.4 Stock condition

Thanet District Council's last stock condition survey was carried out in 2002 and focused on the fitness standard defined in the 1985 Housing Act (as amended). However, the unfitness criteria no longer exist and properties are now judged on whether there is a category one or a category two hazard present. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System was introduced by the Housing Act 2004 and is the new assessment procedure for measuring the condition of the housing stock. As a result, the information relating to the number of properties with hazards and the type of hazard present is limited and some assumptions have been made as a result of the fitness information that was gathered.

It is predicted that 36% of dwellings will have at least one or more serious hazards in the property where intervention by the Council may be necessary.

Due to the inaccuracies of the data collection and extrapolation process it is likely that this figure underestimates the actual number of properties in the private sector that have at least one serious hazard.

The next house condition survey, which is due in 2008, will give a much better indication of the true situation relating to hazards. It may then be necessary to review this strategy at that time.

The survey also gives indications of the costs per property to bring them into reasonable repair. It has been assumed that this information in effect would have the result of reducing all category one and two hazards. It is predicted that the majority of properties can be

repaired for up to £5000 per dwelling however around 18.5% of properties will need between £5,000-£15,000+. The rented sector needs the highest level of investment with repair costs of up to £42.1 million.

4.5 Decent homes

The decent homes standard is a minimum standard introduced by the Government for public sector housing. It has now been implemented as a public sector agreement (PSA) target to include properties within the private sector.

The standard measures the property against 4 criteria:

- Free from category 1 hazards
- In reasonable repair
- Has reasonably modern facilities such as bathrooms and kitchens
- Offers adequate thermal comfort

The house condition survey estimates that 41.2% of dwellings in the private sector are non-decent. This represents 23,619 properties. It is estimated that 12,146 of these properties are occupied by a member of the vulnerable group, this accounts for around 21% of the total dwellings in the private sector.

In order to achieve the governments PSA7 target of ensuring that 70% of homes are decent by 2010 for vulnerable households, this will mean improving approx. 3000 dwellings. Again this information has been based on data collected relating to the fitness standard and therefore this may not provide an accurate view of the number of dwellings that are currently non-decent.

4.6 Energy efficiency

The condition survey suggests that of the properties in Thanet that have cavity walls, 62.9% do not have cavity wall insulation. Although not the only factor to affect the efficiency of a dwelling this goes some way to account for the estimated mean SAP value (standard assessment procedure) for Thanet being only 43. In the house condition survey this figure has been compared to English house condition survey results of 1996 where the mean for the South East was 46.

This figure has improved over the past couple of years to give the latest reported SAP for rented accommodation as 49 and owner-occupied dwellings as 54. The average SAP for Thanet is now 54.

Around 11% of private sector dwellings have a SAP of less than 35. Similar data collection has been carried out across parts of the South-east where the average is 8%. SAP 35 is considered significant as it is used as an indication that a household is in fuel poverty and has a category one hazard for excess cold. [December 2006 HIP figures, CEN].

The SAP rating is a government- specified energy rating for dwellings. The lower the number, the worse the energy efficiency of the dwelling.

The SAP rating is dependant on a range of factors which include:

- Thermal insulation

- Efficiency and control of heating
- Ventilation
- Solar gain
- The price of fuels used for heating and water

It is also apparent from the survey that poor thermal comfort and energy efficiency measures are the main reasons for dwellings to be non-decent with 58% of properties failing to meet this part of the standard.

5.0 Key Partners and Priorities

The Housing Improvement Team has worked closely with a number of partners to identify the issues and priorities that are unique to Thanet. Not only does the work of the Housing Improvement Team compliment the aims of the Council as a whole, but it also feeds into the aims of the following partners:

- Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust (PCT),
- Creative Environmental Networks and the Kent Energy Centre
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service,
- Thanet Community Safety Partnership and the Police
- Social Services
- Home Improvement Agency

5.1 Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust.

It is now widely recognised that poor housing conditions can have a detrimental effect on the health of the occupiers. In particular the NHS and PCTs have specific areas for priority, which include reducing the number of admissions to hospital for the following reasons:

- Falls in the home – in the years 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 on average around 179 over 75 year-olds in Thanet are admitted to hospital each year from falls in the home. This can be associated with falls on the stairs, on uneven surfaces, and in the bath. Around 57% of all falls that result in hospitalisation occur in the home
- Asthma and other respiratory problems –children under the age of 14 are more susceptible to respiratory infections. A major cause of this is exposure to damp, mould growth and house dust mites. Out of all the emergency admissions to hospital in Thanet between 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 5% were admissions of under 16's with respiratory problems.
- Gastro-enteritis – out of all the admissions to hospital in Thanet between 2003-2006 6.5% were children under the age of 16 admitted with gastro-enteritis, which is often associated with food poisoning. It has been identified that most food poisoning occurs in the home and therefore there is currently a drive on food safety and hygiene within the home.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Assist in the reduction of hospital admissions relating to falls in the home, asthma and other respiratory related illnesses and gastro-enteritis.
- Increase awareness of home safety
- Enable people to remain in their own homes safely for longer

Cross-sector Actions:

- By using the Housing Act 2004 and the Housing Health and Safety Rating system and the evidence supplied by the PCT, key hazards should be identified in order to target and prioritise resources. The following hazards have been identified as **Target Hazards** for Thanet district:
 - Damp and mould growth
 - Food Safety
 - Personal Hygiene, sanitation and drainage
 - Falling on level surfaces
 - Falls on stairs
- Provide advice and produce literature/run campaigns to promote home safety
- Offer financial assistance packages to vulnerable people to improve safety where possible such as a 'home safety loan'.
- Utilise housing improvement team resources to target areas and vulnerable groups
- Target rented accommodation
- Support and develop the handy person service in partnership with the PCT and home improvement agency.

