

**APPENDIX A
GOSPORT BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOMELESS STRATEGY REVIEW 2009-2014**

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The last homeless strategy review, conducted in 2005/06 pulled together some key themes. These themes are intended to enable readers to obtain an overview of what can be a very detailed and complex strategy. These themes are now re-visited, amended and new themes added. This review also closes-down exhausted themes.

1.2 The last review had the following five themes:-

Section 15	Are there any significantly different homelessness profiles (including prevention) in Gosport compared to the national average? Why are there differences?
Sections 2 -4	What are the possible explanations and responses to the fact that Gosport has a significantly higher rate of homeless acceptances than the average in South East England region?
Sections 6 - 8	Is the temporary accommodation strategy fit for purpose and efficient? What can we do to address the variation in discharge of homeless duties for those in temporary accommodation?
Section 9	How is this Council to achieve the ODPM target of 50% reduction in all temporary accommodation by 2010?
Section 11	Is the homeless strategy integrated with other strategies?

1.3 The themes that have been added are:

Section12	How should this Council respond to the developing issues surrounding young people (16/17 year olds) and care leavers following the <i>Southwark</i> judgement (House of Lords).
Section 13	What has been/will be the impact of the Rowner re-development?
Section 5	What is our fundamental service priority, and how should resources be configured to achieve this?
Section 10	How are the national austerity measures going to affect the service and what options are there for responding?
Section 14	What can be done to increase the availability of supported housing in Gosport given the high profile of single vulnerable customers in Gosport?

1.4 All of the above themes are considered in a sequence that follows the golden thread of the service.

2.0 What are the possible explanations and responses to the fact that Gosport has a significantly higher rate of homeless acceptances than the average in South East England region?

2.1 Section 15 of this document details the overview of statistical analysis undertaken as part of this review. There are two areas of significant interest:

- a. Gosport Council's exceptionally good record in respect of homelessness prevention (see Section 15); and,
- b. That despite Gosport's exceptional prevention record, the district is still characterised by a high homeless acceptance rate.

2.2 This section discusses the latter point as it is pivotal to understand why the Gosport Housing Options Service is as it is. The table below sets out results for Gosport, South East England, and a Police benchmarking group (Family 10).

2.3 The table shows Gosport as distinctive from the rest of South East England, but very similar to the Family 10 benchmarking group. There

Area	2005/06 strategy review households accepted per 1,000 in district (average quarterly result)	2009 strategy review households accepted per 1,000 in district (average quarterly result)
Gosport	1.7	0.7
S.E. England	1.4	0.33
Family 10 Benchmarking Group	0.7	0.6

is then an intriguing question of which authorities this Council should measure itself against. In order to achieve a suitable benchmark against Gosport it is important that the right organisation is chosen and that the comparison is suitable (i.e. Not apple with pear).

2.4 Since the last strategic review the development of the Local Strategic Partnership (which is now being superseded by the newly forming Gosport Partnership) has significantly improved understanding of the local context. There are many ways to look at how a district is fairing. In terms of measured performance indicators Gosport continues at the bottom or near the bottom of the Hampshire league. The DCLG's wellbeing assessment ranks all districts and this ranking depicts quite well the relative position of Gosport measured over a wide range of factors (see table one below).

Hampshire district	Wellbeing Average Ranking Nationally out of 354 districts	Comments
Hart	1	
Fareham	17	
Winchester	21	
East Hampshire	35	
Eastleigh	64	
Test Valley	72	
New Forest	93	
Basingstoke	122	
Rushmoor	193	
Gosport	229	Ranking is 249 excluding environment ranking
Havant	271	

- 2.5 What is being said here is that the context of Gosport exposes the district's homelessness services to a far greater potential load. Within that general picture it is also the case that some local factors carry particular significance in how that potential load translates to actual customer demands upon specific services such as homelessness services. Local factors that carry with them particular significance for a homelessness service includes:-
- a. Gosport's high demographic profile of young people (homelessness is heavily skewed towards younger adults);
 - b. Significant pockets of socio-economic deprivation.
- 2.6 The reasons why young people are very heavily over-represented in homelessness are about the lack of accrued personal wealth, both financial and social, which exposes young people to increased risk of homelessness.
- 2.7 Taking the above into account we know that we are simply not comparing like for like if we compare with other Hampshire districts. Whilst the Family 10 Benchmarking Group has continued to show a close overall comparison with Gosport it is still important to note that homeless results across Family 10 authorities still contains a significant spread of results. It has been concluded that homelessness results do not depend solely upon the general factors measured in data sets – there are additional factors that determine the local context. What can these additional factors be?
- 2.8 Two additional factors have been identified that are considered to have a major impact on the local context. These are:

- a. The relative capacity of services in the district that provide options for people to avoid homelessness (available resources: these go far wider than the Council alone);
- b. How the Council administers its homelessness functions.

