



RUNNYMEDE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL



A strategy for improving
private sector homes in
Runnymede



2010 to 2015



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PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL STRATEGY – 2010 to 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i) Introduction
- a) The Runnymede Private Sector Renewal Strategy was last adopted in 2003 with the following aims:
 - To enable the improvement of the physical condition of private homes in Runnymede.
 - To enable the improvement of the energy efficiency of private homes in the Borough.
 - To assist in meeting the mobility needs of the elderly, vulnerable and disabled to meet their mobility needs in private homes.

- b) Since that time we have made significant achievements:

Runnymede Care and Repair and Grant Assistance

- Received and dealt with 2,792 enquiries
- Carried out works to over 1,200 cases costing £2 million
- Processed over 700 disabled facilities grants

Licensing and Enforcement

- Issued 63 licenses for eligible Houses of Multiple Occupation introduced in the Housing Act 2004
- Issued 346 notices of enforcement to bring about improvements to the private sector housing
- Issued 178 accreditations following the introduction of the Runnymede Accreditation Scheme

Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

- 3,298 properties had cavity wall insulation installed
- 3,194 properties had loft insulation installed (to the current recommended standard)
- 15 park homes and 3 traditionally built properties are due to be insulated and more are awaiting surveys for works to be completed.

- c) There have been many changes over the past few years that have influenced the revised strategy and the updated Private Sector Stock Condition Survey carried out in 2008 has provided the evidence in order to target activity towards the oldest stock and most vulnerable people in the community. We have taken on board the ability to use finance creatively and propose:

- Introducing a revised financial assistance scheme to help vulnerable people:
 - Changes to disabled facilities grants so that they are a proportion is repayable
 - Discretionary minor works grants up to £600
 - Discretionary major works grants of up to £6,000
 - Decent Home Loans of up to £30,000
 - Moving Home Loans

We will:

- Continue to use enforcement measures to improve the condition of the private sector housing stock, particularly for vulnerable clients.
 - Undertake proactive inspections of Houses in Multiple Occupation to ensure they are safe for tenants.
 - Promote and encourage best practice with the Runnymede Accreditation Scheme.
 - Improve the energy efficiency of homes within the borough to reduce fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions.
 - Contribute financial resources to meet the aims of the strategy and seek new sources of funding wherever possible.
- d) We will implement the policies and action plan contained within the strategy and monitor with the proposal to review regularly to make sure we have the correct policies in place.

PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL STRATEGY – 2010 TO 2015

1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of a Private Sector Renewal Strategy

- 1.1.1 The Council, as the strategic authority has the responsibility for considering the standard of housing in all tenures and developing a strategy for dealing with the issues that arise. The Council adopted the previous “Private Sector Renewal Strategy” in 2003 which outlined our approach to tackling the private sector housing issues and took account of the legislative and regulative framework that existed at that time. The “Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002” and associated Circular 05/2003 called “Housing Renewal Guidance 2003” introduced greater flexibility for Local Authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal based on local circumstances and needs. Since 2003, there have been many changes and challenges and it is necessary to update the strategy to take these changes into account.
- 1.1.2 In addition, the Council commissioned the 2008 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey (December 2008) by Fordham Research. This updated evidence informs the Council’s housing strategy, renewal and empty homes strategies to develop a fresh way forward to dealing with the housing problems and issues within the Borough.
- 1.1.2 Runnymede has a population of 82,600 (Surrey County Council 2007 mid year estimate) and there are estimated to be 30,380 private sector dwellings in the Borough. Of these 30,380, 25,883 (85.2%) are owner occupied and 4,496 (14.8%) private rented. This is a significant number of properties and homeowners and the condition of these properties is extremely important to the health and well being of the residents in Runnymede.
- 1.1.3 The Council is a key strategic enabler in maintaining the quality and standard of private sector housing and we work in partnership with a range of organisations such as registered social landlords, the fire service, social services, private landlords, private owners and many other agencies. We all aim to eradicate poor housing conditions and adapt people’s properties to meet their mobility needs. The Council provides advice, financial assistance and ultimately enforcement to ensure that the residents of Runnymede and in particular the most vulnerable live in a “decent home”.
- 1.1.4 The purpose of this new strategy is to set out how we aim to tackle the issues of the private sector between 2010 and 2015. The document will outline the context within which this strategy is set in terms of national, regional and local policy. The Runnymede Borough Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008 as reported to this Committee in January 2009 provides the information we need in order to target the resources available. This information will shape the framework and assist to develop the aims and objectives of the strategy. The tools available will be identified and an action plan devised.
- 1.1.5 We recognise that the responsibility for maintaining privately owned property is ultimately with the homeowner. As financial resources are limited, we can only target those in greatest need. We appreciate that poor quality housing can impact on the health of the occupants, particularly those in vulnerable groups and we will endeavour to assist these vulnerable groups in maintaining their own property.

1.1.6 In various guidance and consultation documents, the Government has sought to allow local authorities to be more flexible in the use of capital funding to achieve desired outcomes and, as a result, more innovative schemes have been introduced increasing options available. For example:

- Alternative solutions will be considered when a person applies for assistance either for repair or a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), in order to ensure the most efficient use of resources. For example, the use of equipment rather than adaptation, the “moving home” scheme and other feasible options to ensure the most efficient use of resources to achieve the best outcome for the applicant to tackle their repair or adaptations.
- A “moving home” or “alternative housing” scheme is proposed as an option for people requiring DFGs and where it is difficult to practically adapt the existing property. The new property may require some adaptation and the DFG can be considered in a more suitable property.
- We will be introducing the repayment of DFG grants where the expenditure is greater than £5,000, up to a value of £10,000 wherever possible on the sale or disposal of property.
- The move to loans rather than grants has been successful since 2003 and ensures the more efficient use of resources. The repayment of loans can be recycled and contribute towards future funding. Therefore this scheme will continue.
- A grants scheme remains to assist those who cannot be helped with loans. This may be for applicants occupying mobile homes where it is difficult to secure a loan on a property by means of a charge, financial hardship or cultural reasons.

1.1.7 We have proposed an action plan to be completed in Annex A and we will continue to monitor and review the implications of the strategy and actions identified. Annex B contains the procedures we will adopt to ensure that the Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policies are fair and reasonable and take into account legislative and working practice changes that might arise. The process will provide a robust mechanism for the delivery of a sound Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.

2 Drivers for change – External Influences

2.1 Introduction

Plans to deal with housing challenges cannot be developed in isolation, but must fit within broader strategies and plans, and take account of changing strategies and policies at national, regional and local levels. The diagram below lists some of the influences on local private sector housing renewal strategies. Some of the greatest influences are the following:

2.2 National Policies

2.2.1 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order (England and Wales) 2002

The introduction of the Regulatory Reform Order removed the prescriptive rules relating to home improvement grants. It replaced them with a general power to provide assistance for housing renewal to meet local housing needs and priorities targeted at the most vulnerable members of society to repair, renovate or adapt their homes. These are people who would not normally be able to afford to do so. This led to the previous Runnymede Private Sector Renewal Policy in 2003.

2.2.2. “Sustainable Communities, Building for the Future”

In February 2003, the Government launched its Sustainable Communities Plan: “Sustainable Communities, Building for the Future” and “Sustainable Communities for All 2003”. The Plan set out a comprehensive programme to improve people’s homes, neighbourhoods and quality of life. It set out a vision to meet housing need in sustainable communities.

