

South Kesteven District Council
Housing Strategy
2010-2013

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Introduction

The South Kesteven Housing Strategy 2010-13 is unlike previous housing strategies, in that it has been developed within the context of the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy 2008-13. This document has been agreed by a range of housing authorities and providers as an overarching strategic document to deliver the wider community aspirations set out in the Lincolnshire Sustainable Community Strategy.

This Housing Strategy is therefore focussing on the issues within the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy which are of particular relevance to South Kesteven as a District and identifying how the District Council, working with its partners, will seek to address these.

Information about the housing market, the demographic issues, and needs of particular groups have all been the subject of detailed research in partnership with other Councils and are detailed in the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy evidence base (available at [website address]).

This Strategy does not seek to repeat this information, but concentrates on identifying the key

issues within the Lincolnshire Strategy for South Kesteven, and setting out an action plan detailing what action is to be taken, what outcomes are anticipated, what resources will be required, and the timeframe for delivery.

The new Housing Strategy for South Kesteven is launched at a time of economic uncertainty and unprecedented housing market conditions. It will be important that it is kept regularly under review as these conditions change and for this reason a shorter timescale than normal has been taken for this document.

The strategy in context

Since the last Housing Strategy was produced, the Department of Communities and Local Government have published new statutory guidance called "Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities". This puts an emphasis on housing being at the heart of place shaping and Local Authorities having a more strategic role.

Housing Strategies are required by this guidance to:

- fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners
- reflect a clear and evidenced approach
- provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments, including on the infrastructure needed to support housing growth

The Lincolnshire context

In October 2009 the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy was launched. As a partner to the Strategy, South Kesteven District Council worked with other organisations across Lincolnshire to identify the main housing issues facing the County. This led to the

identification of eight key themes, and four main housing priorities for action:

1. To create a well-informed evidence base on housing markets, performance and housing need, to inform decision making
2. To ensure the people of Lincolnshire are both able to access and afford suitable housing to meet their needs
3. To improve the co-ordination of housing's contribution to Lincolnshire's economic development
4. To contribute to raising the quality of design in housing and the creation of sustainable homes
5. To develop approaches and frameworks to enable sustainable communities
6. To meet the affordable housing needs of rural communities
7. To improve service quality, housing choice and accessibility of housing for vulnerable people
8. To manage the housing implications of an ageing society

The overarching priorities for housing in Lincolnshire are to:

- Increase the supply of affordable housing across Lincolnshire
- Increase the supply of affordable homes in rural communities
- Meet the challenge of our ageing population
- Assist vulnerable households

The South Kesteven context

In developing the new local Housing Strategy South Kesteven District Council was keen to reflect these Lincolnshire priorities, and place specific focus on the areas which are of relevance to South Kesteven as a District, given our own issues and corporate priorities which can be summarised as follows:

Customer First:

- Ensure that we understand what each customer wants from services now and in the future
- Get it right first time
- Deliver equally to all areas

Quality Organisation:

- Initiate a 'customer first' training programme, to ensure that the customer is at the heart of what we do
- Focus on equality and diversity issues
- Assess housing assets
- Improve communications

Good for Business:

- Encourage sustainable growth through the promotion of key town centre sites for businesses in Grantham & Bourne, and major housing sites in Grantham.

Quality Living:

- create more affordable homes and improve energy efficiency
- provide advice and grant assistance to improve fuel efficiency in homes
- Improve the condition of South Kesteven's own housing stock
- Adapt a homes for people with disabilities