3.0 The relative capacity of services in the district that provide options for people to avoid homelessness.

3.1 This lack of capacity is, for example, evidenced through the Hampshire Supporting People Strategy. Gap analysis not only looks at what is available in a district but whether that resource is enough. It is accepted that there are some “hot spots” in Hampshire where more investment is needed and Gosport has been a major beneficiary. For example, in the last re-investment of Supporting People money Gosport won 28% of available County funds compared to a Gosport population of 6% of County (CMT Housing Position Statement Report June 2009).

3.2 A simple illustration of the impact of available resources is as follows. Between April and June 2010 Basingstoke district evidenced 15 customers of age 16/17 being accommodated into supported housing schemes. In the same period Basingstoke Council homelessness service accommodated 0. For Gosport the comparative figures are 2 people accommodated in supported housing and 8 housed in homeless accommodation. In other words, the statutory homeless service in Gosport has had to step-in because of insufficient resources in the supported housing sector, whereas in Basingstoke the resources in the supported housing sector are sufficient to meet demand (source: Hampshire districts analysis of 16/17 year old outcomes, Hampshire 16/17 year old steering group).

3.3 The very real difficulties here are two-fold for Gosport:

- a. Re-investment in Gosport requires resources to be stripped from districts elsewhere in Hampshire. The Supporting People Strategy has approved a 0.5% of budget reinvestment which will have only limited capacity to address geographical “hot spots”. This decision reflects the political sensitivity that is inevitable with possible closures of schemes in one district to enable another district to benefit from a new service. Gosport is continuing to insist that the Policy of 0.5% re-distribution is honoured. However, Supporting People budgets are set to decline significantly. The 2009/10 Hampshire County Council (HCC) review of homelessness services achieved a 6.5% cut, but the next (HCC) review in 2012/13 is projecting a 23% minimum cut. Greater detail will be published in October/November 2010 Members Information Bulletin.

- b. It has to be acknowledged that there were, historically, concerns as to Gosport's capacity to successfully steer a proposed vulnerable person's hostel through the various stages to realisation of a new scheme. There remains concern that there is little or no money to fund such a scheme.
- 3.4 Having said all the above, it is considered to be of prime importance that Gosport exerts maximum leverage on the Hampshire Supporting People Strategy.

4.0 How the Council administers its homelessness functions.

- 4.1 Gosport has welcomed the Government's initiative in respect of the Housing Options model of advice. This model has created the prevention of homelessness agenda that this Council has been very successful at. However, there is an issue within the Housing Options model and this is summarised as the housing gatekeeper approach. In itself the housing gatekeeper term is misleading because homelessness law sets out a framework to assist some but not all, and also sets out to what extent customers should be assisted. The problem arises when that gate keeping subverts the intention of the law and in doing so enables the homelessness service to do nothing, or less than is due. Lord Rockers letter to all Council's (see 2005/06 Homeless Review) evidences this problem. This problem is now embedded in media understanding.
- 4.2 Gosport is proud that it has adopted the Housing Options rather than housing gatekeeper approach and has achieved reduction in homelessness purely through genuine prevention of homelessness. The service is at the heart of the community, engaged with customers and agencies in line with the spirit of Gosport Council. This is a pivotal statement. Given the needs of the people of Gosport, the Council needs to maintain its key role in ameliorating the impacts of social deprivation. In turn, this direction statement frames what has to be the priority for the service – that its priority has to be to achieve positive, tangible, outcomes for customers.
- 4.3 Gosport's approach to homelessness set out above has attracted attention and for our own part we do not want anyone to think this Council provides a "soft option". Accordingly, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) request to undertake a Reception and Assessment audit of this Council's homeless and advice functions has been welcomed. The Council has now considered the DCLG's report. The report contains many useful observations that have been fed into the Action Plan. However, in some key areas the recommendation is to agree to differ with the advice of the DCLG. This is discussed and highlighted in some of the following themes. It is worth saying at this point that the DCLG findings were that Gosport

runs a fairly firm service, that they felt was even harsh in some respects. It is certainly not viewed as a soft option service.