2.2.3 Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act 2004, which came into force in April 2006, introduced measures of reform that help the most vulnerable whilst also creating a “fairer housing market for those who own, rent or let residential property”. It also assists in meeting the Government’s 2010 “Decent Homes” target of 70% of vulnerable households living in decent homes by 2010 (see 2.4 below). A number of mandatory duties and discretionary powers were introduced and below is a summary of the main provisions of the Act:

- Mandatory licensing of large, high-risk Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and discretionary powers to license some smaller HMOs.
- The introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) that replaced the Housing Fitness Standard.
- The power for local authorities to selectively license private landlords.
- The introduction of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) to assist to bring empty homes back into use.
- Changes to the Right to Buy Scheme, extending the qualifying period from 2 to 5 years and extending the pay back period.
- The introduction of the tenancy deposit protection scheme.
- Residential Property Tribunals with the power to impose Rent Repayment Orders where a landlord has received housing benefit for tenants living in a property which should reasonably be licensed but is not.

- The introduction of Home Information Packs (now rescinded) and Energy Performance Certificates to assist with the selling process for residential properties.
- The requirement to update statutory overcrowding provisions.
- Extension of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) to people occupying caravans as their only or main residence.

2.2.4 Public Service Agreement (PSA) Target 7

According to the 2001 English House Condition survey, only 57% of vulnerable people living in the private sector in England lived in a home that would be classified as decent. In the Governments spending review of 2002, a target was set to increase the number of decent properties within the private sector to 65% by 2006, 70% by 2010 and 75% by 2020. Vulnerable households are those with families with children, households of older people beyond working age and those suffering from long-term illness and disability. This target was deleted in April 2008 and is no longer a local authority public service agreement target. However, the principles of the target remain and the Council continues to encourage the raising of standards in private sector housing.

2.2.5 The Housing Green Paper – Homes for the Future

The direction of Government policy increases emphasis on increasing the supply of good quality affordable housing in the right places, reducing the environmental impact and tackling planning constraints which can impact on delivery. The shift of resources in this direction is challenging and the current recession has seen increased resources for new build affordable housing and reduction in other Government budgets such as private housing in an effort to stimulate the housing market.

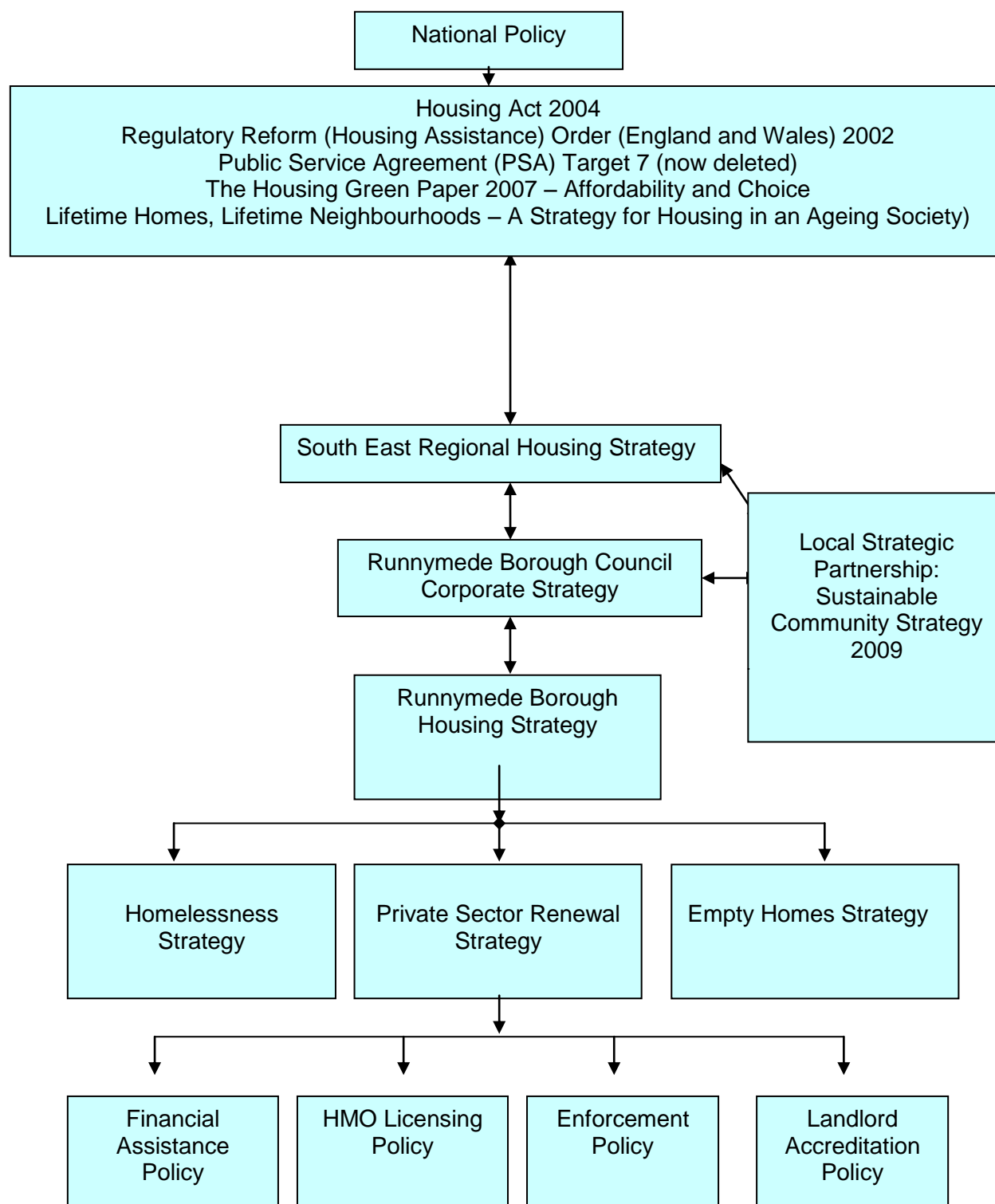
2.2.6 Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods. A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society (Communities and Local Government (February 2008))

The National Strategy document outlined the Government intentions to develop housing and services for older people. The emphasis is on local authority planning for older people, providing a range of accommodation, the introduction of personalised budgets as well as an increase in services such as a rapid response repair service, developing the Home Improvement Services and an increase in “Warm Front” provisions.

2.2.7 Energy Efficiency and Code of Sustainability Targets and Measures

The Government has introduced targets for the reduction of carbon emissions and there have been measures to assist and encourage actions to reduce fuel poverty. Initiatives such as the “Boiler Scrappage Scheme” which has now come to an end, increased insulation assistance are all aimed at reducing costs and emissions to meet these aims. It is predicted there will be many new policies and initiatives in the future which will need to be promoted and brought into action to improve conditions for the residents of Runnymede.

External Influences on the Private Sector Renewal Strategy



2.3 Regional

2.3.1 South East Regional Housing Strategy

The South East Regional Housing Strategy published by the Regional Housing Board (a partnership board of the South East Regional Assembly) stated that in order to meet the Government target, 42,000 private properties would need to be improved by 2010 in the South East, at an indicative yearly cost of £47.5m. This is clearly a very large amount of money. Therefore, the emphasis of policy has been placed on the potential for equity release in the private sector. It is recognised that to promote such schemes takes time but there is commitment to support the long-term development of successful schemes.

Schemes that support the reduction of fuel poverty have been supported and funding recommended towards such schemes. The Regional Housing Board will assess the percentage improvement of non-decent homes how many homes are improved with the funding provided by the Regional Housing Board.

2.4 Sub-Regional

2.4.1 Surrey and Hampshire Home Improvement Partnership (SHIP)

Following approval by this Committee in November 2007, the Council joined the SHIP partnership scheme. Members include Elmbridge, Guildford, Hart, Rushmoor, Spelthorne, Waverley, Woking, as well as Runnymede. There are three sub-groups:

- Private sector energy efficiency group focussed on “hard to heat” properties.
- Empty homes
- Equity loan scheme (based on equity release and operated by South Coast Moneyline).

These were the areas where bids were encouraged for funding by the South East Regional Housing Board.