The Housing Strategy 2010-2013 therefore aims to

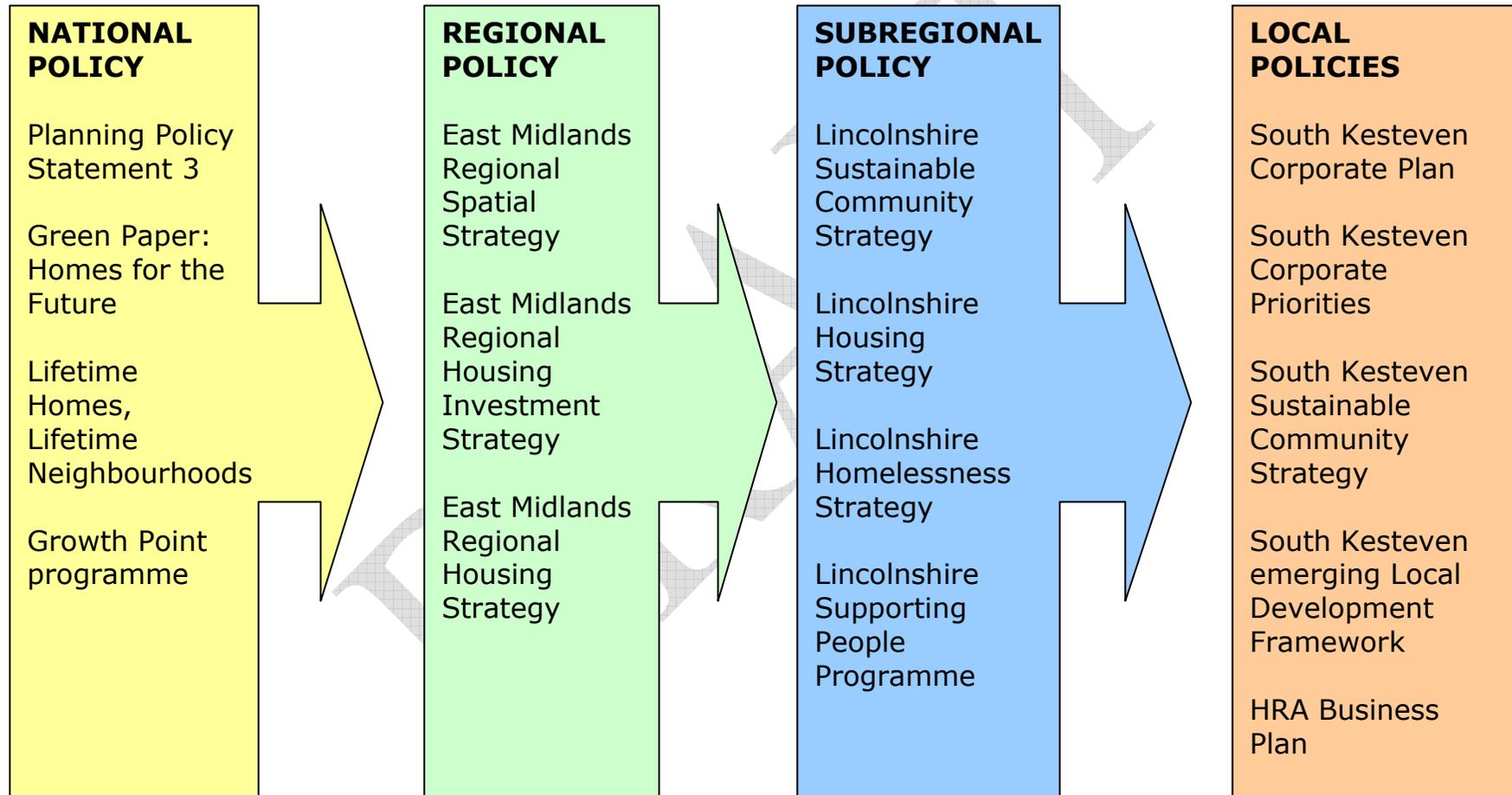
- Reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners as demonstrated in the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy

- Provide a clear and evidenced approach to prioritising action on housing at county and local level; and
- Provide a strong focus on how the Council working with its partners will deliver actions which will address local housing issues and support its wider corporate priorities

For more information about South Kesteven, visit our website: www.southkesteven.gov.uk

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Context



The development of the strategy

The approach that was taken was to involve key stakeholders in the development of the strategy, rather than to produce a draft strategy for consultation. There were five workshops that were held in Grantham, Bourne and Stamford. There was also a Marketplace event held at Grantham which was open to the public for consultation. At this event, stakeholders and South Kesteven officers had stands to offer information in order for residents to have their say and be informed about future priorities in the Housing Strategy.

The aims of the workshops were to provide stakeholders the opportunity to influence and help set options moving forward with the new Housing Strategy. Differing issues and options had been discussed by officers and members at the Council ahead of the stakeholder events and it was these that were first discussed.

