

**City of York Council**

**Housing Strategy 2006-2009**

**Summary Version**

## Foreword

Welcome to this summary version of York's Housing Strategy 2006-2009.

Good housing is at the very heart of successful communities. With this strategy we are setting out York's housing objectives and ambitions over the next three years.

Undoubtedly there are challenges. Steeply rising house prices are meaning that young people are finding it difficult to get a foot on the housing ladder; levels of homelessness continue to be a concern; and more needs to be done to assist older people living in the private sector who cannot afford to cost of making repairs to their home.

But we are making excellent progress too. The council is on course to modernise all of its own housing stock to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010; in partnership with local housing associations we are securing record numbers of affordable homes on private housing developments; and we are supporting new initiatives in the private sector to enable owner occupiers to release capital from their homes for repairs.

The housing strategy achieves a good balance between priorities and targets relating to the council's landlord role, enabling role

and private sector housing actions. It also ensures that we link these to the aims and objectives of the council's Business Plan, the vision for York set out in the Community Strategy "Without Walls" and with regional and sub-regional strategies and initiatives.

Over 300 individuals and organisations were consulted on this new housing strategy. Many of them are also responsible for delivering the homes and services on which the achievement of the aims in the strategy depend

We know that the challenges are steep, but through effective partnerships focussed on the key issues and a determination to improve people's lives, this housing strategy will help more people to access the right homes for their needs..

I am pleased that for the first time the Housing Strategy will be available on the council's website which will help increase its accessibility and also, I hope, encourage you to feedback and comment.

Councillor Sue Sunderland  
Executive Member for Housing  
City of York Council

April 2006

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## 1. Introduction

Safe, secure, well maintained and affordable housing is a basic human need. Good housing promotes health and well-being, improves the appearance of neighbourhoods and helps build strong and confident communities. In contrast, poor housing is directly linked to ill health, low educational achievement, poverty and declining neighbourhoods.

### The aim of the housing strategy

The overall aim of the housing strategy is: *'To enable everyone to have a decent home at a price they can afford within a safe, inclusive and thriving community'*. It works towards achieving this by:

- Providing an over-arching review of housing and housing related issues across all tenures in York.
- Setting out housing objectives for York taking into account national, regional, sub-regional and local priorities.
- Establishing priorities for action and a timetable to deliver them.

The broad priorities of the strategy were agreed by councillors in December 2005 and are reflected in the chapter headings of both the full strategy and this summary version. They are also incorporated into the action plans with targets that are challenging but achievable and which secure the optimum outcomes from the resources available.

### How has the strategy been developed?

The strategy sets out our priorities for housing over the next three years. It has been developed with a robust understanding of York's housing circumstances and written following consultation with over 300 individuals and organisations in the autumn of 2005.

It is a three year strategy because by 2009/10 some key housing targets will have been met, and other initiatives will either be, nearing completion or at an important stage in their development. They include:

- Council and housing association homes should have achieved the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. It will be necessary to agree on future investment priorities for investment in the housing stock.
- Planning policy to secure 50% affordable housing on private developments will have been thoroughly tested and reviewed.
- The Regional Spatial Strategy will have been published and York's housing allocation set.

- The impact of sub-regional initiatives including the Leeds City Region and Northern Way initiatives will be producing outputs that may affect York's housing market as well as the city's economic, transport and environmental policies
- We will have a more thorough knowledge of housing markets in York and the region following the completion and analysis of housing market assessments.
- Proposed housing developments at Hungate, Germany Beck and Derwenthorpe will, if they receive planning permission, be delivering substantial numbers of new homes.
- More detailed proposals for the development of York Central will be known.

It will be timely to plan a new strategy from 2010 taking into account all these factors.

### What has happened since the last housing strategy was written in 2002?

In the four years since the last strategy was completed housing issues have remained a high priority nationally, regionally and locally.

Regional initiatives have been of particular significance and include the first *Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Housing Strategy* published in 2003 that included a sub-regional plan for York and North Yorkshire. Other important regional initiatives have been the launch of the Northern Way Initiative in 2004 to help drive forward a vision for the economic renaissance of the North and the drafting of regional economic, planning and transport strategies co-ordinated by Yorkshire Forward.

These regional initiatives recognise that housing cannot be viewed in isolation from economic, transport and planning policies. They acknowledge too that housing markets spread beyond the boundaries of local authorities. York's housing issues, for example, are directly influenced by the housing and economic policies of neighbouring areas including Leeds as the major economic driver in the region. And York itself has a key housing and economic influence in parts of the East Riding and North Yorkshire. Understanding how these markets work, where they overlap and how they can be managed and influenced is one of the key strategic challenges over the lifetime of the housing strategy.

There have also been local political changes with the election in May 2003 of a Liberal Democrat led council with new ideas and

priorities including an emphasis on the role of housing in contributing to the council-wide York Pride agenda.

This new housing strategy has been written against a backdrop of York enjoying a boom in quality of life indicators including low unemployment, a growing economy and high educational achievement; all factors that has resulted in the city being identified as one of the most desirable places to live in a government report *The State of the English Cities* published in March 2006.

This success is very welcome, but understandably it also contributes to longer term housing demand and helps to fuel the cost of housing. It can also marginalize those residents of the city who are unable to share in the success. These might be older people struggling to maintain the home they own as much as young people trying to get a foothold on the housing ladder. One important role of the housing strategy is therefore to ensure that we take appropriate action to alleviate the worst effects of any social exclusion.

### **Reading this summary version of the housing strategy**

The chapters in this summary have the same titles and follow the same order as those in the full length version of the strategy. They provide a snapshot of the key facts and key challenges in each priority area and a summary of the key actions planned

The full-length strategy gives a more detailed overview of housing issues in York and of the strategic context in which individual chapters have been written and priorities identified.