Fuel Poverty Scheme

The energy efficiency scheme aimed at combating fuel poverty concentrates on a series of measures not normally covered by existing grant schemes. For example, older solid wall properties, those with inaccessible roof spaces, mobile homes etc. To date an agency, “Climate Energy”, has been appointed to administer the scheme and it involves carrying out surveys and organising works to these properties. For 2008/09 and 2009/2010, £556,000 has been allocated by the Government for the South East (GOSE) with a further allocation expected in 2010/11

Equity Loan Scheme

Runnymede decided not to take part in the equity loan scheme when it was initiated because of uncertainties over the revenue and capital resources that need to be committed. However, the results of the scheme will be monitored and considered and the Council may join the scheme at a later date. The more Council's that take part, the cheaper the fees for operating the scheme, so there is a benefit to all parties.

Empty Homes

A sub-group of local authorities received an allocation of £13,000 and have funded a website as a focus for activity across the partner authorities. Further investigation is being carried out to result in a “toolbox” of solutions for each local authority to adopt in order to tackle empty homes. Full details are outlined in the “Runnymede Empty Homes Strategy” adopted by the Council in January 2010.

2.5 Local Influences

2.5.1 Sustainable Community Strategy

The policy on renewal and assistance links into the wider aims outlined in the “Sustainable Community Strategy – Making a Difference” which is a refreshed strategy for the Council, updated in 2009 by the Local Strategic Partnership. Runnymede Borough Council’s aim is:

“To play an effective role in enhancing the quality of life for residents and providing an attractive environment for businesses and visitors.”

The key themes of the new Community Strategy aims to shape the future of Runnymede:

- Healthier and Safer Communities – encouraging pleasant neighbourhoods, less fear of crime, a safe and healthy environment for young people, and better access to health and social care for vulnerable people.
- Prosperous Communities – fostering economic prosperity, strong local businesses, vibrant town centres, reduced traffic congestion, an adequate supply of affordable housing, access to parks and open spaces, and sustainable use of resources.

To be successful with these two key themes, there are key actions identified. The relevant ones to this strategy are:

- Supporting vulnerable people
V2 - “improving the quality of life and independence for vulnerable and older people”.
- Increasing access to decent housing
H4 – “Ensure that wherever possible private and social housing is fit and of an acceptable standard.”

This strategy feeds into the Surrey County Sustainable Strategy and Local Area Agreement which is an agreement with the Government to meet National and Local priorities across Surrey.

2.5.2 The Runnymede Housing Strategy

Our Housing Strategy has the following commitment:

“To assess the housing and community needs of residents and provide good quality, cost effective services that meet those needs.”

The Private Sector Renewal Strategy supports this commitment.

2.6 Other Influences – Consultation Papers and proposed changes

- 2.6.1 The Government published a consultation paper in 2009 named “The Private Rented Sector: Professionalism and Quality. The Government Response to the Rugg Review”. The paper aims at improving the professionalism of the sector and the result could be increased regulation and accreditation of letting agents and landlords. This may have an impact on the private housing sector work and will need to be taken into account. There may be other changes over the next few years that will need to be tackled as and when they arise.

2.7 Other Influences - The Recession

- 2.7.1 The recession has influenced Government policy and priority for funding has been directed towards new affordable housing in an effort to stimulate the market. The recession will undoubtedly have other implications for local authorities and individuals alike such as:

- Potential cuts in public sector funding could impact on the funds available for private sector housing
- The ability for individuals to raise funds to carry out repairs or maintenance to properties may be more restricted due to a lack of finance and willingness on the part of lenders.
- Individuals may be concerned about taking on debt.
- The last recession resulted in a decline in the number of skilled workers in the construction industry. Indications are that this may happen again resulting in the long term in a shortage of skilled workforce to carry out repairs work.

- 2.7.2 We will monitor the impact of the recession and review and revise this strategy to take into account changes in the local housing market.

3 Housing Stock Condition, Housing and Related Needs in Runnymede

3.1 What do we know about the condition of private housing in Runnymede?

3.1.1 Runnymede is a relatively affluent Borough and the condition of privately owned homes is generally high. The 2008 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey provides valuable information about the private sector stock condition and how it has changed since the last survey conducted in 2003. The results will assist in directing scarce resources. The Survey was based on a physical survey of dwellings and a short socio-economic interview of inhabitants and in total 999 valid survey forms were completed. The survey data when weighted by dwelling and household variables is representative of all private sector dwellings.

3.2 Profile of the Housing Stock

3.2.1 There are 30,380 private sector dwellings in the Borough; of these 784 are vacant, leaving a total of 29,596 occupied dwellings. In addition there are 1,458 Registered Social Landlord dwellings which are not included in the main analysis and 3,200 Council owned properties. The stock comprises 25,883 (85.2%) owner occupied while the other 4,496 (14.8%) are private rented. The most common type of dwelling is semi-detached house, comprising 29.4% of the stock. Flats account for around 14% of the stock. The survey estimated that the stock is heavily concentrated in the post 1944 age bands with only 17% being built before 1919, compared with a national figure of 25%.

3.2.2 There is a higher proportion of bungalows than the Runnymede; 20.7% compared with an average of a lower proportion of terraced houses; 14.5% com

3.3 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSR)

3.3.1 The Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSR) is a risk assessment system developed by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and it replaced the fitness standard. The system identifies faults in dwellings and evaluates the potential effect of any faults on the health and safety of occupants, visitors, neighbours and passers by. The system grades the severity of any dangers present in the dwelling. By identifying "hazards", remedial action can be put in place to tackle the defects. When an assessment is made of a property, a score is produced which then determines a banding and subsequently Category 1 or Category 2 hazards, Category 1 being the most severe. Examples of Category 1 hazards are:

- Falls on levels
- Fire
- Damp and mould
- Excessive cold
- Crowding and space
- Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage



3.3.2 There are 29 Category 1 hazards in total. A total of 15.8% of private sector dwellings suffer from excess cold and 22.8% of private rented properties were identified as having this hazard. Falls on stairs and falls between levels are the other significant hazards identified. The most costly Category 1 hazard to remedy is excessive cold at a total cost of £5.8m. The survey showed high proportions of hazardous levels amongst vulnerable households. For example 27.9% of vulnerable households had Category 1 hazards in their homes and 25.4% of people with support needs.

3.4 Disrepair

3.4.1 The survey categorised repairs in terms of urgent repairs, basic repairs (required within the next 5 years) and comprehensive repair (required within the next 10 years). It was found that the average cost per dwelling of urgent repairs was £1,478 or a total of £42.8m across the whole Borough. The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs was £1,915 or a total of £55.4m across the Borough. The main problems were heating systems, kitchens and bathrooms and vulnerable and support needs households have considerably higher repair costs.

3.4.2 The 2003 Private Sector House Condition Survey found that although the costs of repair to the stock were less than the national average, the total was £91million. The 2008 survey total is £98million.

3.5 Decent Homes

3.5.1 The DCLG set a target of 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector to be living in decent homes by 2010, so the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey included an assessment for decent homes. A decent home is one that is warm, weatherproof and has reasonably modern facilities. The Government defines a home as “decent” if it meets all of the following criteria:

- It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing (HHSSR)
- Is in a reasonable state of repair
- It has reasonably modern facilities and services
- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

3.5.2 The results suggested that 33.6% of dwellings failed the standard under one or more of these headings. This figure compares with a national estimate (for private sector dwellings) of 37.5% and 28% from the 2003 survey. Of these 33.6%, 21.9% are considered to be vulnerable households. The 33.6% is lower than the average estimated by CLG in 2006 of 37.5%. The main reason for failing was Category 1 hazards. A total of 71.2% failed on only one of the 4 factors above. Only 3.6% need to reach decent home standard to reach the 2010 target. Groups with a high level of non-decency included private rented, pre 1919 and mobile homes. They also show high levels of lone parent, support needs and vulnerable households. The total cost of remedying non decent homes is £25.4million.