There were originally five main themes focussed upon Understanding Community Needs and Aspirations, Maximising our Resources, Creating a Quality Housing Environment, Ensuring Housing is Affordable and finally Providing Advice and Support.

These five themes have since been merged into the three themes of Meeting a range of needs for housing and support; Maximising our resources; and Delivery of a quality, affordable housing environment which will provide the main structure for the new strategy.



Throughout the process the work has been supported by a multi-disciplinary officer team drawn from across the Council and guided by the Housing Strategy Member Working Group, reporting to the Communities Policy Development Group.

Key Housing Issues in South Kesteven

The three key themes which have emerged for the housing strategy of “Meeting a range of needs for housing and support”; “Maximising our resources”; and “Delivery of a quality, affordable housing environment” were informed by the discussion at the workshop events of a number of housing issues which were felt by stakeholders to be of local importance for the District.

A summary of the main points of discussion which has informed the development of the action plans is given below.

Meeting a range of needs for housing and support

Rural housing needs

With the exception of our main towns, (and in particular Grantham and Bourne, the two key areas of targeted housing and business growth within the Council’s priorities), the remaining settlements in the

District fall within the definition of “rural” of settlements of under 10,000 population.

There is a need for improved information about rural housing need. SKDC requires a clear strategy to meet rural housing need which will ensure that its actions in its enabling role in rural settlements is strategically driven and delivers defined outcomes

Whilst the significant growth planned in Grantham and Bourne will deliver a proportion of new affordable housing, the housing needs of rural settlements need to be kept separately under review.

Rural housing need has historically been assessed on a locality basis in partnership with providers. A strategic and community based approach is now under development which will inform choices about where rural housing development will be supported. It is not anticipated, given the lack of available funding, that there will be significant levels of development in rural areas; rural housing development will only be supported in line with planning policy where a local need for housing can be robustly demonstrated.

Meeting the housing and support needs of older people and understanding the needs of other groups

There is a need to test that current methods of providing housing services in the District are meeting the needs of the diverse communities living in South Kesteven

The population of South Kesteven is diverse and changing as a result of demographic shifts. It is important that the housing services which are on offer are appropriate and accessible for all communities, and that agencies work together to co-ordinate service provision to meet needs.

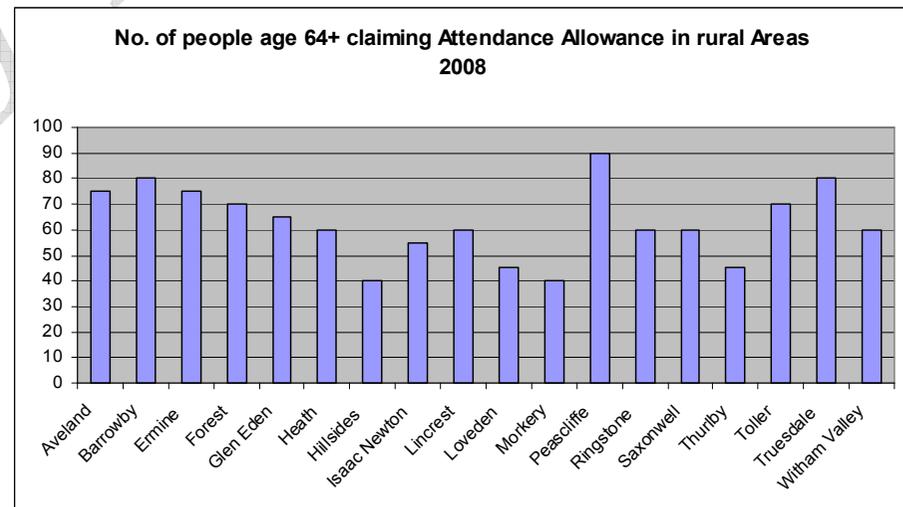
Further joint working and improved signposting of services for hard to reach groups including those from ethnic minorities, young people, and those people who are homeless were areas of improvement that were highlighted through the consultation events.

It was recognised that there are a range of groups with other support needs whose needs for housing advice may not be appropriately met at present. There are significant populations in the District of

people with physical disabilities, mental health problems and learning disabilities, whose access to services should be assessed to see whether their customer experience could be further improved.