5.0 What is our fundamental service priority, and how should resources be configured to achieve this?

5.1 From the preceding section it has been concluded that the service priority is, to:

To achieve positive, tangible, outcomes for customers.

5.2 What does this mean in practice? To answer this question we have been greatly assisted by the DCLG diagnostic assessment of the service.

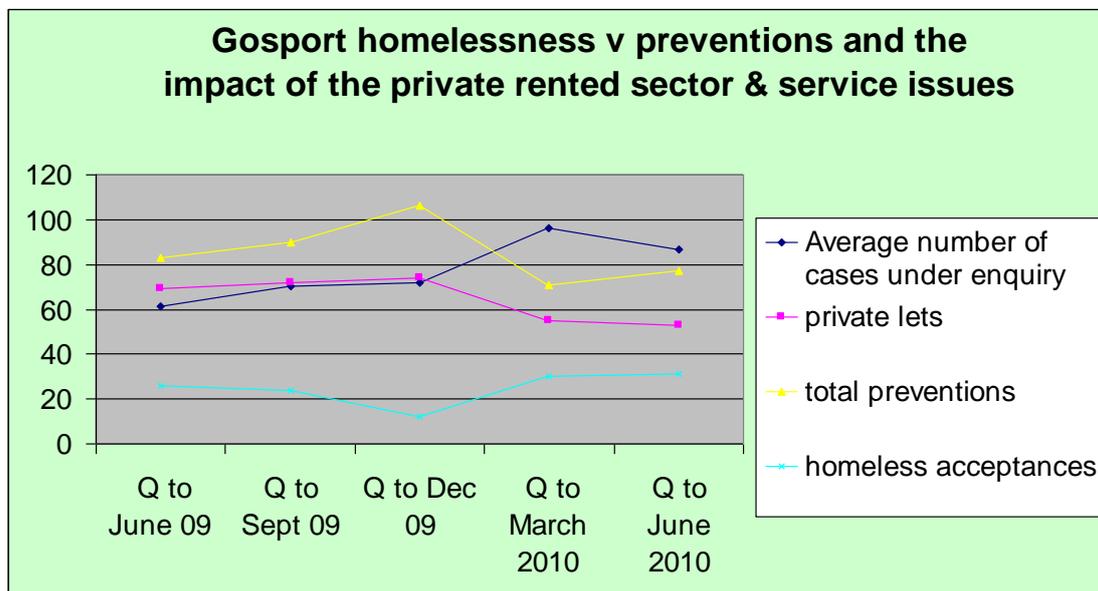
5.3 In overview, the main challenge the DCLG put to this Council was that the service should be open, more or less, 9am -5pm, 5 days per week for customers dropping into the Town Hall for advice without appointments. The DCLG did not consider other matters such as telephone access. The concern the DCLG had was that the current configuration might result in some customers not being seen before a crisis develops in their lives and they have no alternative but to come to the Town Hall as an emergency case.

5.4 What the current service delivers is as follows:-

- a. Open Advice 5 days per week:
Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 9 -12am;
Tuesday and Thursdays 1 – 3pm.
- b. Housing Options emergency advice (customer statement of homelessness that night):
9- 5pm all weekdays.
- c. Housing Options telephone service:
9am -5 pm service (although telephone engaged rate April – June 2010 was nearly 38%)
- d. Housing Options Appointments service
9 – 5 pm all weekdays
- e. Housing Options emergency service
Cover outside of office hours every day of the year;
- f. Housing Options correspondence and email enquiry services
10 working day service target applies
- g. Housing Options back office work (enquiries etc).

5.5 There are two points to make about the current service configuration:

- a. Gosport does deliver a 24 hour emergency service;
 - b. To increase non-emergency open advice to 9-5 daily would require a very significant curtailment of back office work and increase in staffing resources.
- 5.6 The problem with significantly reducing back office work is that it is highly likely to have an adverse effect on enquiries (quality of enquiries and time to make homeless decisions) and prevention options (such as sourcing private rented accommodation). Additional resources are not an option in this current climate.
- 5.7 Between January and June 2010 events occurred which gave some clarity to the issues involved here. What is clear is that the question of configuration is vital to get right so that the required services are delivered. What happened between January and June 2010 was a marked change in service outcomes, something which has not been recorded since the early 2000's. In summary, lets in the private sector shifted from easily accessible, to difficult to access. This was accompanied by a surge in uncompleted casework (caseload). It is probably reasonable to assume that both private let access issues and caseload were connected but also separately shifting at this time. Graph one below shows the impact on service outcomes.