3.6 Houses in Multiple Occupation

- 3.6.1 The Housing Act 2004 provided a legal definition of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and introduced a requirement for some “high risk” HMOs to be licensed by local authorities. A Licensable HMO is one of 3 or more storeys and containing 5 or more people. The aim of the licensing regime is to provide greater protection to the health, safety and welfare of the occupants of this type of property. In general terms, HMOs are typically older dwellings and about 90% of households living in HMOs are childless adult households. Support needs and vulnerable households are slightly more likely to be living in HMOs than any other household group. In the Runnymede Borough, there are high concentrations of HMOs in Egham and Englefield Green.



- 3.6.2 The survey estimated that there were 1,143 HMO dwellings compared with 499 from the 2003 survey. This total is all HMO dwellings (shared dwellings) and not necessarily those eligible for licensing. The survey estimated that there are 33 HMO buildings that are likely to be licensable. However, the Council has to date licensed 63 HMOs. The Private Sector House Condition Survey estimated that 38.6% of HMOs have at least one Category 1 hazard and that 42.3% fail the Decent Home Standard.

3.7 Energy Efficiency

- 3.7.1 The 2008 survey compared Runnymede to the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), the Governments recommended system. The energy rating is based on the calculated annual energy cost for space and water heating and expressed on a scale of 0 to 100, the higher the number the better the standard. The findings of the survey showed:

- 97.2% of dwellings have central or programmable heating.
- 90.7% of dwellings have full or partial double glazing.
- The average SAP rating in the private sector is 52, which is above the average for England (47).
- Older dwellings typically display lower SAP ratings.
- It is estimated that household's current heating systems make for an average requirement to spend £630 on space and water heating. This is the amount spent to achieve a temperature of 21 degrees so households may choose to spend more or less. The average dwelling produces 6.77 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

- 3.7.2 The survey suggested ways of improving the energy efficiency of dwellings across the Borough. This is both in terms of improving SAP ratings and reducing the amount required to be spent on fuel. In looking at fuel costs, it is possible to calculate a “payback” period, which is simply calculating the amount of time it would take for the cost of improvements to equal the cost savings. There are three main ways in which the energy efficiency of dwellings can be improved; these are:

- Add or increase insulation to hot water cylinders, lofts and cavity walls.
- Upgrade or install heating systems e.g. gas powered central heating.
- Upgrade all windows to double glazing.

3.7.3 Significant potential improvements can be made to the energy efficiency of private sector dwellings in the Borough. An improvement in SAP of around 21% appears possible although this will be difficult to achieve as it would involve improving virtually every dwelling in the area to some degree i.e. 26,778 properties have been identified as needing a measure of improvement and at a cost of £57.5million. These improvements range from 25,389 properties requiring insulation only to 8,920 requiring double glazing. The pay back period for double glazing is very high at 63.5 years. The most cost effective package of measures is on improving insulation and installing central heating. By applying these two measures it would be possible to increase the average SAP rating in the Borough from 52 to 62. Maximum improvements to central heating and insulation across the whole of the private sector in the Borough would entail a total cost of 32.2 million.

3.8 The Private Rented Sector

3.8.1 There are 4,274 privately rented dwellings in Runnymede, of which 33% are flats and the majority occupied by non pensioner households without children. An estimated 30.8% of private rented dwellings were recorded to have a Category 1 hazard compared with 20.1% for the rest of the stock. The levels of disrepair in terms of costs are generally lower in the private rented sector although the standardised cost is slightly higher. The energy efficiency profile of private rented dwellings is poor although the SAP level is higher than the rest of the private stock. This can be explained by the nature of the stock i.e. large number of flats. 45.8% were found to be non decent.

3.9 Registered Social Landlords

3.9.1 The RSL dwellings are in general of better condition. For example only 13% have a Category 1 hazard and disrepair is less of an issue than the private sector. The energy efficiency profile is good with high levels of insulation and efficient heating systems. The average SAP ratings are 69 compared with 52 for the private sector. A total of 36.2% of RSL dwellings were found to be non decent, similar to the rest of the private sector but less expensive to remedy. The reason for the better condition is that the majority of RSL property is post 1980 construction.

3.10 Mobile Homes

3.10.1 There are 1,267 mobile homes in Runnymede, over a third built since 1990 and few occupied by households with children. An estimated 58.2% were recorded to have a Category 1 hazard compared with 19.7% for the rest of the Borough. Levels of disrepair and costs to repair are high. The energy efficiency profile is good when compared with other dwellings. However, the SAP rating is poor at 39 compared to 54 for other dwellings, explained by the large amount of external exposure. 62.5% of mobile homes were found to be non decent which is very high. There are also 20 permanent residential houseboat moorings at New Haw.



3.11.1 Fundamentally, it is the owner's responsibility to maintain and repair their own home and policy reflects this by placing greater emphasis on loans rather than grants. The Survey assessed owner's ability to fund the repairs and also taking into account equity release. It found that the total cost of remedying non decent homes in Runnymede for vulnerable owner-occupiers is £3.1million, of which £1 million can be paid for by owners and equity release. There was a general reluctance to examine this route by many home owners. For example, 34.8% of home owners were willing to consider equity release. In the private rented sector, the 369 vulnerable households living in non-decent accommodation would require a total spend of £0.8million. There is clearly a shortfall if income and equity release are taken into account. Equity release is unlikely and difficult with mobile homes.

3.12 Other Characteristics of the Population of Runnymede and Vulnerable Households

The Runnymede Borough Council Household Survey 2008 found that of the 32,500 households in Runnymede, there are nearly 12,000 households containing older persons, which is 35.1% of the total number of households. From the 12,000, some 8,573 older people live on their own. The following table shows the breakdown of frail elderly and physically disabled households within Runnymede.

Frail Elderly and Physically Disabled Households

Category	Number of households	% of all households
Frail elderly	1,312	4.0
Physical disability	2,511	7.7
Learning difficulty	470	1.4
Mental health problem	579	1.8
Severe sensory disability	660	2.0
Medical condition	2,459	7.6
Other	153	0.5

The information shown above only provides indicators but it does show that there are a significant number of households and people who may require assistance within Runnymede.

3.13 Conclusion and Policy Implications

3.13.1 The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey concluded that the condition of the housing stock in Runnymede is generally better than those found nationally. The costs of making the necessary improvements are very high and can only be partially met from the limited capital funds available to the Council. The results should however shape the Council's future strategy and package of incentives to support improvements in stock conditions. The Survey report recommended that financial assistance should be targeted at the following areas:

- Private rented dwellings
- Mobile homes
- Pre-1919 stock dwellings
- Vulnerable households
- Households with disabilities

3.13.2 The next section will outline the aims and objectives in order to identify and tackle the measures as identified.

4 Strategy, Aims and Objectives

4.1 The aims we wish to adopt in the Runnymede Private Housing Renewal Strategy are as follows:

- ❖ To enable the improvement of the physical condition of private homes in Runnymede
- ❖ To enable the improvement of the energy efficiency of private homes in the Borough
- ❖ To assist in meeting the needs of the elderly, vulnerable and disabled to meet their mobility needs in private homes

4.2 The objectives have been amended since the 2003 strategy to take into account the results of the 2008 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, new legislation and regulation and priorities. The changes are:

Objective 1	To identify, by raising awareness, and reduce the number of dwellings with a Category 1 hazard under HHSRS standards (as stated in the Housing Act 2004).
Objective 2	To increase the number of households living in decent homes, specifically the proportion of private sector housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable.
Objective 3	To reduce energy consumption and domestic carbon dioxide emissions of private sector stock under the 1995 Home Energy Conservation Act
Objective 4	To continue to identify and license Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and reduce the incidence of hazards as identified under the Housing Act (2004).
Objective 5	Where necessary to operate private sector enforcement policy in accordance with legislation to contribute to the improvement of the condition of the private sector stock.
Objective 6	To continue to promote and operate a landlords accreditation scheme.
Objective 7	To work with private landlords, letting agencies and others to promote responsible private renting
Objective 8	To operate a Home Improvement Agency to assist elderly and disabled homeowners and private tenants to live independently and safely in their homes.
Objective 9	To improve the energy efficiency of private homes and tackle fuel poverty.