The full-length version of the strategy also includes an extended chapter on the links between the housing strategy and other local, sub-regional, regional and national priorities. It describes in more detail how we have consulted on the drafting of this strategy and how we will fund the priorities identified and monitor the delivery of the actions and targets.

For these reasons, if you have a particular interest in any part of the housing strategy it is strongly recommended that you do also read the equivalent chapter in the full length version of the strategy.

In both this summary version and in the full length strategy we have tried to keep to a minimum the use of housing jargon and to

make it easy to read and understandable to a wide audience. A glossary of terms is included at the end of this summary version

### **Monitoring and reviewing the strategy**

The housing strategy will be reviewed annually to check and monitor progress against the action plans and targets and to take into account new policies, challenges and opportunities that come forward. Progress will be reported annually to the council's management team and to the Executive Member for Housing and Advisory Panel.

### **Reader feedback**

We need to be certain that the housing strategy has identified the most important housing issues facing York and has put in place appropriate actions and targets to address these within the resources we have available.

If you feel there are parts of the strategy that need to be improved or if there are particular issues that have been overlooked please let us know so that we can fully consider any suggested improvements or new priorities when the strategy is reviewed each year.

If you have any questions or would like more information on any aspect of the strategy please contact the Housing Strategy Manager (see below).

### **Obtaining copies of the strategy**

This summary and the full length version of the housing strategy can be viewed and downloaded from the council's website at:

**<http://www.york.gov.uk/housing>**

Printed copies of the summary version are available free of charge. To obtain a copy of the summary or for details of the cost for the full length strategy please contact:

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## 2. Understanding the York housing market and measuring housing needs

### Introduction

A key task of the housing strategy is to understand the housing market in York taking into account demographic, social and economic trends and forecasts. This includes looking beyond the administrative boundaries of the city to include regional and sub-regional housing markets and how these interact with economic growth, travel to work patterns, planning policies and environmental sustainability. The evidence this provides will enable us to make informed decisions about the type of housing the city needs as well as how, and where, those needs might be met

The 2005-2021 Regional Housing Strategy for Yorkshire and The Humber identifies York and North Yorkshire as high value housing markets with a particular need for additional affordable housing. A “Golden Triangle Partnership” representing the high demand area broadly bordered by Harrogate, York and North Leeds has been the focus of work across to address housing affordability issues.

### Key facts

- York’s population is growing; estimated by 9.5% between 1996 and 2016.
- Household growth over the same period will be 20% of which 38% will be single person households.
- The number of residents aged over 75 is expected to rise by 8.1% by 2011.
- Higher education students make up 11% per cent of York’s population.
- Homelessness presentations have increased every year since 1999 (1,489 in 2004/05).
- Over 2,000 households are registered on the housing waiting list.

- On average 643 new homes are built in York each year.
- The council’s 2002 Housing Needs Survey identified a need for 950 additional *affordable* homes each year for five years.
- 66% of new homes completed between 2003-2005 were apartments
- Over 90% of new homes were built on previously developed “brownfield” land in 2004/05.
- Average house prices have increased by 166% from 1996 to 2005. Prices in the lowest 25% quartile have increased by 191% over the same period.
- Less than 1% of the housing stock in York is empty for longer than 6 months.
- The ‘buy-to-let’ housing market has expanded rapidly catering for both the student and higher earnings end of the market.

### Key challenges

- Reconciling high housing demand with a wish to preserve the historic character of York and the preservation of green belt land.
- Meeting the need for more affordable homes.
- Creating mixed income and tenure communities that are sustainable and meet the housing needs of all of York’s residents.
- Increasing the specification and standard of new homes.
- Ensuring that new homes built in York meet all housing needs.
- Making the best possible use of existing housing.
- Meeting an identified need for more affordable housing in York’s villages.

### What do we plan to do during the next three years?

A priority over the next three years will be to develop our understanding of York’s housing market in the context of regional economic, planning and housing priorities. We will update the city’s housing needs survey and also explore the possibility of undertaking regional housing needs and market assessments with neighbouring local authorities and through the Regional Housing Board. We will continue to be active members of the Golden Triangle Partnership working to find new ways of delivering more affordable housing.

Action	By when
Commission a new (or an update to the existing) Housing Needs Survey	2006-07
Develop a database of “key housing statistics” for York	2006-07
Require a percentage of all new homes to be built to ‘lifetime home’ standards	2006-08
Explore the feasibility of undertaking a sub-regional housing strategy with other North Yorkshire local authorities	2007-08
Work with the Golden Triangle Partnership research and gain a better understanding of the North Yorkshire sub-regional housing market	2006-09

### 3. Analysing and meeting the need for affordable housing

#### Introduction

Maximising the supply of new affordable homes and ensuring the optimum use of the existing affordable housing stock is a crucial aim of the housing strategy. Rapidly rising house and land prices over the past 10 years have meant that many of York's residents are unable to get a foothold on the property ladder and this has emphasised the important contribution of affordable housing in achieving government and council aims for sustainable and inclusive communities

The council has worked hard with housing associations and private developers to increase the supply of affordable housing. The private rented sector also has an important role to play in providing affordable alternatives to housing association and council homes.

#### Key facts

- The council and housing associations manage over 12,000 homes for rent and affordable home ownership.
- Approximately 1,300 rented homes become available for re-letting each year.
- 43% of the council housing stock is flats and 26% designated for older people.
- Since 1998/99 1,140 council homes have been sold under the 'right to buy'. During the same period 1,133 new housing association homes have been built.
- The council's 2002 *Housing Needs Survey* concluded that an additional 954 affordable homes were needed each year for 5 years to meet existing and newly arising need. From 2002-05, 424 were provided.