Work should be carried out to ensure that older people in South Kesteven are readily able to access information to inform them about a wide range of housing choices and options.

A significant number of older people in the rural areas in the District are in receipt of attendance allowance



and therefore accessing some form of support or care in their own homes.

These older people may or may not have information available about the range of housing support and accommodation options that are available to them.

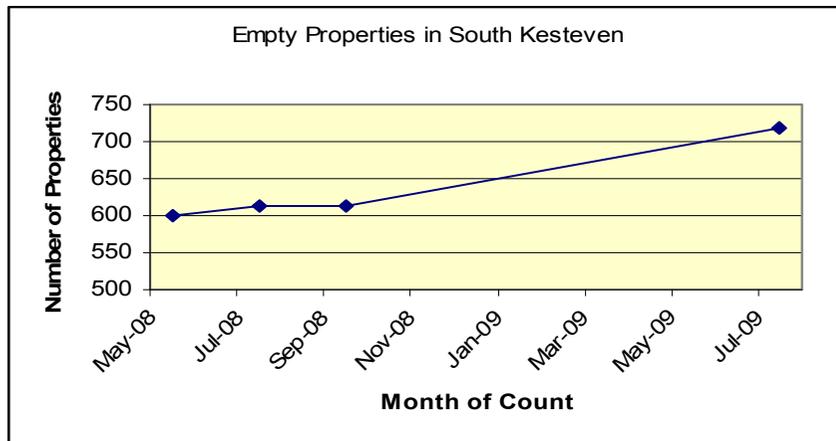
South Kesteven is working with other public and voluntary sector agencies to offer the "First Response" service through which a resident can highlight a whole range of types of support that would be useful for them to maintain their independence in their own home, and through this service access all of these agencies with a single initial assessment.

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Maximising our resources

Making the most of private sector housing

There is a need to improve the quality of data available on empty properties and develop a strategy so these properties can be brought back into use effectively and efficiently



Available data on empty properties shows this to be an increasing issue in the District. Concerns were raised that this not only contributed to housing need, but that it also impacted on the quality of life in

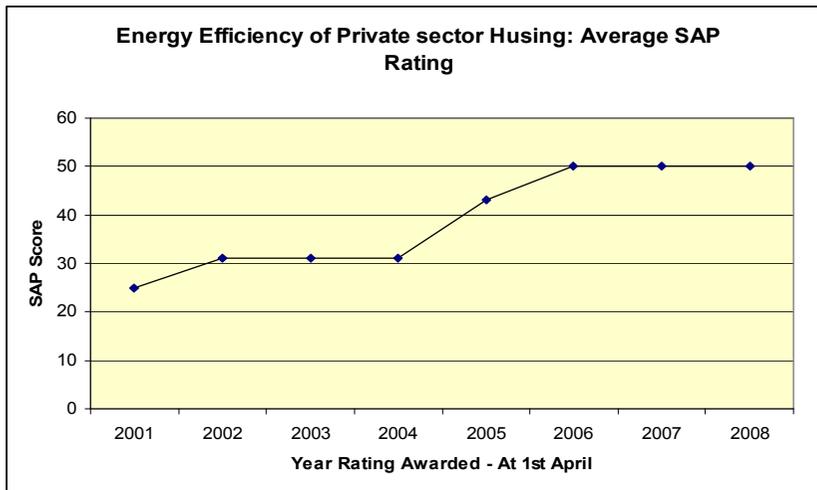
neighbourhoods, as empty properties were subject to deterioration and could blight an area. The Council had had success in recent years in working with private property owners to bring properties back into productive use and this work could be further targeted.

There is a need to ensure that private sector housing meets decent homes standards, particularly for those properties which are occupied by vulnerable people

The Council receives grant funding through the regional housing allocations to support its work in the private sector and has funded a range of improvements targeted at vulnerable households.

This work could be further directed through an area based renewal approach to support the key priorities of the Council in improving areas in Grantham and Bourne to incentivise further development and growth.

This will require a review of the Council's current Private Sector Housing funding policy.