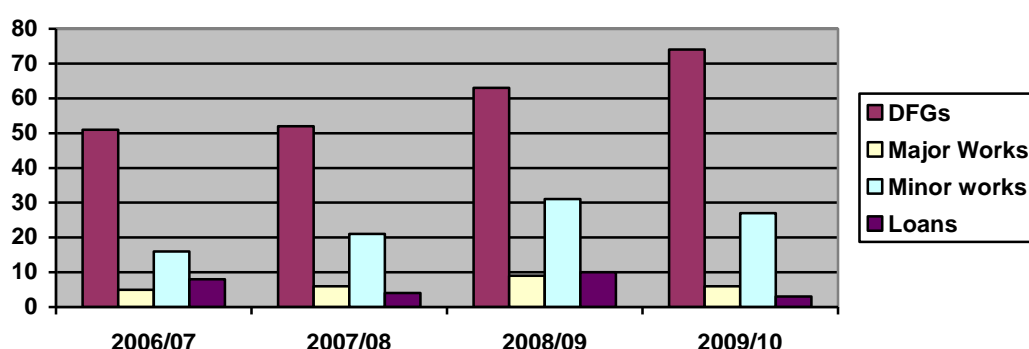
4.3 The policies and action plan set out in this strategy are directed to these aims and objectives and contribute to “enhancing the quality of life for all our residents”

5. Policy Implementation Tools

5.1 Advice and Assistance on Home Repair and Improvement

- 5.1.1 Advice and assistance to elderly and disabled homeowners seeking to adapt their homes to meet their needs is an area that is already well developed in Runnymede by the Home Improvement Agency, Runnymede Care and Repair. Since the 2003 Private Sector Renewal Strategy there have been 2,388 enquiries made to Runnymede Care and Repair seeking advice and assistance. The graph below illustrates the number of Disabled Facilities Grants, Major Works, Minor Works and Loans administered over the past 3 years.

The Number of Disabled Facilities Grants, Major Works, Minor Works and Loans Administered since 2006/07



- 5.1.2 In the 2003 Private Sector Renewal Strategy, a loans scheme was introduced to provide further financial options for homeowners and make the Council's limited financial resources assist more people by recycling loans repaid. Loans are increasingly being offered and this new strategy will continue to encourage loans rather than grants. Details will be outlined in a later section about financial assistance.
- 5.1.3 A range of leaflets were produced outlining the role of Care and Repair as well as contractors lists and where to go for further help. In 2005 extra funding was provided by Surrey County Council to pay for an additional part-time case worker to handle the increasing workload. Runnymede Care and Repair work closely with the Housing Needs Section where options of moving are considered more appropriate and it has resulted in successful solutions to problems of disrepair and adaptations.

5.2 The Development of Runnymede Care and Repair

- 5.2.1 Runnymede Care and Repair Agency consists of one and half case workers, a technical officer and admin support. The team offer a service to vulnerable clients to have adaptations, major or minor repairs carried out to their homes to enable to remain in their homes rather than be admitted to hospital or remain longer than necessary in hospital. The type of work carried out can range from small jobs such as grab rails and ramps to walk in showers, stair lifts and extensions to accommodate the occupants' disabilities.



- 5.2.1 The service is jointly funded from the Surrey County Council Supporting People budget. The Home Improvement Agency services across Surrey were reviewed in 2008. The findings of the study demonstrated that there are inconsistencies of service provision across Surrey. Some Councils do not have a Home Improvement Agency and some are managed by private agencies such as Anchor. There is a desire by Surrey County Council Supporting People to market test and re-commission the service across groups of local authority areas from 2011. Discussions are on-going and the result will be challenging for the service over the coming 2/3 years.
- 5.2.2 Government policy is focussed on people remaining in their own homes receiving support rather than be transferred to hospitals or expensive residential homes. Since 2006 the funding for all housing support services was transferred to Supporting People teams set up within County Councils. The budget was ring fenced for supported housing projects but from 2011 will no longer be ring fenced and in an era of financial restraint could be used for other areas of County expenditure. It has however been estimated that the Supporting People budget saves the public purse £33 million so it is envisaged that the funding, albeit in the current climate reduced, will remain for supported housing but there is a greater need for justification and accountability of services in receipt of funding.
- 5.2.3 In 2008 to 2009, we worked in partnership with Woking Borough Council to provide a joint handyperson scheme with funding provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Runnymede Borough Council benefited from a full time handyperson and in addition a part time handyperson was employed by Runnymede Age Concern. The Woking partnership was a pilot project and the funding ceased from November 2009. Funding was then secured to pay for a part-time handyperson employed by Age Concern, the result of which is a full time handyperson service overall within the Borough.
- 5.2.4 The pilot project with Woking introduced an in-house Occupational Therapist used by both Councils. Following a review of this project, funding has been confirmed from Surrey County Council for a part-time Occupational Therapist to be employed by Runnymede Borough Council to carry out assessments of clients applying for Disabled Facilities Grants for 2010/2011. This addition will complement the existing Care and Repair Agency and provide a more effective Occupational Therapist client assessment service. The intention is to improve service delivery response times against targets set by the Supporting People team and the DCLG.
- 5.2.5 The resultant service within Runnymede is along the lines of that outlined in the Government publication "Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods. A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society (Communities and Local Government) (February 2008). A Care and Repair agency linked to a rapid response handyperson service. The placement of an Occupational Therapist within the team will strengthen the activity and improve options and service delivery to vulnerable clients. The effectiveness of this appointment will be monitored to assess the effectiveness and success and encourage future funding for this post to be permanent.

Runnymede Care and Repair Performance Targets

- 5.2.7 Runnymede Care and Repair have performance targets set by the Surrey County Council Supporting People Team and the data is fed back to the DCLG. There are additional benchmarking measures being agreed between the Home Improvement Agencies in Surrey, some of which were suggested by DCLG guidance. The

performance targets include the number of enquiries received and jobs completed, the time taken to visit clients and time taken to complete jobs. This data is collected quarterly and reviewed by the Supporting People Team as well as used as a basis of good practice in partnership working with other agencies and authorities. The table below shows the performance against targets set for 2008/09 and 2009/2010.

Runnymede Care and Repair Annual Service Targets Reported to Supporting People

Target	Targets 2008/09	Actual	Targets 2009/10	Actual April 2009 to March 2010
Utilisation targets				
Number of new enquiries received	500	517	1,310	497
Number of jobs completed (over and under £1,000)	96	109	100	100
Response times				
Number of weeks between initial enquiry and first visit	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
Number of weeks between the first visit and completion of works for jobs costing less than £1,000	10	15.8	20	6
Number of weeks between the first visit and completion of works for jobs costing more than £1,000	20	34.9	35	33

5.2.8 The target for the number of enquiries received has been significantly increased from 500 to 1,310 but this target was not agreed with the Council and cannot be achieved within one financial year without increased resources or promotion. Runnymede Care and Repair has been successful in meeting most of the targets to date but the involvement of so many other parties e.g. Social Services, Occupational Therapists, specialists, equipment providers, contractors etc sometimes makes it difficult to achieve. There is often a great deal of work involved in advice and progression of adaptations which do not happen in the end for various reasons. Partnerships are being developed to improve relationships and response times. Other examples of projects to improve response times include improved procurement procedures with contractors to speed up the time taken to procure and to complete jobs, and generally reviewing procedures to improve accountability.