5.2 Creative Environmental Networks and the Kent Energy Centre

Creative Environmental Networks (CEN) is the umbrella organisation who runs the Energy Centre and advice service for Kent. As a group they commission research and promotional activity in an attempt to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in dwellings as well as trying to tackle issues such as fuel poverty.

Fuel poverty is currently high on the agenda due to the number of excess winter deaths in the UK each year. During the period of 1997-2002 there has been an average of 124 excess winter deaths each year in Thanet alone. In some winters this has risen to around 190 deaths. [Kent Health and affordable warmth strategy 2005-2008]

Compared to the rest of Kent, Thanet has the highest percentage of households in fuel poverty (approx.9.5%). It also has the highest percentage of its population on benefits (8.9%), of people with a long term limiting illness (21.7%) and of households with at least one person resident who is of pensionable age (39.6%). [Kent Health and affordable warmth strategy 2005-2008]

As a result Thanet has a high proportion of vulnerable residents who are living in properties that are inefficient and fail to meet the thermal comfort criteria set out in the decent homes standard.

It is widely known that the main reason for failing the decent homes standard is poor thermal comfort. Within Thanet 58% of properties are non-decent because of this.

Due to the rising significance of this issue and the particular concerns within Thanet, Thanet District Council has signed up to the Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy 2005 – 2008. As a result Thanet has shown a commitment to reducing fuel poverty within the area.

With regards to referrals for existing schemes such as Warmfront grants on average are 500 grants each year. The measures provided range from low energy light bulbs to full central heating systems. Although not the lowest grant take up rate, many local authorities run alternative 'in-house' schemes to substitute the referrals to Warmfront. Since 2006, regional housing board funding has been allocated to this area and has been utilised to develop schemes and initiatives centred on fuel poverty issues. Since these schemes have been in

place, there has been a marked improvement and positive progress is expected to continue as a result.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Increase awareness of fuel poverty
- Increase take up of Warmfront grants
- Reduce number of households in fuel poverty
- Reduce number of excess winter deaths
- Reduce CO₂ emissions.

Cross-sector Actions:

- Continue to support the Kent Energy Centre and the campaigns they are involved with
- Support the Coldbusters scheme to assist vulnerable people to apply for grant and assistance to install heating and insulation measures.
- Promote the Warmfront scheme through Coldbusters and through local information.
- Using the housing health and safety rating system, identify excess cold as a key target hazard.
- Increase awareness by working with key local community groups.
- With support from Creative Environmental Networks map data for the district and identify areas of the district to target.
- Consider signing up to the prescribing warmth scheme.
- Consider holding a 'green event' to raise awareness.
- Investigate ways to target the rented sector
- Promote sustainable energy solutions wherever possible

5.3 Kent Fire and Rescue.

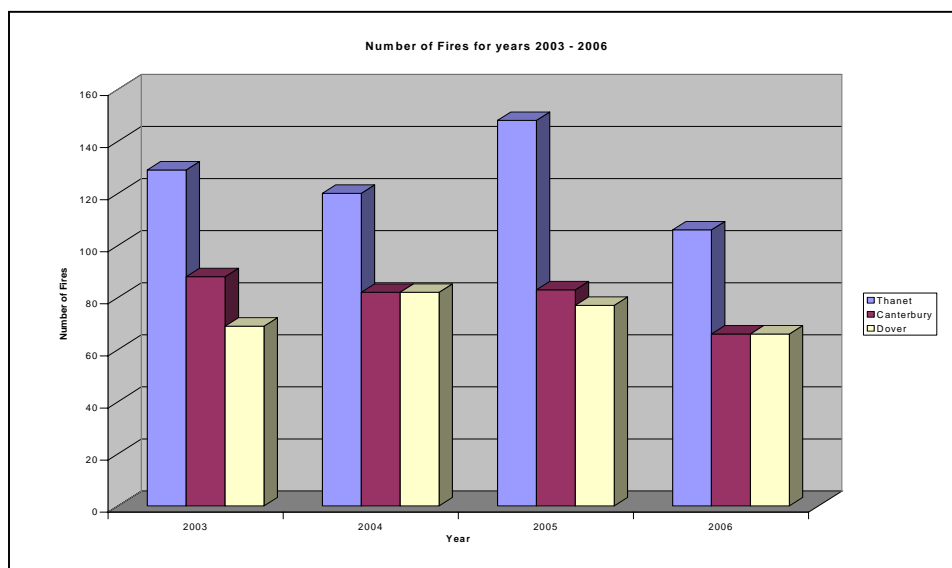
The fire service has also provided information on the key areas within Thanet where there is a higher concentration of fires. 2003 and 2004 figures show that Thanet had 249 fires over the two years and 38 people either suffered injury or fatality. Compared to Thanet's neighbouring authorities Dover (151 fires, 20 casualties) and Canterbury (170 fires, 29 casualties) the likelihood of a fire starting and someone coming to harm in Thanet is very high. By crudely comparing the information for Thanet to the data provided in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Operating Guidance, the figures indicate that domestic fires are ten times more likely in Thanet than England as a whole.

As a result of this information, fire safety in Thanet is considered to be a high priority and one of the key points to consider is that a large proportion of these fires (21%) are started deliberately (arson).

A number of fires have been recorded in the ward of Cliftonville west and some of the surrounding wards. In the years 2003 and 2004, 26% and 30% respectively of all fires occurred in Cliftonville west. EastCliffe and central Harbour wards in Ramsgate had 13% of all fires in both years.