- Over 75% of new affordable housing is now provided on private developments. In 2000/01 the figure was 7%.
- Approximately 68% of affordable homes on private developments are flats.
- Since 1996 over 800 affordable homes have been built on private developments without public subsidy.
- Since 2001, the Housing Corporation have provided grant funding to housing associations to build over 300 affordable homes across York.
- In April 2005 the affordable housing target on private developments was increased from 25% to 50%.
- The council and housing associations have worked with private landlords to lease over 20 homes to use as temporary homeless accommodation.

#### Key challenges

- To find innovative ways to enable more affordable homes to be provided.
- To maximise the number of affordable homes built in York.
- To find new ways of delivering more affordable housing in York's villages.
- To increasing the quality and standard of affordable homes secured through planning gain.
- To optimise the use of existing affordable homes by ensuring they are let quickly, fairly and fully occupied.
- To agree a minimum standard for the size and quality of affordable homes.
- To consider demolition of council homes that are no longer popular or will cost too much to refurbish to meet the Decent Homes Standard

#### What do we plan to do during the next three years?

The main priority is to maximise the number of affordable homes built in York by our housing association partners. We will also focus more on the quality of affordable homes by agreeing minimum standards and reviewing existing housing association developments.

Action	By when
Enable the delivery of an average of 200 additional affordable homes each year	2006-09
Agree a minimum specification for affordable homes on private developments	2007-08
Undertake an evaluation of all new affordable housing schemes 12 months after their completion with housing associations.	2006-09
Undertake an annual site visit with each housing association to their developments in York to identify any problems with the management and maintenance of these developments	2006-09
Redevelopment of 3 sites of prefabricated "discus" bungalows	2006-09
Ensure all opportunities for affordable housing are considered as part of the Council's Corporate Asset Management Policy	2006-09

## 4. Preventing and responding to homelessness

### Introduction

Homelessness and rough sleeping are not only the extreme outcomes of a shortage of affordable housing, but are often linked to other issues including drug addiction, offending, poor mental health and escaping domestic violence. It is important therefore, that efforts to reduce homelessness are seen as part of this 'bigger picture' which includes tackling social exclusion and improving access to health and social care services.

In 2003 the council published its Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003-2008 and also a Strategy for the Prevention of Rough Sleeping 2002-2004. The main objectives of these strategies are:

- To prevent homelessness wherever possible.
- To minimise the impact of homelessness on individual households.
- To ensure there is an adequate supply of accommodation and appropriate support for people re-settled after homelessness.

### Key facts

- The number of homeless presentations to the council have increased every year since 1999. In 2004/05 the numbers were 42% higher than in 1999/2000.
- The number of households accepted as homeless and in priority need for housing averages 441 each year.
- 165 cases of potential homelessness in 2004/05 were prevented by the timely intervention of homelessness prevention workers.

- 61% of households accepted as homeless and in priority need require a home with two or more bedrooms.
- Since March 2004 no families with children have been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, except in short term emergencies.
- The council manages three homeless hostels with a combined total of 55 bed spaces. Further accommodation is provided by voluntary sector organisations including the Arlight project, Salvation Army and Peasholme Charity.
- Approximately 170 council homes are used for self-contained temporary accommodation; a ten fold increase from the 17 homes used in 1996/97.
- In line with government targets the number of people sleeping rough in York has reduced to no more than one third of the figure in 1998.
- Delivering the action plans and targets in the homelessness strategy relies on the support of over 25 different statutory and non-statutory organisations.

### Key challenges

- Reducing the number of homeless presentations.
- Increasing the availability of temporary accommodation for homeless households in the private sector.
- Developing long term supported housing for people with mental health problems.
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing.
- Finding and bringing forward a suitable site for the re-provision of the Arlight direct access homeless hostel.

### What do we plan to do during the next three years?

Strategic priorities will be in securing a site for the Arlight direct access homeless hostel and also in preparatory work to identify a new site for the Peasholme homeless centre as part of the redevelopment proposals at Hungate. Annual reviews against actions and priorities in the homelessness strategies will be completed and a new homelessness strategy written in 2008.

Action	By when
Identify and agree a new site for the Arlight direct access homeless hostel	2006-07
Re-provision of the Arlight direct access homeless hostel	2006-07
Increase the accessibility of the private rented sector for homeless or potentially homeless people	2006-07
Develop a mental health assessment tool for homeless/potentially homeless customers	2006-07
Redevelopment of the Peasholme Homeless Centre	2007-08
Deliver, monitor and review the homelessness strategy	2006-09

## 5. Meeting the housing needs of York's black and minority ethnic residents(including travellers)

### Introduction

York's black and ethnic minority (BME) communities collectively make up almost 5% of the city's population and although this remains a very small percentage it represents a significant growth in recent years.

Data from the 2001 Census provides most of the statistical information on ethnic minorities in York, but it includes, for example, 3,737 residents who described themselves as "white other white" (as opposed to "white British" or "white Irish"). Anecdotaly we know this group includes significant numbers of Polish and Kurdish people but we currently lack more precise information on these communities which could inform any housing priorities.

Our knowledge of the housing needs of travellers and gypsies is much better since the council owns and manages the three permanent traveller sites in the city.

### Key facts

- York's ethnic minority communities comprised 8,857(4.9%) of the city's population at the time of the last Census in 2001.
- The single largest BME group was Chinese
- Almost a quarter of the BME population in York lives in two wards – Heslington and

Fishergate. It is likely this is due to the proximity of these wards to the university.