5.2.9 It is hoped that improved efficiency will enable the service to deal with the increase in demand that is currently being experienced and likely to increase in future years. The service has resulted in a more efficient and accountable delivery of DFGs and other repair options for the vulnerable residents of Runnymede.

5.3 Financial Assistance for Private Sector Home Repair and Improvement

5.3.1 This strategy extends the existing scheme of financial assistance for the repair, improvement or adaptation of private homes to allow more flexibility and provide more options for homeowners and tenants. The capital budget available for private sector housing is limited. Therefore, in order to ensure that resources are used effectively, the principles of financial assistance policy are:

- Homeowners are responsible for improving and maintaining their homes. Financial assistance from the Council is only appropriate where homeowners do not have the means to do so.
- The Council's financial assistance scheme must provide best value. In other words, the Council must use its public funds prudently and effectively. Loans will be provided in preference to grant aid. Grant aid will only be provided where loans are not appropriate (for example, where it is not possible to secure a loan on a mobile home).
- The scheme cannot assist all homeowners in need, or even all cases of unsatisfactory housing. The resources available to the Council are limited and compete with other demands for funding. Priorities for assistance are outlined below.
- Repair or adaptation of a property for the existing occupier may not always be the most reasonable and practical solution. In handling applications for assistance the Council will have to assess the appropriateness of the case and give consideration to alternatives such as re-housing or re-location. It is also possible that a homeowner's equity can be a source of financing home repairs and improvements even where the homeowner is on a low income.

5.3.2 The priorities for the financial assistance policy are:

- To assist low income elderly or disabled persons whose homes are in need of urgent repair to make their homes safe to live in.
- To assist low income elderly or disabled owner occupiers and private tenants to adapt their homes to meet their needs.
- To assist low income elderly or disabled homeowners and private tenants to be, and feel, safer in their homes.

5.3.3 The full details of the scheme of financial assistance and procedures for applying the loans contained in Appendix B, but can be summarised:

- Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants and Loans

These grants (DFGs) are mandatory and available to homeowners and tenants to cover the costs of works to adapt the home to meet the needs of the disabled person. The works needed have been extended to "access to the garden" and further clarification was outlined in the February 2008 Department of Communities and local Government publication "Disabled Facilities Grant – The Package of Changes to Modernise the Programme." The maximum amount of grant is £30,000 to include fees and charges. This scheme will now seek repayment of the grant should the property be disposed of (either by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) within 10 years. Up to a maximum of £10,000 will be repayable for grants over £5,000.

- Discretionary minor works assistance

This grant assistance consists of funding of up to £600 to carry out small scale works of repair, improvement or adaptation which address health, safety and

security needs or essential repairs. A limit will be applied of £1,800 per property over a 3 year period.

- Discretionary major works assistance

Major works grants will be available to cover essential major works which will remedy a hazard that otherwise would seriously affect the occupiers' well-being. The maximum grant will be £6,000 and no more than £12,000 on one property over 3 years to be payable.

- Decent Homes Loans

Loans will be made available to assist with essential repairs where elderly and disabled homeowners would otherwise be unable to carry out works. The maximum loan will be £30,000. Loans will be subject to interest either paid regularly or "rolled up" and paid when the loan is finally repaid on disposal of the property.

- Moving on Grants

In some situations, adapting the current property is not possible, appropriate or reasonable and other options need to be investigated such as moving home. These grants will be available to enable homeowners and tenants who cannot afford to move towards the cost of moving to more appropriate alternative accommodation. The financial assistance can be up to a maximum of £30,000 and the cost of any resultant DFG will also need to be taken into account in approving a moving home grant.

5.3.4 The capital and revenue resources of the Council are limited and equity release is an option recommended by the South East Regional Housing Board and acceptable in principle by the general public. However, it is a difficult and complex project to introduce involving financial advice. The equity release/loan scheme adopted by some members of the SHIP project operated by South Coast Money line has financial implications for the Councils involved. Therefore it is recommended that the success of the SHIP equity release scheme is monitored with a view to further investigation.

5.3.5 We will continue to monitor the package of financial measures to ensure that needs are met with the possibility of introducing other innovative schemes to increase and improve options.

5.3.6 We continue to work in partnership with other agencies such as Surrey Social Services, local health and other local authorities. There are cross boundary liaison groups such as the Surrey-wide Home Improvement Agency liaison group, where the development of policy and best practice encouraged. This work will continue and develop to provide opportunities for the best use of resources.

5.4 Licensing and Enforcement

Enforcement

5.4.1 The Housing Act 2004 introduced wider powers for local authorities to protect the most vulnerable people living in our community through licensing and enforcement procedures. In 2006, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) was introduced and replaced the Housing Fitness Standard as the new tool in assessing

the level of potential risks to the health and safety of occupants in residential properties.

5.4.2 The assessment considers the hazards that are most likely to be present in housing, the likelihood of an incident arising from the condition of a property and the likely harmful outcome. Properties are assessed against 29 hazards. It is then assessed against whether a dangerous occurrence is likely as a result of the hazard and also what the likely outcome of the occurrence would be. The hazards are placed in bands and categorised as Category 1 or Category 2. The local authority has a duty to take appropriate action where a Category one hazard exists and discretionary power to act where a Category 2 hazard exists and poses a risk to an occupier's health and safety. There are various "notices" the Council can serve on the owner:

- An improvement notice requiring remedial action
- A prohibition order which closes the whole or part of a dwelling or restricts the number of permitted occupants
- A Hazard Awareness Notice
- An Emergency Prohibition Order
- A Demolition Order
- Include a property in a clearance area

5.4.3 The Council can also take emergency remedial action. The Council can impose fines up to £5,000 against any owner, landlord or managing agent who fails to comply with a statutory notice. These powers allow the non-decent properties to be targeted and brought up to standard through enforcement action. This will improve the housing conditions for those within the private sector and ensure that targets to increase the number of vulnerable households living in decent accommodation are met.

5.4.4 Since April 2006, a total of 346 notices have been served. They have all been successful in bringing about improvement to the condition of properties. A breakdown is shown below:

A Summary of the Enforcement Notices Issued since April 2006

Type of Notice	Number
Improvement Notice	34
Prohibition Order	8
Hazard Awareness	3
Emergency Prohibition	5
Requisition for Information	92
Revocation Improvement	5
Revoke Prohibition	5
Notice proposing to grant licence	100*
Notice of decision to grant licence	93
Overcrowding notice	1
Total	346

* The majority of these notices result in the "Notice of decision to grant licence".

5.4.5 These measures can be added to options to facilitate improvements in the private sector. The last Private Sector Renewal Strategy outlined proposals to investigate options to facilitate improvements to a private sector housing development in the Borough (Douglas Road) where the condition of a number of leasehold flats has been deteriorating due mainly to the inaction of the freeholder. Since then, the residents have been tackling the freehold in an attempt to regain control, but conditions are still deteriorating. It is a very difficult problem to resolve and innovative measures will need to be identified on a corporate scale to ensure that the conditions of these properties are improved.

5.4.6 The majority of approaches to the private sector enforcement team consist of advice and assistance and often enforcement action is not required. The Council aims to work co-operatively with landlords with the use of enforcement action as a last resort. A private sector enforcement policy and procedures has been adopted that outlines the approach the Council takes in this area.