Although the energy efficiency of private sector housing in the District has been on the increase in recent years, further targeting of regional funding towards this agenda both meets requirements for improving stock condition, and also addresses fuel poverty issues by improving homes so that they are less expensive for residents to heat.

The District Council has recently received the report of the Lincolnshire wide private sector house condition survey and this has highlighted an increase in the number of vulnerable households in homes in the

private sector that fail the decency standard. This information will be used to review the policies in the Private Sector Housing funding policy, to target resources to areas of greatest need, and those localities which meet with the Council's wider corporate priorities.

Maximising use of public sector resources and assets

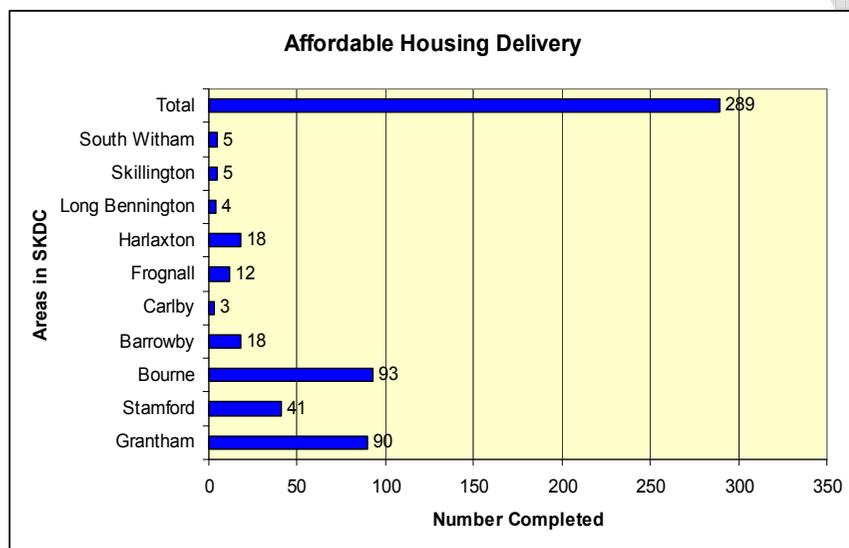
Public sector agencies need to examine all ways to pool or align resources or jointly commission housing services and create efficiencies

With public sector spending under increasing pressure, it is important that all opportunities for funding for local services are explored and exploited. South Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council are working with the Homes and Communities Agency to develop a Single Conversation Investment Plan for Grantham which will detail how pooled and aligned funding streams will be used to support proposals for housing and economic growth in the town.

Historically South Kesteven has performed well in terms of new affordable homes delivery with completions reaching a peak in 2008/9 (see below), supported by central government funding, or delivered through planning gain as a result of market housing development on major sites. With increased pressure on public sector capital resources, the joint agreement of targeted investment priorities will be key to ongoing delivery of new affordable homes in areas of demand and growth.

SKDC needs to keep the quality of its own stock and viability of management of the housing stock under continual review, and to plan for meeting decent homes standard

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Housing Asset Management Plan have both been the subject of a comprehensive review, following a recent 100% stock condition survey, in parallel with the development of the Housing Strategy.



In line with this housing strategy, the Council will be targeting action around improving energy efficiency and affordable warmth to increase the numbers of homes qualifying as Decent Homes to over 80% by March 2010. Further work is programmed to December 2010 to ensure that all the Council's stock reaches the Decent Homes standard by this date.

Delivery of a quality, affordable housing environment

Incentivising quality through minimum design standards to promote economic, social and environmental sustainability of developments

As part of its place shaping role the Council should take action to promote improved quality of design in all development

As a Growth Point Council, the authority is expected to work with its partners to ensure that delivery of new housing reaches the highest design and environmental standards possible. This can be delivered through partnership agreements with housing providers, and also through requirements in the planning framework.

Ensuring that there is sufficient housing which is affordable in the District, regardless of tenure

There is a need to continue to maximise provision of new social rented and affordable housing through market housing development

The bulk of affordable housing development going forward will be delivered through the planning framework as part of the planned major housing developments for Bourne and Grantham.

Other small rural schemes will be supported where these have been identified as priority by the Council on the basis of locally assessed and demonstrated housing need, and where funding is available from government or private sector sources to support the development.