- 17% of the BME population live in 'communal establishments' This includes student halls of residence.
- 53% of the BME population live in owner occupied housing, 11% live in council or housing association homes and 18% rent privately.
- By the definition of the Census 2001, 31% of Bangladeshi households were "housing deprived"; the highest percentage of any community in the city.
- There are currently 15 households waiting for a pitch on one of the three traveller sites in York
- The 2004 Housing Act requires local authorities to assess the need for pitches for gypsies and travellers.

### Key challenges

- Raising the profile and priority of ethnic minority housing issues when the population is relatively small.
- Researching the housing needs of 'hard to reach' groups when the absolute numbers are relatively low.
- Establishing a robust set of qualitative as well as quantitative data on ethnic minority housing needs that can be translated to housing priorities.

### What do we plan to do during the next three years?

We need to bring together a more thorough understanding of the housing needs of York's BME communities. We cannot plan services without a robust evidence base, nor can we assume that the housing needs of each community are the same. With limited and competing resources we will need to work innovatively with minority communities either directly or by working alongside colleagues in, for example, education or children's services and with partners in the voluntary sector. We will also explore whether a new Housing Needs Survey could include sufficiently robust data on ethnic minority housing needs.

Action	By when
Subject to a successful bid for government funding, undertake major refurbishment works at each of the three permanent traveller sites in York	2006-07
Monitor housing services user information relating to ethnicity, vulnerability and disability to drive service priorities across individual service areas	2006-07
Analyse the Census 2001 further to give information on housing deprivation and tenure by ethnicity and use this with other data as a basis for prioritising resources	2006-07
Consider how ethnic minority housing needs can be included when the council commissions a new housing needs survey or housing market analysis.	2006/07
Undertake an assessment of gypsy and traveller housing needs and provision through the Local Development Framework process	2006/07

## 6. Meeting supported housing needs

### Introduction

Although there are differences in the support needs of vulnerable people, what connects them is a shared experience of facing extra difficulties or barriers to accessing housing that meets their needs.

Below we give a brief overview of the range of supported housing needs being met through the housing strategy and some of the key challenges for the next three years. Because of the wide range of different groups of people who need supported housing, this section is slightly longer than others and for easier reading, it also separates the key facts, challenges and table of action plans into the different areas of supported housing.

### **Supporting People: Key facts**

- Revenue costs for housing-related support are met primarily from Supporting People grant; £9.6m for 2005/06.
- Supporting People grants contribute to the funding of 280 services providing support for 5,500 customers through 46 different organisations working in York.
- Current government proposals could see York's Supporting People budget reduced by 49% during the next 10 years.
- The Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010 identifies the following customer groups as priorities for new services:
  1. People with drug problems
  2. Offenders with mental disorders
  3. People with multiple or complex needs
  4. Young people
  5. People with mental health problems
  6. Ex-Offenders
- Reviews of housing services that receive Supporting People funding have included young people at risk, mental health, learning disability, physical disability and older people.

### **Supporting People: Key challenges**

- Matching the ambition of services with limited resources.
- The scrutiny of existing services needs to question whether they can be delivered in other ways that ensures they continue to offer the best service to customers and also deliver value for money.

### **Older people: Key facts**

- The number of residents aged over 75 is expected to rise by 8.1% by 2011.
- By 2025 the number of residents aged over 85 is predicted to be 77% above current levels.
- A 36% increase in the number of older people with dementia is expected over the next 10 years with a further 30% increase in the following 10 years.
- The number of older people owning their home is increasing.

### **Older people: Key challenges**

- Demographic and social trends mean that older people's expectations for services are changing significantly.
- A new generation of older people are more likely to be owner occupier and designing services that enable them to continue living at home will be increasingly important.
- The council and housing associations will need to re-model their own older people's housing stock where this is becoming unpopular.

### **People with learning disabilities: Key facts**

- In 2003 the council published a *Housing Options Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities*, and in 2004 published an accessible guide to housing options for people with learning disabilities.
- York has a relatively high number of supported housing schemes for people with learning disabilities compared with other cities of an equivalent population.
- Since 2002 11 new supported living schemes creating 25 tenancies for learning disability customers.
- In 2005 a Learning Disability Commissioning Group was established to bring forward a 3 year plan for commissioning housing and support and to map current and future needs.
- The 2005 review of the council's housing allocations policy included giving more priority for people with a learning disability.

### **People with learning disabilities: Key challenges**

- Enabling the development of new models of supported housing as people seek

greater independence and move out of family homes.

- Ensuring people with a learning disability are not excluded from new affordable housing because of the poor design or specification of the homes being built.
- Creating new opportunities for supported living against a backdrop of learning disability schemes already receiving the largest share (37%) of Supporting People funding.
- Bringing forward recommendations to overcome the challenges presented by the different timetables for funding the capital and revenue elements of supported housing.

#### **People with mental health problems. Key facts**

- Providing housing for people with mental health problems has been implemented through different models of support including two schemes of self-contained flats with shared communal facilities.
- A partnership between the Selby and York Primary Care Trust and the council has doubled the number of staff in the assertive outreach team and enabled an additional 85 tenants with challenging needs to receive extensive support that helps them to continue to live independently.

#### **People with mental health problems. Key challenges**

- Enabling services to expand or new ones to be created against reductions in Supporting People funding for support.
- Re-configuration of existing mental health schemes without reducing the level of service to customers.
- The successful integration of mental health residential and rehabilitation services.
- Undertaking a review of rehabilitation services to increase the opportunity for customers to access supported housing.