Figure 4

Figure 4 gives a visual representation of the fires in Thanet compared to neighbouring authorities 2003 and 2004 [Kent Fire and Rescue]



This information is vital in targeting the Housing Improvement Team's work and shows that fire safety is still an issue within Thanet. The fire brigade is also keen to target areas where there are high levels of emergency callouts in order to assist with their efficiency and to save lives.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Reduce number of casualties from fires
- Reduce number of fires in HMOs and other high risk properties
- Increase awareness of fire safety in the home

Cross-sector Actions:

- Raise awareness of fire safety in the home with the fire service by providing advice
- Promote and/or procure equipment to be given out to qualifying vulnerable households.
- Target rented accommodation, in particular houses in multiple occupation and properties in areas where there are high incidences of fire.
- Using the housing health and safety rating system identify the hazard of Fire as a key target hazard.

5.4 Police and Thanet Community Safety Partnership.

There has been a general rise in the number of burglaries committed in Thanet over the past three years according to the data provided by the community safety partnership.

In 2003-2004 there was an 8% increase in offences compared to the national figures which show an 8% decrease overall.

The Police have identified security and domestic burglary as an area that requires action in Thanet in order to reduce this rising trend.

The data suggests that those wards with the highest percentage of rented accommodation have the most significant problem. These include Cliftonville West, Margate Central, Newington and

Dane Valley. The 'Thanet Crime and Disorder Audit 2004' suggests that poor security measures to protect the property may be one of the main contributing factors.

Although Thanet is not in itself considered to be a 'high crime area' in the same way as some of the bigger inner city areas, crime and the fear of crime are still important considerations in Thanet. The figures suggest that there is a rising trend with regards to domestic burglary and along with the rise in other key crime statistics; this stimulates the perception that this area is becoming less safe. For this reason, security and crime reduction are a high priority.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Reduce number of domestic burglaries
- Target key areas of high crime to improve security measures
- Increase awareness of security in the home

Cross-sector Actions:

- Use the data provided to target areas with home safety advice and home security measures.
- Look at the procurement of equipment with the police to improve security for eligible households
- Provide advice and develop campaigns with the police to raise awareness.
- Use the housing health and safety rating system to make 'entry by intruders' as target hazard for action and enforcement.
- Enhance and promote home safe schemes in conjunction with the home improvement agency and Kent County Council for the elderly and vulnerable.
- Support and advise neighbourhood watch schemes.

5.5 Landlords and Landlord associations

Historically there has been limited communication between the council and landlord groups across the district. Although the Council has hosted a number of landlord forums the relationship has not been developed.

The Housing Improvement Team has attempted to rectify this by consulting and liaising with known landlords in the area and working more closely with landlord associations.

As a result, it is intended to develop a representative board of landlords who will help to inform the Housing Improvement Team on the best way to work with landlords, the content of landlord forums, how best to update on changes in legislation and council policies, and the means by which to consult on the service that is provided.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Improve the working relationship between the Council and Landlord groups
- Target resources to poorly performing landlords
- Provide incentives and rewards for good landlords
- Improve the quality of privately rented accommodation
- Improve communication of changes in council policies and legislation

Cross-sector Actions:

- Re-establish landlord forums and information events
- Produce information packs with relevant information
- Consider the introduction of an accreditation scheme
- Establish a landlord board of volunteers to work closely with the council
- Consult with landlords on key documents and changes to procedures, service delivery and standards etc

5.6 Social Services

Social services play an important role in assessing and supporting people in the community. They visit people within their own homes and often provide an important link to vulnerable members of the community. In particular the Housing improvement Team work closely with the Occupational Therapy Bureau and Care workers. The aim of social services is to provide a comprehensive care package to enable vulnerable and disabled people to live independently within their own home. As a result their input is crucial as part of the private sector housing strategy.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Enable elderly, vulnerable and disabled people to live independently

Cross-sector Actions:

- Streamline DFG Process working with HIA and OTs
- Promote home safety and provide advice and assistance where possible
- Promote the use of House proud to assist those unable to get grant or who have a contribution.
- Develop assistance packages over and above the mandatory DFG
- Look at the procurement of services/equipment for minor adaptations

5.6 Home Improvement Agency

The Home Improvement Agency in Thanet is run by In-touch who are part of the Hyde housing group. They work very closely with the Housing Improvement Team in delivering services to vulnerable households. They also provide a handy person service, and support for grant applicants. Their aim is to provide a comprehensive list of services to vulnerable people to assist them in living independently for longer in their own home. In Thanet there is a large proportion of the population who are elderly, disabled and on benefits. Therefore this service is invaluable in providing assistance relating to housing repair and adaptation. In 2006/07 in-touch assisted the Housing Improvement Team in delivering heating and insulation grants to vulnerable people in the district. Their expertise in dealing with people has contributed to the success of this scheme.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Support vulnerable people in applying for Council services such as benefits, grants and loans
- Providing a handy person service to elderly people.
- Support vulnerable people in accessing other services and assistance

Cross-sector Actions:

- Continue to work closely with HIA and develop relationship through joint working and training programmes

- Continue to support handy person service and investigate the potential to expand the service
- Promote the services of the HIA to key groups
- Investigate the potential for providing a 'home maintenance advice' service through the HIA.

6.0 Our Priorities

6.1 Corporate Plan

Not only does this strategy impact on the work of external partners, it is sympathetic to the objectives of other departments within Thanet District Council. In particular, the work of the Housing Improvement Team has strong links with the objectives of the corporate plan and community strategy.