There is a need to maximise levels of housing benefit take-up and ensure that all residents are aware of their benefit entitlement

Affordability of accommodation is also governed by the availability of finance. In many cases it is thought that local residents are not accessing the benefits to which they are entitled to help them with paying for their home. It is important therefore that benefit entitlement is widely publicised, with all housing advice services able to signpost residents to the appropriate advisors to enable them to access those

benefits to which they are entitled, and that our customers receive fast, efficient and accurate advice.

The need to support vulnerable households by the promotion of affordable warmth

The promotion of affordable warmth addresses issues of poverty in households, improves the quality of life of vulnerable groups such as older people, improves housing condition and also addresses issues of environmental sustainability. It is seen as an increasing issue given the changing age demographic of the South Kesteven population.

Targeted action within our own housing stock will improve the insulation and warmth of their homes by March 2010, and meet the Decent Homes criteria.

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Action plans

Committee through the Council's established priority monitoring framework.

The action plans on the following pages represent the Council's delivery programme in line with the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy. These actions are those which will support the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy aims and objectives and which are of most relevance to South Kesteven and the Council's agreed priorities.

The actions are to be delivered within the existing resources available to the Council and there are no major areas of growth. Where resources are to be targeted at a new activity, there will be reduction in other areas which are considered to have less priority.

The scale of delivery of the programme will be dependent on the availability of resources both within the Council and from external and partner sources, and targets for delivery and performance will be set annually through the Council's service planning process, taking account of the availability of resources; and monitored by the Cabinet and Scrutiny

Actions to meet a range of needs for housing and support

Theme 1: Meeting a range of needs for housing and support					
ACTIONS	MILESTONES	LEAD OFFICER	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	OUTCOME
Rural housing needs					
Develop a strategy for the assessment and meeting of rural housing needs.	Incorporate rural affordable housing sites within the SHLAA refresh and examine cross-authority approaches to rural housing needs assessment	Karen Sinclair	by March 2012	Incorporated within existing LDF programme	Sites considered as possible locations for rural affordable housing identified.
Carry out a rolling programme of surveys in rural communities	Develop a programme for in-house rural housing needs survey work	Karen Sinclair	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources	Up to date and community based information available on rural housing need
Meeting the housing and support needs of older people and understanding the needs of other groups					
Carry out a full equalities impact assessment of housing information and advice centres.	Work with organisations supporting for example older people, those with mental health problems, physical disabilities or learning disabilities to carry out a full review of our services	Kevin Martin, Jane Booth	By March 2012	Within existing staff resources	Full equality impact assessment carried out to inform future service delivery.
Continue to work with other agencies through the South Kesteven Homelessness Forum to deliver services to people who are homeless.	Collate information from other agencies to map unmet need for services.	Kevin Martin	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources	Information available on unmet need to inform future service delivery

Theme 1: Meeting a range of needs for housing and support (contd)

ACTIONS	MILESTONES	LEAD OFFICER	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES	OUTCOME
Develop a local strategy based on information about housing needs and aspirations of older people	Set up a partnership project group to develop a South Kesteven Housing with Care strategy	Steve Cullington	By April 2010	Within existing staff resources	All partners involved in developing housing with care strategy
	Publish South Kesteven Housing with Care strategy	Steve Cullington	By April 2012	Within existing staff resources	A strategy to inform future development of services for older people and others needing care in housing

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Actions to maximise our resources

Theme 2 - Maximising our Resources					
ACTIONS	MILESTONES	LEAD OFFICER	TIMETABLE	RESOURCES	OUTCOME
Making the most of private sector housing					
Develop an Empty Property Strategy to set out and agree the range of options for dealing with empty homes in the District.	Produce a draft empty property strategy including revised policies for inclusion in the private sector housing policy	Kev Martin	By March 2012	Within existing staff resources, and existing regional housing allocation for private sector renewal	Action and resources targeted leading to increased numbers of empty homes being brought back into use
	Create a database of empty properties	Kev Martin	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources	comprehensive information available to inform action against empty properties
Develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy to support the implementation of the Private Sector Housing funding policy	Evaluate private sector stock condition survey data	Kev Martin	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources	Local report on private sector stock condition to inform policy choices
	Increase levels of enforcement in relation to private sector housing conditions, particularly in the private rented sector	Kev Martin	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources	Increased role around enforcement to improve private sector housing conditions in the District
	Create awareness with tenants regarding stock condition - "are you living in a decent home?"	Kev Martin	By March 2012	Within existing revenue budgets	Information available in a range of formats to advise tenants
Review the Private Sector Housing funding policy to target funding in area based renewal and to effect key policy objectives	Private Sector Housing funding policy reviewed and new policy direction approved	Kev Martin	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources, and existing regional housing allocation for private sector renewal	Policy revised and targeted to achieve key priorities.