#### **Young people: key facts**

- Addressing the housing needs of vulnerable young people is closely linked to the Strategy for the Prevention of Homelessness.
- In 2003 a 24 hour supported housing scheme for up to 5 young people with chaotic lifestyles was opened in partnership with Foundation Housing.
- A supported lodging scheme – Safe and Sound Homes – provides a home for

homeless young people for up to two years.

- A housing support worker has a specific responsibility for working with young people to prevent their homelessness.

#### **Young people: Key challenges**

- Implementing the outcomes and recommendations of a Supporting People full review of services for young people will be a major priority for the service in 2006.

#### **Ex-offenders: Key facts**

- 25% of ex-offenders are officially homeless.
- For ex-offenders aged over 17 supported housing is available through the York Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders.
- Supporting People funding provides a housing support scheme for 14 customers.
- The Probation Service is working with the Drug Intervention Programme to establish a rent bond guarantee scheme in 2006/07.

#### **Ex-offenders: Key challenges**

- Reducing the number of ex-offenders discharged without adequate support or accommodation and thus at a higher risk of re-offending.
- Contributory factors to offending may include drug or alcohol addiction, homelessness or mental health problems. Services across all these areas need to work together to ensure specialist support and services are available for ex-offenders considered to be at risk of re-offending.

#### **Drug and alcohol addiction: key facts**

- This complex area of need overlaps with the strategies for the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping and is not one easily categorised by age or sex.
- Services include an outreach and resettlement programme run by the Salvation Army and a team of drug workers based at the York Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders who work towards resettling customers into tenancies with the council and housing associations.
- Two homes specifically for homeless people with alcohol dependency have

been established through the Arclight and Peasholme charities.

**Drug and alcohol addiction: Key challenges**

- Finding resources to increase the provision of supported housing for drug users.
- Meeting a target to increase by 5% the numbers of primary and secondary needs drug users who access housing support services.

**Women leaving violent relationships: Key facts**

- The site for a new purpose built refuge was acquired in 2004 and the new refuge opened in early 2006 with space for up to 9 households with children.

- Women and their children can stay in the refuge for anything up to one year although usually for a shorter time than this.
- Funding for the new refuge came from commuted sums for affordable housing grants from the Housing Corporation and private finance from Yorkshire Housing.
- The new refuge has 24 hour staffing.

**Women leaving violent relationships: Key challenges**

- Within the constraints of funding, a priority now is to consider the potential of providing 'move-on' accommodation for women and children leaving the refuge.

**What do we plan to do during the next three years?**

With anticipated reductions in Supporting People funding, the overriding challenge will be to ensure existing services continue to offer the best value for money and to adapt and re-configure them where this improves services to customers. The publication of the council's first Older People's Housing Strategy will set the priorities for older people's housing services.

Customer group	Action	By when
Supporting People	Continue service reviews of Supporting People funded projects and services ensuring they continue to offer value for money and deliver the right packages of support to customers	2006-09
	Undertake a review of how customers access services and how this can be improved	2006-07
Older People	Publish an Older People's Housing Strategy with an action plan to develop housing services appropriate to the needs of older people	2006-07
	Implement the priorities and targets established in the Older People's Housing Strategy	2006-09
Learning disability	Establish a 3-5 year commissioning plan, led by the work of the Learning Disability Commissioning Group (Housing)	2006-07
	Undertake a revised mapping of current and predicted future needs of customers known to CYC Community Services	2006-07
	Set up an Allocations Panel to oversee the revised housing allocations policy and the housing requirements of people with a learning disability	2006-07
Mental health	Complete a review of rehabilitation services with a view to helping more people with mental health problems to access supported housing	2006-07
	Complete the integration of residential and rehabilitation services	2006-07
Young People	Review services as appropriate when the outcome of the Supporting People review of services for Young People is known	2006-07
Ex-offenders	Increase the number of homes available to ex-offenders through agreement with housing associations	2006-09
	Work with the police and probation service to plan for the accommodation of high-risk ex-offenders.	2006-09
Drugs & alcohol	Increase by 5% the number of primary and secondary needs drug users accessing housing support	2006-07

## 7. Allocating affordable homes for rent and sale

### Introduction

With a high demand for affordable housing for rent and sale ensuring that the allocation of these homes is managed in a fair, equitable and transparent way is of paramount importance.

It is essential that priority is given to households with the highest housing need, but also that this is balanced with a wider social responsibility to sustain neighbourhoods and communities with a mix of household types, incomes and tenures.

From May 2006 a new allocations policy will be introduced based on 5 bands of housing need ranging from 'Band A' (very urgent) to 'Band E' (no priority). Applicants for housing will be placed in the highest band their particular circumstances allow and within each band applications will be ranked in date order.

### Key facts

- With over 8,000 homes for rent the council is the single largest landlord in York. A further 4,000 homes for rent are also managed by housing associations.
- At April 2005 there were 2,122 households on the housing waiting list with a further 1,748 applications on hold pending more information.
- Approximately 50 new applications for housing are received by the council each week.
- Approximately 1,300 council and housing association rented homes are let each year. The council nominates tenants to a proportion of housing association homes.
- The annual turnover of council flats at 11% is almost treble that of houses at 4%.
- There are more than 800 homes in York that have been purchased under affordable home ownership schemes such

as 'shared ownership' and 'discounted for sale'.

- Approximately 300 households are registered for affordable home ownership opportunities.
- From May 2006 a newly established tenancy management team will allocate council owned homes under the new allocations policy.
- Under the new allocation policy tenants with no rent arrears for three years and no complaints against them for anti-social behaviour will be given a priority when applying for a transfer to another council home.