In the Corporate plan the Housing Improvement Team plays a part in most of the areas identified. Key themes such as improving the look, cleanliness, vitality and safety of Thanet street scene particularly in town centres and coastal areas, increasing the extent to which improving economic prosperity benefits the whole of Thanet by focusing regeneration efforts in key wards, and housing need and quality are all complimented by this strategy. The draft corporate plan for 2007-2011 makes housing one of the six corporate priorities and this private sector housing strategy identifies the areas the Housing Improvement Team, whilst working closely with other partner organisations, will deliver the vision of 'Decent Quality Housing'.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Facilitate the provision of decent quality housing
- Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- Facilitate renewal, regeneration and economic progression
- Target key areas of the district as identified through local data and evidence

Cross-sector Actions:

- Develop schemes with the Police to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour, through advice, procurement of equipment, financial assistance and enforcement.
- Implement mandatory HMO licensing
- Investigate the feasibility of selective or additional licensing in key areas such as the Renewal area
- Research and develop as appropriate landlord accreditation schemes
- Review the financial assistance policy to assist in improving housing and to encourage investment into the area
- Work closely with the Renewal area team to assist in achieving their targets
- Review enforcement procedures to ensure tools are being used effectively to improve housing conditions

6.2 Renewal Area

The Housing Improvement Team also work closely with the Renewal Area Team. Initiatives and actions taken by the Housing Improvement Team must have regard to and positively impact on the aims of this area.

Improving the housing conditions and enhancing the general appearance of this area is imperative to the success of regeneration. The renewal area was declared in May 2005 due to the number and magnitude of issues within this relatively small area.

There is a high proportion of rented accommodation, which is often occupied by the most vulnerable members of the community and is generally in the worst state of disrepair. There is a high crime rate, a high level of deprivation, and a large proportion of the population is on benefits, out of work or have a disability.

The transient nature of the population in this area means that there is little pride in the area from those who are not permanent residents, and this has led to continued decline.

The Renewal Area Team has worked hard in the area since it was declared and the key objectives are to improve the quality of the accommodation and re-balance the housing market.

There are a number of other key objectives of other partners, such as crime, health, fire safety, and a high percentage of households in fuel poverty, all of which are focused within this area. The concentration of issues, the high level of rented accommodation and the deprivation mean this is a priority.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Improve housing conditions within the Renewal area
- Engage with the community and rented sector
- Re-enforce partnership working within the area
- Encourage private sector investment

Actions:

- Pilot schemes and initiatives within the renewal area
- Develop a multi-agency referral form through the joint policy and planning board for East Kent and pilot within the renewal area.
- Target resources to key roads and problem addresses identified by partner organisations.

6.3 Empty Properties

Thanet has around 2500 empty properties, 935 have been empty long term and are in varying states of repair including in a derelict state. The Housing Improvement Team has a dedicated empty property officer who facilitates and supports owners of empty dwellings to bring them back into use. There is currently a separate strategy for empty properties which is due to be reviewed in 2007/2008. The empty property officer works closely with departments across the Council and is supported by Kent County Council and the 'No use empty' campaign. There is also a close working relationship between Thanet and other local authorities across Kent and Sussex with similar issues. The empty property officer plays an important role in the strategic identification of appropriate sites for development with registered social landlords and other mixed-use development that leads to the regeneration of the area.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Facilitate the reduction in the number of vacant properties in the district.
- Ensure developments, and improved properties provide quality, decent accommodation
- Facilitate the provision of mixed tenure and mixed use property to assist in the regeneration of the area
- Assist in the provision of housing to meet local housing need

Cross-sector Actions:

- Housing Improvement Team empty property officer to maintain and develop links with internal and external partners in order to facilitate the provision of quality, decent housing that meets local need.
- Offering advice and expertise where necessary and ensuring links with appropriate partners in order to access expertise when required
- Develop assistance packages for owners of empty properties to bring them back into use.
- Identify key sites for development

6.4 Fuel Poverty and Carbon Reduction

Thanet as a whole has a high percentage of households in fuel poverty (see 5.2). The Council is committed to reducing the number of households in fuel poverty and reducing the carbon emissions of the district as a whole.

Under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1996 the council is required to report annually on its progress towards carbon reduction across the district. A survey carried out in December 2006 identified the most significant percentage improvement since reporting began in 1996.

Although this is a step in the right direction, the council currently has no targets set for carbon reduction and fuel poverty reduction and therefore this improvement is not as a result of a strategic approach.

This weakness has now been identified and the action plan takes account of the need to increase activity in this area.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Reduce carbon emissions across the district
- Reduce the number of households in fuel poverty
- Increase awareness of fuel poverty
- Increase awareness of carbon footprints and carbon reduction targets

Cross-sector Actions:

- Develop an HECA statement with aims and objectives for carbon reduction
- Raise awareness through events, and information leaflets across the district
- Set targets and an action plan to achieve a reduction in fuel poverty and carbon emissions
- Promote financial assistance towards efficient heating
- Provide information/advice on home energy certificates

6.5 Homelessness

The Thanet District Council and East Kent Triangle Homelessness strategy 2003-2007 has a number of aims, two of which the Housing Improvement Team should have regard to. The first is to reduce the incidence of homelessness through prevention and the second is to maximise the housing options and choices for homeless households. The Housing Improvement Team can compliment these aims by ensuring that the enforcement policy has regard to these issues and considers the impact of the action it takes on factors such as social exclusion and the loss of units of accommodation. By helping to improve the quality of housing in the private sector the team can help to increase the availability of suitable housing.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Prevent unnecessary homelessness by improving the quality of privately rented housing.

Cross-sector Actions:

- Work closely with the homelessness team where homelessness could be a result of enforcement action taken by the Housing Improvement Team.
- Regulate temporary accommodation through licensing and accreditation schemes.

6.6 Equal opportunity and diversity

Regard should also be had to strategies such as Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities and Human Rights. These agendas are vital when considering targeted action and enforcement.

It may be necessary to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on the services provided by the Housing Improvement Team and the implications this strategy and associated policies may have.