Theme 2 - Maximising our Resources (contd)					
ACTIONS	MILESTONES	LEAD OFFICER	TIMETABLE	RESOURCES	OUTCOME
Maximising use of public sector resources and assets					
To examine all opportunities for a joined up approach to managing funding streams	Engage in the Single Conversation with the Homes and Communities Agency and secure funding for new housing and the Grantham Growth project	Teena Twelves, Karen Sinclair	By March 2010	Within existing staff resources	Funding available to support the delivery of new housing and growth in Grantham
Carry out options appraisal for SKDC housing stock taking into account requirements of the Decent Homes Standard and the revised Housing Revenue Account financing regime	Approve HRA business plan and asset management strategy	Richard Wyles	By March 2010	Within existing staff resources	Clear strategic vision to maintain the condition of SKDC's housing stock
	Deliver a programme of improvement work to SKDC own housing stock to improve energy efficiency and aim to reach the Decent Homes Standard by December 2010	Paul Stokes	By March 2015	Within available HRA resources	Clear strategic vision to maintain the condition of SKDC's housing stock
	Plan for ongoing strategic review of stock options in line with strategic housing needs	Teena Twelves, Richard Wyles	By March 2015	Within available staff resources	Options for stock kept under regular review
Consider costs and benefits of local authority new build	Produce a feasibility report on new build LA Housing	Richard Wyles, Teena Twelves	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources	Information available to enable decisions to be made about delivery options for new affordable housing

Actions to deliver a quality affordable housing environment

Theme 3 - Delivery of a quality, affordable housing environment					
ACTIONS	MILESTONES	LEAD OFFICER	TIMETABLE	RESOURCES	OUTCOME
Incentivising quality through minimum design standards to promote economic, social and environmental sustainability of developments					
Develop the urban design framework for the District	Develop and adopt the urban design framework for South Kesteven	Karen Sinclair	By March 2012	Within existing staff resources	appropriate planning guidance available to inform development within the Local Development Framework
Review the affordable housing delivery partnership	Develop approved design and quality standards for new affordable housing in the district	Karen Sinclair	By September 2010	Within existing staff resources	Stronger partnership with clearly defined outcomes and standards of delivery
Ensuring that there is sufficient housing which is affordable in the District, regardless of tenure					
Adopt a policy to support negotiation of an appropriate level of intermediate and affordable housing on proposed new housing developments	Develop and adopt a Supplementary Planning Document for Affordable Housing contributions as part of the Local Development Framework	Karen Sinclair	By March 2012	Within existing staff resources	Appropriate planning guidance available to inform development within the Local Development Framework
Work with partners to carry out a benefit take-up campaign	Plan and promote a housing benefit take-up campaign with partners	Kev Martin, Craig Scott	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources	Improved levels of benefit take-up leading to improved access to affordable housing across all tenures

Theme 3 - Delivery of a quality, affordable housing environment (contd)

ACTIONS	MILESTONES	LEAD OFFICER	TIMETABLE	RESOURCES	OUTCOME
Review how we can assist householders on improving energy efficiency of their homes	Produce a report detailing the extent of fuel poverty in the district	Kev Martin	By September 2010	Within existing staff resources	Improved information to target regional funding resources
	Promote schemes operated in partnership with the private sector energy providers to promote energy efficiency	Kev Martin	By March 2011	Within existing staff resources	Improved access for residents to energy efficiency schemes
Pilot renewable energy technology in Council-owned housing	Deliver a renewable energy scheme to inform future investment	Paul Stokes	By March 2012	Within existing HRA resources	Improved environmental efficiency of the Council's own housing stock

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