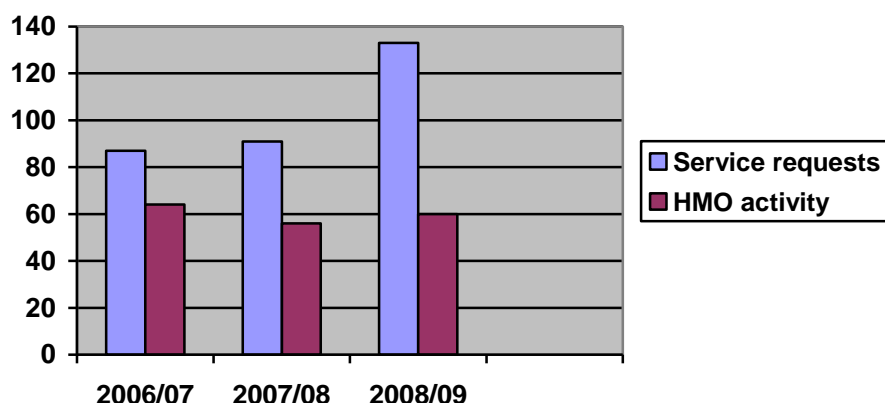
5.5 Licensing

5.5.1 Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 introduced mandatory licensing of certain types of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Such licensing aims to ensure that standards of accommodation and management practices within HMOs are raised to a decent level in order to protect the interests of vulnerable residents. The legislation applies only to properties that are over 3 storeys in height and have five or more households in occupation. To date, most HMOs that require licences have been identified and 63 licences have been issued.

5.5.2 Mandatory licensing has been generally accepted very well by landlords and both landlords and the authority see it as a positive step to improving property standards and identifying other landlords who are not complying with legislation. Further work is required to identify any other HMOs not already known. The 2008 Private Sector Stock Condition estimated that there are 1,143 HMOs within Runnymede but not all are subject to current licensing requirements. We are currently undertaking proactive inspections of non-licensable HMOs to ensure that they are also meeting licensable standards. This is proving successful as the majority of visits result in identified work for the landlord to carry out.

5.5.3 The graph below shows the number of service requests within the sector as well as HMO activity. Service activities include crowding assessments which is another duty of the section. Service requests are increasing in general but HMO activity decreasing slightly as the condition in the sector improves.

The Number of Service Requests and HMO activity - Private Sector Enforcement



5.6 The Runnymede Accreditation Scheme

- 5.6.1 In 2005, the Council introduced the Runnymede Accreditation Scheme, designed to promote good quality, well managed private sector accommodation for students of Royal Holloway and the University of London. The scheme has the full support of Royal Holloway, University of London and the Students Union. It is also supported by Surrey Police and the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and presently there are 178 accreditations.
- 5.6.2 Landlords are encouraged to apply for the Accreditation of properties that are let to students and they have to comply with a set of “Accreditation Standards” which cover minimum standards in relation to the management of the property, its physical condition and appearance. The Council assesses whether the standards are met before issuing an Accreditation Certificate. This can last for up to 5 years and the Council will monitor the property during this time to check if the standards are maintained. The scheme also encourages responsible behaviour by tenants through a “Tenant Code of Practice”. Landlords must issue all tenants of accredited properties a Tenant Code of Practice. This code guides tenants on how to conduct themselves in the property in order to help landlords maintain the property and help them participate in the community in a positive way.

6. The Private Rented Sector

- 6.1 The contribution of the private rented sector is valuable in meeting housing need across the Borough. We promote and encourage responsible letting practices, the rights of tenants and landlords and good conditions and standards in the private rented sector. The private sector housing team work closely with the Private Sector Resettlement Officer and Housing Advice Team. The Council operate a rent deposit and bond scheme to assist statutory homeless households to secure privately rented accommodation.
- 6.2 Housing advice and assistance is provided to private tenants and landlords through the Council's housing service and through the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). We hold joint landlords forums to encourage good practice and invite links to be made so that we can all work together for mutual benefit.

7 Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

7.1 Fuel Poverty

7.1.1 Fuel poverty exists where householders cannot afford to keep their home warm. This is caused by a combination of poor energy efficiency in the home and low income. The aim of our fuel poverty strategy is to ensure that all households in the Borough have the opportunity to achieve “affordable warmth”. This means that the householder needs to spend no more than 10% of their disposable income on fuel. Statistics in the English House Condition Survey 2001 found that there were 4,826 households in the private rented and social rented sector in fuel poverty which is 17% of the total number of households in Runnymede. In order to achieve the target of no more than 10% of disposable income being spent on fuel, the strategy is based on the following:

- Improving income levels through benefit maximisation. We work with CAB, Social Services, Health agencies and other voluntary groups to ensure entitlement to benefits is maximised and that help and assistance is offered to vulnerable groups to assist them in completion of benefit forms. Staff training in other areas assists to identify households who should be claiming benefits. For example, Runnymede Care and Repair often alert clients to their eligibility for benefits they are not currently claiming.
- Improving energy efficiency of homes in the Borough. This is set out in further detail below.
- Awareness of energy efficiency and availability of grants. We promote awareness of the use of heating systems, fuel prices, payment methods and budgeting as well as providing advice and assistance to encourage people to consider cost effective ways of heating and insulating their homes and using energy more efficiently.

7.2 Energy Efficiency

7.2.1 We have always been committed to improving the energy efficiency of homes in the borough to reduce CO2 emissions and help to meet the climate change targets. From 2002/03, 3,298 homes within Runnymede have had cavity wall insulation and 3,194 loft insulation. These figures include Council properties and the loft insulation was installed to the standards present at the time. The recommended thickness of loft insulation has steadily increased over the years. These figures do not include private owners who have purchased and fitted their own insulation.

7.2.2 Improvements in energy efficiency are required across all types of household in the Borough and across all types of property. The Government has set a target for Local Authorities to achieve energy savings of 30% by 2006 which was achieved and exceeded by Runnymede Borough Council. The Council was required to report annually on its progress in improving energy efficiency through its legal duties under the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA). However, it is now proposed to repeal the HECA 2006. The Council is awaiting confirmation concerning this and the replacement. There is no longer a requirement to report.

7.2.3 Section 3 above outlines the information from the 2008 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey concerning energy efficiency and SAP ratings. The survey examined the energy efficiency of the stock and suggested ways of improving the

energy efficiency of the total stock. The most cost effective package of measures suggested is to concentrate on insulation and central heating. By applying these two measures it would be possible to increase the average SAP rating in the Borough from 52 to 62. This Council sponsor and encourage schemes to assist with the provision of insulation and heating in order to improve the energy efficiency of properties within the Borough. Some of the initiatives are listed below:

7.3 Warm Front

- 7.3.1 Warm Front is a Government funded initiative operated by a Company called EAGA. The Warm Front scheme provides grants for insulation and heating improvements such as loft insulation, draught proofing, cavity wall insulation, hot water tank insulation, heating systems, energy advice and low energy light bulbs. In addition Warm Front will trial small-scale pilots for low-carbon heat and power technologies, such as solar thermal heating and air source heat pumps, which will be installed in a small number of properties. From 1 April 2009 until 30 September 2009 a total of £121,000 was spent in Runnymede to assist 60 households.

7.4 Runnymede Energy Efficiency Partnership

- 7.4.1 The Runnymede Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEP) is a partnership of the local authority and partner agencies and works hard to promote Government initiatives and grant schemes including those run by utility companies. There is currently a "Free Insulation Scheme" set up with Energy Efficiency Commitment Funding to assist some residents who may not be eligible for the Governments free Warm Front Grant scheme or are not in a position to be able to afford the cost of insulation to their home. This scheme is open to owner occupiers or those in privately rented property who have the permission of their landlord.

7.5 Runnymede Boiler Scrappage Assistance

A government supported boiler scrappage scheme was introduced in January 2010 and we introduced assistance of £100 to eligible households towards a new boiler. This is in addition to the £400 offered by the Government. This scheme is now closed to new applicants.