Although the EIA has not yet been carried out, regard has been had to equity and equality throughout this document. The majority of the work carried out by the Housing Improvement Team is targeted at vulnerable people and the diverse community through enforcement action, advice, licensing schemes, financial assistance and disabled facilities grants.

The overall aim of the Housing Improvement Team is to improve the quality of housing in the private sector. In conjunction with the enforcement policy, and the financial assistance policy, the strategy provides the mechanism by which resources can be directed towards the poorest housing conditions and those most in need.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Ensure the service provided by the housing improvement team meets the diverse needs of the community.

Cross-sector Actions:

- Carry out an equality impact assessment for the services provided by the housing improvement team.

6.7 Housing Benefit

The benefits team are responsible not only for processing of applications for benefit but also to investigate fraud. They often make visits to properties and provide a valuable opportunity

to access accommodation. By being aware of each other's responsibilities it may be possible to establish better links and sharing of information.

Key Strategic Aims:

- Establish a working protocol for the sharing of information in particular in identifying fraud, identifying poor housing conditions, identifying HMOs, and where rent repayments orders are required.

Cross-sector Actions:

- Develop a working protocol with benefits for information exchange and procedures to deal with rent repayment orders, overcrowding and poor housing conditions.
- Develop a scheme to provide incentives for landlords to improve accommodation and for tenants to take more responsibility.
- Develop procedure for Rent Repayment Orders

7.0 Housing Improvement Team Action Plan

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
1.0 Decent, Quality Housing					
1.1 Identify non-decent housing	Identify number of non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households through Stock condition survey	Specific resources required to carry out stock condition survey. Tendering process required to employ appropriate consultants. £100,000	East Kent Triangle Housing strategy and development	Corporate plan Service plan	Commission stock survey condition February 2008
	Identify number of properties with category 1 hazards through stock condition survey	Specific resources required to carry out stock condition survey. Tendering process required to employ appropriate consultants.	East Kent Triangle Housing strategy and development	Corporate Plan Service Plan	Commission stock survey condition February 2008

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
1.2 Identify 'Target Hazards' based on evidence	Utilise and update data collected from stock condition survey, and information provided by PCT, fire authority, police, CEN, along with local data collection by council through complaints and service requests, to inform 'target hazards' for priority.	Specific resources required to carry out stock condition survey. Tendering process required to employ appropriate consultants. Utilise existing resources	East Kent Primary Care Trust Home improvement agency Fire Service CEN Police Improvement and Performance		Collect data from partners on an annual basis. Investigate data modelling to be incorporated within stock condition survey February 2008 Update stock condition survey data on an annual basis Update target hazards on an annual basis 07/08 Following hazards have been identified from the data collected so far: Damp and mould Excess cold Fire Entry by intruders Falls in the home Food safety and personal hygiene

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
1.3 Identify target areas for action relating to each of the target hazards.	Properties identified through: Complaints By age of population By Ward, By type of property By local data collection	Utilise existing resources	East Kent Primary Care Trust Home improvement agency Fire Service Police CEN Renewal Area Team		Map existing data on GIS system by April 2008 Map data on a quarterly basis
	Map all data collected in order to identify target areas and monitor progress	Utilise existing resources			Map existing data on GIS system by April 2008 Update data on a regular basis
1.4 Improve quality of private sector housing	Research and develop the following policies: Housing/ Financial Assistance policy Private Sector Enforcement policy	Utilise existing resources Utilise existing resources			Produce revised policy by April 2008 Produce policy by June 2007

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Produce and review procedure documents for all aspects of the service	Utilise existing resources			Review current procedures and identify gaps January 2008 Produce procedure documents August 2008
	Develop service plan to implement service delivery	Utilise existing resources		Corporate Plan	Develop service plan year on year to compliment strategy
	Develop challenging team targets	Utilise existing resources		Corporate plan - targets 100 homes each year, Team target to exceed this. Service plan	07/08 100 homes made decent Progress so far 2007/08 September 74 made decent. 08/09 120 homes made decent 09/10 140 homes made decent 10/11 160 homes made decent

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Take enforcement action in relation to category one hazards			Corporate plan Service plan	07/08 50 Enforcement actions/intervention 08/09 60 Enforcement actions/intervention 09/10 65 Enforcement actions/intervention 10/11 70 Enforcement actions/intervention
1.5 Licence houses in multiple occupation	Identify HMOs that require a mandatory licence	Utilise existing resources	Fire Service Police Renewal Area Team		Licence 50 HMOs by March 2008 Identify 20 properties per year to be licensed
	Take enforcement action where HMOs do not licence or breach licence conditions	Utilise existing resources	Fire Service Police Renewal Area Team		07/08 35 Enforcement actions/intervention 08/09 40 Enforcement actions/intervention 09/10 45 Enforcement actions/intervention 10/11 50 Enforcement actions/intervention

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Inspect licensed HMOs for category 1 hazards	Utilise existing resources			Inspect all within 2 years of licence being issued. 07/08 Inspect 40% 08/09 Inspect 45% 09/10 Inspect 50% 10/11 Inspect 55%
	Research feasibility of landlord accreditation schemes	Utilise existing resources	Stakeholder groups such as landlords Fire Service Police Renewal Area Team		Framework and Report to cabinet by March 2008
	Research feasibility of additional or selective licensing schemes particularly in the renewal area	Utilise existing resources	Stakeholder groups such as landlords Fire Service Police Renewal Area Team		Proposals put forward by March 2008 Apply to Secretary of State by March 2010
	Management orders			East Kent Triangle aims /objectives	Develop management order procedures in partnership with RSL and East Kent authorities by August 2008