### Key challenges

- Achieving a fair, transparent and consistent allocation policy that balances letting homes only to households with the highest housing need and a wider strategic responsibility to create and maintain sustainable neighbourhoods.
- Delivering greater numbers of new affordable *houses* rather than a continuation of the predominance of flats seen in recent years.
- Achieving a reasonable balance between the numbers of homes let to households on the waiting list with those let (on licence) to homeless families as temporary housing.
- Matching people's housing aspirations (for an extra bedroom, for example) with their current housing need.
- Managing people's expectations on the likelihood of being able to offer them a home.
- Achieving a higher number of nominations of homeless households to housing association homes.

### What do we plan to do during the next three years?

With a fundamental review of the housing allocations policy due to be implemented from May 2006, most focus will be on monitoring and reviewing the impact of the policy both in terms of customer satisfaction and also through key performance measures such as the time it takes to re-let homes.

Action	By when
Introduce a new housing allocations policy	2006-07
Transfer responsibility for managing the affordable home ownership register from the Housing Development Team to the Housing Allocations Team	2006-07
Review the impact of the new housing allocations policy	2006-08
Monitor the proportion of housing association homes let to City of York Council applicants through nomination agreements	2007-08

## 8. Ensuring well managed rented housing across the public and private sectors

### Introduction

The council has a strategic role in promoting good housing management practice across the private and social housing sectors. As a landlord of over 8,000 homes we have a direct responsibility to meet the highest standards in management best practice. In the private sector we have responsibility for licensing Houses of Multiple Occupation and work closely with private sector landlords to promote best practice. We also offer landlord grants to bring homes up to the Decent Homes Standard

### Key facts

- 21,000 (27%) of York's 77,000 households live in rented homes.
- 70% of private sector rentals are to student households.
- 18 housing associations manage almost 4,000 homes across the York district.
- In 2005 the housing landlord and strategic housing functions of the council were brought under a single management structure.
- The Government has 'signed off' the council's decision to retain ownership and management of its housing stock
- The average time to re-let a council home is 35 days against a target of 21 days.
- Introductory tenancies were established in 2003.
- A tenants' participation agreement called 'Getting on Board' was launched in 2003.
- The 2005 survey of council tenants showed reduced satisfaction with tenant

participation, repairs and maintenance services.

- The council operates a code of best practice for private sector landlords.
- There are 3,000 Houses in Multiple Occupation in York. Approximately 400 of these will need licensing under the Housing Act 2004.
- Almost 40% of houses in multiple occupation do not meet minimum legal standards.
- 80% of landlords who had their HMO's inspected in 2005 were satisfied with the service they received from the council.
- In 2004/05 the council assisted in bringing 20 private sector empty properties back into use

### Key challenges

- Improving the level of tenant satisfaction with the housing service.
- Through a review of the void management process, improve the average time taken to let council homes.
- Implementing the 2004 Housing Act.
- Reviewing older people's sheltered accommodation to ensure these remain the best models of providing housing with support.
- Reducing the level of rent arrears in council homes
- Ensuring appropriate and timely levels of support to new tenants in order for them to sustain their tenancies.

### What do we plan to do during the next three years?

Key priorities for the council's landlord service include improved tenant satisfaction, quicker re-letting of homes and reducing rent arrears. For private sector housing the implementation of the Housing Act 2004 will be a top priority. We will also work with housing association partners to benchmark their housing management performance with that of the council.

Action	By when
Undertake a review of sheltered accommodation and warden call schemes	2006-07
Explore options for adopting a range of incentive schemes for tenants to clear rent arrears, pay for repairs etc	2006-07
Alter the private sector grants policy to only offer grants to licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation which would then meet the decent homes standard.	2006-07
Carry out a systems review of the responsive repairs service	2006-07
Implement the recommendations of the review of the void management process	2007-08
Monitor housing association management performance information	2007-08
Write a new Private Sector Renewal Policy	2007-08
Consider redevelopment and re-modelling parts of the council housing stock that are unpopular or do not meet the housing needs of the city	2006-09

## 9. Improving the condition of the housing stock across all tenures

### Introduction

Poor housing condition as evidenced by disrepair, dampness, a lack of modern facilities and poor insulation contribute to ill-health, poverty and social exclusion.

In its role as a landlord the council has a responsibility to ensure its housing stock is maintained and modernised to a high standard. In particular that it meets the Decent Homes Standard by 2010/11. Housing associations are also required to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

As a strategic housing authority the council encourages the maintenance and improvement of private sector housing through advice, grants and referral to other agencies.

### Key facts

- 83% of housing in York is in the private sector.
- A 2003 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey showed. 22% of homes failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard. The single biggest reason was lack of thermal comfort.
- At April 2005 864 council homes (9.26% of the stock) failed the Decent Homes Standard.
- Over 6,000 council homes have been modernised since 1989. Modernisation includes window replacement programmes to improve energy efficiency.
- In 2002 the council gained a general power to provide financial assistance through grants, loans and equity release

products to improve the condition of housing in the private sector.

- In 2004 the York Home Improvement Agency was established to provide advice and guidance to owner occupiers on the options for improving the condition of their homes.
- In 2005-2007 the council plan to award 100 Disabled Facilities Grants to improve homes across the public and private sector.
- From 2006/07 a new Home Appreciation Loan scheme will enable equity loans to be made to owner-occupiers for essential improvements to their home.
- In 2004/05 over 1,000 private sector tenants received advice on energy efficiency. Over £170,000 of warm-front grants were made.
- A York Landlord grant worth up to £10,000 is available for the refurbishment and repair of empty properties back into use.

### Key challenges

- Meeting the Decent Homes Standard for all council and housing association homes by 2010.
- Raising awareness and developing new initiatives for improving the condition of private sector housing.
- Identifying the resources to commission a new Private Sector Stock Condition Survey.