7.6 Surrey and Hampshire Home Improvement Partnership

- 7.6.1 The SHIP project has been outlined earlier in this document but consists of three projects: energy efficiency for hard to heat properties, empty homes and the equity loan scheme (equity release). The hard to heat project deals with single skin properties, mobile homes, and dwellings with no loft space and other instances where traditional methods of home insulation are not possible or feasible. Climate Energy has been appointed to carry out surveys and make recommendations. Some of the works are relatively expensive due to the nature of the solution, but this group is investigating alternative methods of treating these properties with insulation. It is hoped that this project will assist where others have been unsuccessful to date.
- 7.6.2 Since the beginning of the SHIP Warmth for 1000 scheme we have approved the installation of external insulation to 15 park homes and 3 for traditionally built properties. A further 6 park homes and 1 traditionally built dwelling are either awaiting survey or approval under the grant scheme for solid wall insulation. These figures are at March 2010 so we would hope to achieve more within the scheme timeframe to March 2011.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.1 The services we provide are often to some of the most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and disabled, particularly with the Care and Repair, and we try to ensure that all of the services are available to all of the community. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken with regard to this strategy and to ensure that the services provided are available to all and we collect data and statistics to monitor the situation.

9 Resources

- 9.1 The capital and revenue resources available to the Council are limited. The overarching policy of this Strategy is to use these resources where they can do most good. Therefore, our capital and revenue funds will be used flexibly, with funding following our priorities and initiatives as they develop.

Revenue Budgets

- 9.2 Our revenue budgets are set out in our Budget Book. For 2009/10 and 2010/11 the main revenue budgets that support this Strategy are:

Private Sector Housing: Revenue budgets		
	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000
Private Sector Renewal Assistance	85	88
Care and Repair Service	43	58
Housing Enforcement	94	70
Total	222	216

- 9.3 Runnymede Borough Council faces considerable financial challenges over the next few years. The Council is currently spending significantly more on services than can be supported by government grants and the council tax. Reserves are currently being used to plug the gap, but these will become exhausted in the near future. Despite Runnymede levying the 6th lowest local level of council tax in England, the governments capping rules prevent the increase of the tax above small percentage increments.
- 9.4 To meet this challenge and find the savings required to live within our means, the Council is carrying out a series of service reviews that will look at all the services delivered and suggest improvements, efficiencies and, inevitably, some reductions in service provision.
- 9.5 The medium-term revenue resources available to support our private sector housing strategy will be dependent on the outcome of these reviews.

Capital Budgets

- 9.6 The capital resources available for Runnymede Renewal are set out in our housing capital programme. This programme is updated to reflect new demands and policy initiatives, and the availability of resources.

9.7 The use of the capital resources over the past four years is set out in the table:

Private Sector Housing Renewal: Summary of capital expenditure over the past four years:				
	2005/06 £000	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000
Disabled Facilities Grants	452	377	237	350
Discretionary Renovation Grants	26	14	23	20
Major Works Assistance Grants	14	6	9	11
Loans granted	7	46	20	29
Total expenditure	499	443	289	410
Loans and grants repaid	0	(5)	(27)	(1)
Net total	499	438	262	409

9.8 The programme for 2009/10 and the following three years are set out in the following table:

Private Sector Housing Renewal: Capital programme:				
	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000
Disabled Facilities Grants	450	450	459	478
Discretionary Renovation Grants	25	25	25	25
Major Works Assistance Grants	9	14	14	14
Warmth for 1000 project	21	19	7	0
Loans granted	40	40	40	40
Total expenditure	545	535	545	557
Loans and grants repaid	(2)	(5)	(5)	(8)
Net total	543	530	540	549

9.9 The only external source of funding available to support the capital programme is government subsidy. Government subsidy is currently £270,000 a year. The DCLG is reviewing the methodology for assessing the capital allocation to local authorities to more reflect need, and this may impact on the level of Government funding in the future.

9.10 The remaining of the programme is financed by using capital receipts generated from the sale of other housing assets. It is Council policy to retain housing capital receipts, where possible under existing regulations, rather than pass a proportion over to the government. These retained receipts must be spent on 'housing and regeneration projects'.

9.11 The current financial forecast of the Council is based on the use of retained housing capital receipts to finance the Runnymede Renewal programme set out above, and our 'Homes First' policy of enabling new affordable housing provision. It is possible to switch funding between Runnymede Renewal and Homes First

subject to the necessary consent of the Council. This provides flexibility to meet the most urgent demand, within overall budgetary provision.

- 9.12 The provisions in the Housing Capital Programme are not sufficient to meet all housing needs. For instance, the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2008 estimated the cost of bringing vulnerable owner occupied homes to a decent homes level at £2million.
- 9.13 Therefore, the eligibility criteria for support is focussed on those with the greatest need, for example, those over 60 years of age, those with disabilities and/or in receipt of benefits.
- 9.14 As with revenue funding, the availability of capital resources is not assured. The impact of the recession on the availability of government grant and other resources adds a degree of uncertainty. In particular, the ability to fund the capital programme at current levels beyond 2012/13 is uncertain.
- 9.15 The move to loans and repayment of DFG grants will assist the funding position in future years and external funding sources will continue to be sought to supplement and secure the programme where possible.

Staff Resources

- 9.16 The Private Sector Housing team is small with 2.5 staff within Runnymede Care and Repair. There is a Private Sector Housing Manager and Officer to manage the private enforcement section (HMO licensing and housing standards) and the private sector is managed overall by the Private Sector Housing and Enabling Manager, all professionally qualified. There is also an Energy Project Manager to provide advice and assistance towards the energy efficiency issues. The activities outlined in this document are clearly wide ranging and demonstrates the professional approach required and adopted in order to achieve the results.

10 Implementation, Monitoring and Review of the Strategy

- 10.1 The strategy incorporates an action plan (Appendix A) to help to achieve the aims and objectives of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2010 to 2015. The achievements against actions will be considered in the Departmental Service Plan, which is reported to Housing and Community Services Committee and will be part of the Housing Strategy for Runnymede. The action plan will be updated as necessary and to take into account policy or legislative changes.
- 10.2 As mentioned above, Runnymede Care and Repair have performance targets set by the Surrey County Council Supporting People Team and the data is fed back to the DCLG. The performance data is collected quarterly and reviewed by the Supporting People Team. Runnymede Care and Repair has been successful in meeting most of the targets but with an increasing demand being experienced and forecast in the future due to an ageing population, several actions are being introduced to improve policies, procedures and partnership working to deal with the increase effectively.
- 10.3 The grant and loans scheme will be monitored and continually reviewed to ensure the most efficient use of limited resources. The increased use of loans and more flexible policy will encourage the best use of those resources.
- 10.4 The private sector enforcement team will continue to operate the HMO licensing, accreditation, and generally advising mostly tenants and landlords in order to improve standards and the health and well-being of the residents of Runnymede. The service will continually be reviewed and updated as necessary.

11. The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy – The Future

- 11.1 The new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy will update the Councils approach to delivering the varied services provided by the private sector section. There has been a great deal of change in National, Regional and Local policy over the past few years which influences the new policies being introduced. For example, an emphasis on disabled people remaining in their own homes rather than hospital and residential homes, a change to funding streams (Supporting People) and the introduction of new legislation, guidance and consultation.
- 11.2 There have been external influences, for example the recession and the impact to the local economy. There is a general move towards loans rather than grants and a more efficient use of resources. It seems that there are changes all the time. Changes are proposed and guidance issued in a number of areas. For example, the new HSSRS scheme introduced in 2006 included “overcrowding” assessments and guidance has been produced by LACORS to assist local authorities to introduce policies to tackle overcrowding. The Government is also likely to introduce changes to the regulation and licensing schemes for private landlords following the consultation paper “Private Rented Sector: Professionalism and Quality: The Government Response to the Rugg Review.” This may impact on the role of the local authorities. The aim of this report is to improve the professionalism within private renting and encourage landlords to deal with renting as a business.
- 11.3 The challenges ahead will be many and this strategy attempts to tackle those challenges with a considered and structured approach resulting in a good quality standard for the residents of Runnymede.