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
2.0 Renewal Area					
2.1 Target action in the renewal area	Pilot multi agency referral process within the renewal area	Utilise existing resources	E&W Kent JPPB (Housing) fuel poverty sub-group Renewal area team East Kent Primary Care Trust Home improvement agency Fire Service Police CEN	Corporate plan Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan Service plan	Pilot to be in place by December 2007 Pilot for 3 months
	Identify key high profile streets for intensive action	Utilise existing resources	Renewal area team	Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan Corporate Plan	Mapping of data to identify streets for action by March 2008 Produce action plan for targeting sites June 2008
	Identify key sites and derelict/empty properties for development	Utilise existing resources	Renewal area team	Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan	Mapping of data to identify sites for action by March 2008 Produce action plan for targeting streets June 2008

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Target housing enforcement activity within the renewal area	Utilise existing resources		Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan	07/08 15 Enforcement actions/intervention 08/09 20 Enforcement actions/intervention 09/10 23 Enforcement actions/intervention 10/11 25 Enforcement actions/intervention
	Target security and fire safety in renewal area	Utilise existing resources	Police Fire authority Renewal area team	Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan	07/08 Improve fire safety and security to 20 properties 08/09 Improve fire safety and security to 25 properties 09/10 Improve fire safety and security to 30 properties 10/11 Improve fire safety and security to 35 properties

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Target HMOs and HMO licensing in Renewal area	Utilise existing resources	Police Fire authority Renewal area team	Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan Service Plan	07/08 24 Enforcement actions/intervention 08/09 27 Enforcement actions/intervention 09/10 30 Enforcement actions/intervention 10/11 33 Enforcement actions/intervention
	Identify HMOs in the renewal area to be licensed		Renewal area team Police Fire service	Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan Service Plan	All HMOs known to the team as of August 2007 to be licensed by March 2008. 07/08 Licence 70% of newly identified HMOs 08/09 Licence 75% of newly identified HMOs 09/10 Licence 80% of newly identified HMOs 10/11 Licence 85% of newly identified HMOs

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Inspect Licensed HMOs for category 1 hazards in the renewal area		Renewal area team	Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan Service Plan	Inspect all within 2 years of licence being issued. 07/08 Inspect 40% 08/09 Inspect 45% 09/10 Inspect 50% 10/11 Inspect 55%
	Investigate feasibility of selective or additional HMO licensing	Utilise existing resources	Police Fire authority Renewal area team	Service Plan Corporate plan Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan	Proposals put forward by March 2008 Apply to Secretary of State by March 2010
	Research feasibility of landlord accreditation schemes for HMOs in Renewal area	Utilise existing resources	Police Fire authority Renewal area team	Service Plan Corporate plan Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan	Framework and Report to cabinet by March 2008

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
3.0 Energy Efficiency					
3.1 Improve the overall energy efficiency of dwellings in the private sector	Continue to support and promote Kent Energy Centre and EAGA activities	Existing resources Further resources required in order to expand this service	CEN EAGA	Service Plan Corporate plan	Promote schemes to improve properties 07/08 improve 624 properties 08/09 improve 675 properties 09/10 improve 750 properties 10/11 improve 775 properties
	Improve take up of Warm front grants through promotion of scheme		EAGA CEN	Service Plan Corporate plan	Promote scheme to increase take-up 07/08 500 grants 08/09 525 grants 09/10 550 grants 10/11 575 grants
	Develop local initiatives to encourage home owners to improve the efficiency of their homes	RHB funding	CEN East Kent Triangle	Service plan	Bid to RHB for funding by October 2007
	Continue to gather data to report on HECA	Existing resources	CEN	Corporate plan Service plan	Map existing data by March 2008 Report to DEFRA on an annual basis

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
3.2 Reduce the number of households in fuel poverty	Continue to contribute to Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy	Utilise existing resources	CEN KHAWS group	Corporate plan Service plan Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy	Reduce percentage of households in fuel poverty from 6.6% to 07/08 6.4% 08/09 6.2% 09/10 6.0% 10/11 5.8%
	Reduce percentage of households in fuel poverty in the renewal area.	Utilise existing resources	CEN KHAWS group	Corporate plan Service plan Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy	Reduce percentage of households in fuel poverty in Renewal area from 8.0% to 07/08 7.8% 08/09 7.6% 09/10 7.4% 10/11 7.2%
4.0 Empty Properties					
4.1 Reduce the number of long term empty properties and derelict sites in the district	Review empty property strategy	Utilise existing resources		Corporate Plan	Produce revised strategy either independently or as part of PSH strategy by March 2008

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Target activities to the renewal area by identifying key sites and properties	Utilise existing resources Lever in funding from partners Investigate other sources of funding	Renewal Area team Kent County Council	Service Plan Corporate plan Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan	07/08 bring back to use 35 properties 08/09 bring back to use 36 properties 09/10 bring back to use 37 properties 10/11 bring back to use 38 properties
	Utilise data to identify other target areas	Utilise existing resources Lever in funding from partners Investigate other sources of funding	Kent County Council	Service Plan Corporate plan Housing Renewal Area Delivery Plan	Map current information by March 2008 Overall bring back to use (inclusive of renewal area) 07/08 86 08/09 88 09/10 90 10/11 92
5.0 Disabled Adaptations					
5.1 Facilitate adaptations to dwellings in the private sector for disabled people	Continue to deliver the mandatory disabled facilities grant programme (DFG)	Utilise existing resources	THIA Social services	Service Plan Corporate plan	0 applications to be waiting more than 6 moths for approval 07/08.