### What do we plan to do during the next three years?

Meeting the Decent Homes Standard for all the council and housing association stock by 2010 is a key priority. The council will also complete a review of its responsive repairs service. In the private sector a new grant scheme will be introduced aimed at private sector residents who fall just outside of the means-tested criteria for receiving warm-front grants.

Action	By when
Introduce a new grant aimed at customers who fall outside of the warm front criteria.	2006-07
Monitor the effectiveness of the York Home Improvement Agency	2006-07
Market a new regional home appreciation loan as an additional tool to tackle non decent homes in the private sector	2006-09
Implement the recommendations of the review of the council's responsive repairs process	2007-08
Commission a new Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	2007-08
Ensure all council housing meets the decent homes standard by 2010	2006-09
Monitor the effectiveness of the HMO licensing scheme in accordance with Housing Act 2004	2006-09

## 10. Tackling disadvantage: housing benefits and income maximisation

### Introduction

Housing and council tax benefits are administered by local authorities to help people on low incomes with their rent and council tax payments.

The accurate and timely payment of these benefits has a direct impact on the affordability of homes and homelessness. They also affect the performance of social landlords in term of the level of rent arrears they incur and on the willingness of private sector landlords to accept tenants on low incomes who depend on these benefits.

The service also has a team of benefits advisors who help customers claim all the benefits they are entitled to including pension credits, tax credits and sickness and disability benefits. They play a key role in promoting the take-up of benefits often in partnership with other organisations including, for example, Age Concern, housing associations and the York Home Improvement Agency. This forms an essential part of the wider anti-poverty objectives of the council.

### Key facts

- During 2004-05 the benefits service dealt with 72,000 customer enquiries (70% by telephone, 30% face-to-face), and handled 8,000 claims for benefit.
- A welfare benefits advice team offers a comprehensive advice service to over 4,000 residents each year.
- During 2004/05 more than 1,800 referrals were dealt with by the discretionary charges team for customers who receive non-residential care services for which a charge applies. The benefits team helped

customers claim an additional £726,000 in benefits.

- Performance of the benefits team declined sharply in 2002-03 due to a backlog of claims that built up during the introduction of new computer system.
- In April 2004 there were almost 2,000 new claims for benefit waiting to be processed. By April 2005 this had reduced to 600.
- At its peak the average number of days taken to process new benefit applications was 99 days in August 2004. By October 2005 this had reduced to 36 days.
- In 2004 the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate assessed the benefits service as being "weak". In 2005 the service undertook a self-assessment using the same criteria and confirmed a significant improvement in its score to "good".
- The current accuracy of processing new claims for benefit is 94.6%. The target for 2005-06 is 98.3%.
- A new contact centre – the York Customer Centre – will open in 2007. The centre will provide a single point for customers to contact the council and the services we offer. Elements of the Revenues and Benefits teams will transfer to the centre in early 2007.

### Key challenges

- Continuing the improvement in the performance of the benefits service.
- Preparation for the transfer of benefits service staff to the new York Customer Centre.
- Developing an anti-poverty strategy.
- Introducing the new local housing allowance from 2008 which is likely to replace housing benefit.

### What do we plan to do during the next three years?

A priority is to continue improving the performance of the benefits team particularly around the speed of processing claims. Subject to funding a proposal to increase the benefit take-up of older people will also be pursued.

Action	By when
Develop an anti-poverty strategy alongside colleagues in housing services	2006-07
Improve performance in the speed of processing benefit claims to meet Best Value Performance Indicator targets	2006-07
Subject to confirmation of funding, achieve a Local Public Sector Agreement to increase benefit take-up for older people (funding bid pending)	2007-08
Introduce Local Housing Allowance (LHA) scheme (subject to this being rolled out across the country following successful pilots)	2007-08

## 11. Glossary of terms

We have tried to keep to a minimum the use of acronyms and jargon. However, it is inevitable that some terms and phrases will not be familiar to all readers and so this glossary will help towards understanding these.

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- **Affordable Housing.** Homes provided at a price level that can be sustained by local people in housing need. It can include subsidised housing for rent, shared ownership, discounted for sale and low cost market housing.
  - **Brownfield Site.** A brownfield development site is any land or premises which have previously been used or developed and are not currently fully in use.
  - **Community Plan/Community Strategy.** Under the Local Government Act 2000, all local authorities are required to work in partnership with the community, businesses, the voluntary sector and other public sector partners to develop a long-term strategy to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of their local communities. York's Community Strategy is called '*York – A City Making History: York city vision and community strategy 2004-2024*'. For further information see: <http://www.yorkwow.org.uk/>.
  - **Council.** The central decision making body of the City of York. It sets the budget and strategic policy framework.
  - **Councillor.** An elected representative on the council. Councillors represent the interests of the constituents who live in their ward and York as a whole. 47 councillors represent 22 wards. For further information on local democracy in York see: <http://www.york.gov.uk/council/index.html>
  - **Choice Based Lettings.** An approach to letting council and/or housing association homes that no longer relies on a "points" system but which generally allocates homes based on bids from potential tenants.
  - **Decent Homes Standard.** The Government's policy statement 'The Way Forward for Housing' published in 2001 stated that all social housing would be made decent by 2010. A Decent Home is one that satisfies the following criteria:
    - it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
    - it is in a reasonable state of repair
    - it has reasonably modern facilities and services
    - it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.
  - **Empty Property Policy.** An assessment of the number of empty properties within the housing authority area and options available for bringing them back into use, or for converting them to other uses.
  - **Executive.** Comprises the nine Executive Members responsible for decision making within the policy and budget framework of the Council.
  - **Executive Member.** There are nine Executive Members on City of York Council including the leader. Each Executive Member has responsibility for a key strategic area of the council.
  - **Golden Triangle Partnership.** A partnership of local authorities in Leeds, Harrogate and York, the Housing Corporation, Yorkshire Forward, The Government Office, Home Housing Association and Yorkshire Housing. Aims to find solutions to the common problems of affordability in this high value and demand housing areas.
  - **Green Belt.** A defined area where planning controls aim to maintain a rural character and therefore there is a general presumption against development except in exceptional circumstances as set out in the Local Plan.
  - **Greenfield Land.** A site of undeveloped land usually in agricultural use, located outside the existing built up area.
  - **Home Improvement Agency (HIA):** An agency which enables vulnerable people (determined by age, disability or income) to maintain their independence in their chosen home for as long as possible. The homes are predominantly in the private rented, leasehold or owner-occupied sector. For further information on HIA's see: <http://www-foundations.uk.com/>.
  - **HMO (House in Multiple Occupation).** A house occupied by persons who do not form a single household.
  - **Housing Association.** See Registered Social Landlord.
  - **Housing Benefit.** A means tested benefit to help tenants to pay their rent. It is also known as a rent rebate or rent allowance. How much help anyone receives depends on their income and other circumstances.
  - **Housing Corporation.** The official government body that provides capital and revenue funding for Registered Social