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Introduce a new priority system for referrals for DFG	Utilise existing resources	THIA Social services		New system introduced February 2007 Review system and keep clients on waiting list informed every 6 months by October 2007
	Streamline delivery process of DFGs	Utilise existing resources	THIA Social services		Write procedures for process by December 2007
	Support 'Houseproud' – loan service for vulnerable and disabled people	Utilise existing resources	THIA Social services		07/08 Refer 5 cases to houseproud 08/09 Refer 7 cases to houseproud 09/10 Refer 9 cases to houseproud 10/11 Refer 11 cases to houseproud

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
6.0 Financial assistance					
6.1 Develop financial assistance packages to assist in delivering activities in 1.1-1.5	Investigate loan packages and other forms of assistance for owner-occupiers, tenants, landlords	RHB funding Utilise existing resources Lever in funding from partners Investigate other sources of funding	KCC EKT Renewal Area Team THIA PCT CEN	East Kent Triangle aims /objectives	Lead on bid to RHB for funding for 2008-2011 Bid to be submitted by 12 th October 2007 Once funding confirmed (due February 2008) set targets for funding within partnership
7.0 Advice services					
7.1 Develop a range of information leaflets and packs	Gather information from partners Produce information pack for different service users ie tenants, landlords, owner-occupiers.	Utilise existing resources Lever in funding from partners Investigate other sources of funding	EKT PCT Fire service Police Council departments Stakeholder groups such as landlords Age concern, supporting people		Identify leaflets required and produce advice leaflets by March 2008

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
7.2 Organise information events for different service users	<p>Identify target groups</p> <p>Plan event tailored to the target group</p> <p>Identify common themes across partners and neighbouring authorities.</p>	<p>Utilise existing resources</p> <p>Lever in funding from partners</p> <p>Investigate other sources of funding</p>	<p>EKT</p> <p>PCT</p> <p>Fire service</p> <p>Police</p> <p>Council departments</p> <p>Stakeholder groups such as landlords Age concern, supporting people</p>		<p>Green road show April 2008</p> <p>Landlord event December 2007</p> <p>Hold landlord event every 6 months</p>
8.0 Service quality and performance					
8.1 Improve Services and delivery	Carry out equality impact assessment	Utilise existing resources	Stakeholder groups		<p>Complete EIAs for the following policies and strategies</p> <p>Enforcement policy by March 2008</p> <p>Service standards by June 2008</p> <p>PSH Strategy by March 2008</p> <p>Housing financial assistance policy June 2008</p> <p>Empty properties strategy June 2008</p>

Activity	Action	Resources required	Partners	Strategic Context	Targets and Review date
	Assess service quality through customer satisfaction questionnaires	Utilise existing resources	Stakeholder groups		Produce questionnaires by November 2008 Send out questionnaires to target groups January 2008 Map data March 2008
	Assess the housing improvement team service against Key line of enquiry 9 (KLOE)	Utilise existing resources	Stakeholder groups		Self assessment October 2007 Action plan for improvements November 2007
	Develop service standards				Publish service standards by September 2007 Now due January 2008
	Develop performance monitoring and evaluation systems	Utilise existing resources	Stakeholder groups		System to be developed by March 2008 Identify key indicators, outcomes and outputs for all areas of the service by August 2008

8.0 Conclusion

The Housing Improvement Team plays a vital role in drawing together a number of strands that ultimately lead to a healthier, more sustainable community. This strategy is designed to provide vision and focus for the team, the council and partner organisations.

To achieve the actions set out in this strategy will be resource intensive, and challenging. They must be kept under regular review as the priorities for the area change and develop. This strategy is for a four year period and as a minimum should be reviewed annually.

Appendices

- Appendix A Definition of an HMO
- Appendix B Empty Property Strategy July 2003
- Appendix C Financial assistance policy – Private Sector Housing June 2003
- Appendix D Financial Resources from Community Service Plan 2007/2008
- Appendix E Consultation

Appendix A Definition of an HMO

The 2004 Act also introduces a new definition of an HMO. There are four categories or tests for an HMO:

- the standard test,
- the self-contained flat test,
- the converted building test and,
- certain converted blocks of flats.

The standard test:

Any building which consists of one or more units of accommodation which are not self-contained and where two or more households must share one or more basic amenities, or where the accommodation is lacking basic amenities.

The self-contained flat test:

Any part of a building which is a self-contained flat, which consists of one or more units of accommodation in which two or more households must share one or more basic amenities or where the accommodation is lacking basic amenities.

The converted building test:

Any building which has been converted and contains one or more units of accommodation, which are not self-contained (whether or not the building also consists of some self-contained units).

Certain converted blocks of flats:

Any building which has been converted into and consists of self-contained flats only, it does not comply with appropriate building standards (e.g. the 1991 Building Regulations) and less than two thirds of the flats are owner occupied, (more than one third on short tenancies).

Appendix B Empty Property Strategy July 2003

Extract from Empty Property Strategy

<http://www.thanet.gov.uk/PDF/EPstrategy.pdf>

Aims and objectives of the Thanet Empty Property Strategy

- 1.4.1 The aims of the empty property strategy are to:
- Make effective use of derelict urban land to prevent it being an environmental nuisance and a source of fly tipping and vandalism
 - Reduce the number of long term empty residential properties and increase the housing supply in Thanet by bringing them back into use
 - Further increase the available homes in Thanet by working to bring other empty properties, for example shops and offices, into use as residential property where appropriate
 - Provide a contact point and resource for both owners of empty properties, and members of the public concerned about empty properties
- 1.4.2 The objectives of the empty property strategy are:
- To reduce the number of long term empty properties, initially targeting on a 'worst first' basis.
 - To assist the Council's Homelessness Strategy in ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation other than in an emergency
 - To minimise the number of properties becoming long term empty by identifying them early and working with owners
 - To reduce the amount of land remaining long term empty in Thanet, thereby improving the amenity and safety of local communities
 - To increase research into the nature and effect of the district's empty property and vacant land, and the impact of schemes as part of the district regeneration
 - To ensure economic stability and development in Thanet
- 1.4.3 This is Thanet District Council's first empty property and derelict land strategy. As such, it intends to provide a summary of the national and local pictures, and details of the legislative context of empty properties. As the first such strategy, this document provides broad overall objectives to reducing the number of empty properties and vacant land.
- 1.4.4 It is intended that the strategy will be active, growing and evolving as further work to tackle the issue of empty property and land takes place. The strategy will be reviewed annually to assess whether amendments may be required.
- 1.4.5 It is anticipated that there will be a lead in period, whilst the initiative becomes established. The number of properties being brought back into use, therefore, should rise as the initiative progresses.

Appendix C Financial assistance policy – Private Sector Housing June 2003

Extract from Financial assistance policy – Private sector housing June 2003

Aim of Policy

Legislative Authority The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002)

To ensure dwellings within the private sector provide living accommodation that is both safe and fit for the purpose of housing.

Objectives

1. **To assist owners of residential accommodation ensure that the dwellings are safe and fit for the purpose of occupation.**
2. **To reduce the level of long-term vacancy within the private sector.**
3. **To ensure that residential buildings do not detract from the aesthetic amenities of the immediate neighbourhood.**
4. **To provide financial support, in an appropriate form, where this is proven to be needed and the applicant satisfies the conditions imposed by the Council.**

Appendix D Financial Resources from Community Service Plan 2007/2008

Financial Resources Available

This portfolio aims to improve the choice, supply, quality and accessibility of housing and promote a safe environment for local residents by the provision of community services such as CCTV and community wardens. This portfolio is also responsible for the management of car parking within the district and the provision of environmental health services.

	<i>2006/07 Original</i>	<i>2007/08 Proposed</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2010/11</i>
Grants (Including Vol. Orgs)	235,570	482,130	482,130	482,130	482,130
Housing Services	20,110	12,250	12,580	12,910	13,230
Housing Services-Hmo	(4,790)	48,950	52,280	55,510	58,740
Housing Services-Homeless	189,150	89,290	113,130	114,470	115,990
Housing Services-Residential	670,710	770,070	807,770	842,430	879,060
Events	231,790	156,330	161,860	167,220	172,360
Improvement Grants etc.	278,020	569,200	577,180	584,940	592,710
Car Parks Charged	(376,280)	(479,050)	(449,430)	(423,950)	(409,340)
Car Parks Non Charged	8,130	3,050	3,160	3,270	3,380
CCTV	198,600	230,990	240,220	249,590	259,780
On Street Parking	0	0	0	20,270	42,250
Fixed Penalty (Non Car Park)	(300)	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
Community Safety	207,790	279,870	291,200	304,540	328,470
Dog Control	183,730	157,520	160,790	164,080	167,640
Bus Shelters&H'Way Public Seats	4,460	8,190	8,730	9,070	9,430
Emergency Planning	53,080	68,240	70,880	73,360	76,090
Community Development	1,150	0	0	0	0
Gen Env. Health Services	5,220	5,170	5,170	5,240	5,380
Food Safety	336,110	483,390	504,170	524,580	543,640
Health And Safety	220,470	11,880	11,980	12,070	12,160

Pest Control	117,990	79,370	83,690	87,040	90,620
District Highways Activities	139,000	85,160	83,530	86,550	89,520
Pollution	564,920	740,670	776,880	804,480	834,160
Misc Finance-Idb Drainage	53,330	55,200	56,860	58,560	60,320
Queensdown Estate Water	910	23,250	24,500	25,450	26,470

In addition, this portfolio is also responsible for the following administrative sections. The cost of these have already been charged out to the various services and are included in the net cost of those services.

	<i>2006/07 Original</i>	<i>2007/08 Proposed</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2008/09</i>
Head Of Housing And Community Services	148,480	363,870	378,750	392,550	407,020
Private Sector Housing	404,540	704,950	738,210	770,540	802,900
Strategic Housing	608,020	684,750	718,780	752,380	790,430
Tenant Services	1,139,990	1,407,440	1,476,080	1,534,970	1,589,350
Community Services	778,070	1,052,640	1,112,330	1,150,360	1,191,940
Environmental Health	614,080	999,420	1,049,930	1,089,100	1,131,510
Health And Safety (inc. Food)	451,150	484,320	505,040	525,400	544,440

<i>General Fund Capital Programme</i>	<i>2006/07 Original</i>	<i>2007/08 Proposed</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2008/09</i>
Disabled Facilities Grants (TDC Funding 400,000 pa)		878,320	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Renewal Area For Cliftonville West & Margate Central		200,000	200,000	21,190	0
Safer Stronger Community		1,130,000	0	0	0

Appendix E Consultation

The following stakeholders were consulted in the drafting of this strategy:

Cllr Zita Wilrshire, Thanet District Council

Amber Christou Housing Strategy and Development Thanet DC

Brian White, Head of Development Services Thanet DC

John Lewis, Benefits Department, Thanet DC

Nigel Cruttenden, Community Safety Partnership

Carla Wenham-Jones Renewal Area, Thanet DC

Marion Money at National Landlords Association,

Kate Dallip & Pat Tempany at SEEDA,

Steve Kethero at GOSE,

Richard Tacagni at LACORS,

Caroline Davis at East & Coastal Kent PCT,

Meroe Blackford at Creative Environmental Networks,

Tina Tinsley at in-touch Thanet Home Improvement Agency,

Lesley Clay East and West Kent Joint Policy Planning Board (Housing)

Ashford Borough Council

Canterbury City Council

Dartford Borough Council

Dover District Council

Gravesham Borough Council

Maidstone Borough Council

Medway Council

Sevenoaks District Council

Shepway District Council

Swale Borough Council

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Leaflets were also sent out to all known landlords and an announcement put in the local papers. The document was also available on TDCs website.