Landlords. It also monitors and regulates their performance in terms of financial probity and the management and development of their homes. For further information see:

<http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/> .

- **Housing Needs Survey (HNS).** An assessment of housing need including the extent and pattern of need. The York HNS completed in 2002 covers all tenures and considers the link between housing costs and income levels.
- **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).** Properties that are occupied by persons who do not form a single household.
- **Lifetime Homes.** A standard which identifies 16 features designed to make homes more flexible and accessible. They include: level access to front and back doors; a car parking space that can be enlarged if necessary; wider interior hallways and doors; enough turning space for a wheelchair; easy-to-open windows with low sills and sockets and switches at heights that are convenient to reach. This specification also ensures that handrails, hoists and lifts can be easily installed if necessary.
- **Local Development Framework (LDF).** The name for the portfolio of Local Development Documents. Together these documents will provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for a local authority area and may also include development orders and simplified planning zones.
- **Low Cost Home Ownership.** Property available for people who cannot afford to buy a home at open market prices, but who do have sufficient income to afford housing which has a level of subsidy to reduce its cost below general market levels. Examples of low cost home ownership include homebuy and shared ownership schemes and discounted for sale, property provided by developers at an agreed discount below full market value.
- **Private Sector Housing.** Accommodation not controlled by bodies such as local councils or central government agencies, voluntary organisations or housing associations. Mostly it refers to owner occupied homes and those owned by private landlords.
- **Regional Economic Strategy (RES).** This is a ten-year strategy, produced by Yorkshire Forward which provides the framework of common priorities around which businesses, public agencies, voluntary groups and communities can focus their investment and effort. The strategy is owned, and can only be delivered, by the whole region working together.
- **Regional Housing Board (RHB).** The new regional body responsible for regional housing policy and allocation of capital funding for housing across a region (e.g. Yorkshire and Humberside).
- **Regional Housing Strategy (RHS).** Covering Yorkshire and Humberside, the RHS forms the basis of advice to government ministers on strategic housing priorities in the region, ensuring too that they are consistent with the region's other key strategies (notably Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Planning Guidance and the Regional Transport Strategy, which forms an integral part of the Regional Planning Guidance). For further information see: <http://www.goyh.gov.uk/rhb/rhs.htm>
- **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).** Sets out the region's policies in relation to the development and use of land and forms part of the development plan for the local planning authorities.
- **Registered Social Landlord (RSL).** A non profit-making voluntary group, generally a Housing Association, formed to provide affordable housing and registered with the Housing Corporation.
- **Right to Buy (RTB).** Under the RTB scheme most council tenants can (after a qualifying period) apply to purchase their home at a discount from its full market value. Tenants of housing associations have a similar 'right to acquire' their homes but with a lower fixed discount.
- **Shared equity.** A means of helping people into home ownership. The buyer purchases a share of their home, with the remaining share being held by another party, for example a housing association. When the homeowner comes to sell the home, the other party would be entitled to some of the proceeds of the sale.
- **Shared Ownership.** A way of buying a share in a property in partnership with a housing association. The borrower purchases part of the property and rents the remainder from the housing association.
- **Social exclusion.** Social exclusion happens when people or places suffer from a series of problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poor health and family breakdown.
- **Social Housing.** See Affordable Housing.

- **Supported Housing.** Accommodation where an individual receives support to enable them to live independently in the community. It is usually linked to the provision of housing for specific client groups.
- **Supporting People.** A specific funding stream and also a more generic term used to cover the programme of funding for housing-related care and support services to vulnerable people living in supported or independent accommodation.
- **Sustainable Communities.** Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.
- **Sustainable Development.** A process of planning that integrates social, economic and environmental perspectives, and includes significant discussion with the communities involved. The aim is to improve quality of life without compromising the future.
- **Temporary Accommodation.** Accommodation arranged by local authority in order to meet a homeless duty.
- **Tenants' Choice Modernisation Scheme.** Started in 1989, the scheme modernises council homes and offers tenants a choice of different designs of fittings. Improvements may include new kitchens, new bathroom suites and new central heating systems. Over 7,000 tenants have benefited from the scheme since 1989.
- **Tenure.** The nature of the structure by which people own or rent their home. Categories are usually broken down as follows: Owner Occupied, Private Rented, Local Authority or Registered Social Landlord.