Graph One

- 5.8 The service outcomes (compared to outcomes prior to September 2009) showed:
- a. At least a 20% increase in homeless acceptances, and;
 - b. At least a 15% drop in homelessness preventions, and;

c. At least 30% increase in caseload.

5.9 These sorts of shifts in service outcome present serious risks because they jeopardise the Council's current capacity to cope with the temporary accommodation demands in an efficient way. Capacity can be changed of course, but it requires planning and resources. Capacity changes without planning and resources result in significant numbers of households being placed in B&B as the worst, but only option. The cost to this Council of placing in B&B exceeds £100,000 a year per 10 single people placed. It is easy to see how costs can very quickly be counted in the £100,000's per year, and subsidy on B&B placements is deliberately very low to deter use of B&B. In simple terms, a strategy that relies upon B&B, in all but exceptional circumstances, is unaffordable as well as unachievable (due to scarcity of available B&B placements). It is also the least desirable place to reside (for example, no cooking facilities).

5.10 It is clear that existing staff resources are closely matched to demands and that we do not have the luxury of pulling resources out of the service or re-deploying these resources without potentially very serious consequences. The current service configuration is about balancing competing demands to achieve tangible outcomes (such as homeless prevention). An alternative service model, within existing resources, is to ensure 9-5 open advice coverage which is of course beneficial for front line customer service, but would be disadvantageous for tangible outcomes like homelessness prevention, affecting the customer and the Council.

5.11 Despite the above, if it was the case that the current configuration does result in significantly more homelessness because the service is engaged too late to prevent homelessness, then this would be of serious concern. Out of 62 homeless decisions accepting a full duty 31 (50%) were subject to a previous decision within the few months before the homeless decision was made (homeless decisions made January – June 2010). Clearly, this Council needs to be concerned on this point, but equally, the existing resources are pinned down on existing commitments and shifting resources around will need to be very carefully planned and managed. A number of actions apply in the Action Plan to address this issue.

6.0 Is the temporary accommodation strategy fit for purpose and efficient? What can we do to address the variation in discharge of homeless duties for those in temporary accommodation?

6.1 This theme falls into three parts:

a. Fit for purpose – see section 7;

b. Efficient – see section 8.

- c. Variation in homelessness duty discharges depending upon customer household type (e.g. family, young person, etc); This is covered below at 6.2.

6.2 Item C above has been considered under the Council's Equality Impact Assessment framework and the conclusions were that the strategic direction of ending use of B&B in favour of using Council managed accommodation has achieved a better retention rate, more positive outcomes, and less negative outcomes for all. In addition, there is no evidence that any customer category has consistent discernibly poorer results.

6.3 Although this matter does need to be monitored it does appear that fears of unequal outcomes have been allayed. A further Equality Impact Assessment is timetabled to be completed by June 2012 and is referenced in this strategy's Action Plan.

7.0 Fit for purpose?

7.1 The late 1990's and early 2000's were characterised by:

- a. A daily struggle to find available emergency accommodation (mainly B&B); and,
- b. A lack of available move-on accommodation.

7.2 Then the later 2000's are characterised by:

- a. A steady availability of Council managed hostel emergency placements which meets demand virtually all the time; and,
- b. More move-on accommodation, of decent homes standard or above, from the private sector.

7.3 This Council is in a truly enviable position in respect of the above. However, it should be noted that the shift in accessibility of the private rented sector from January 2010 onwards is potentially serious:

- a. This shift illustrates how volatile the private rented sector is and as such carries significant risks in relying upon it as the main move-on vehicle.
- b. The private sector is used by this Council because there is no other source of accommodation. Whilst social housing traditionally soaked up homelessness, social housing no longer has the capacity to deliver effective solutions on its own, or anything like the extent required to enable the Council to exit from the private rented market. At present these are manageable problems but this area needs to be monitored carefully because we know that if our accessibility to the private

sector substantially reduced, the entire homeless service will cease to function effectively, at huge expense to the Council (widespread use of B&B).

- 7.4 The current area of concern about the temporary accommodation portfolio is in the area of risk management, particularly in the hostels. The hostel environment can be challenging for residents and staff alike and some residents can present high levels of risk, however detailed risk assessments are in place.
- 7.5 Having said the above, it is clear that the strategy of managing homeless customers in our accommodation has very substantial benefits indeed. These benefits include:
- a. Very substantial financial savings compared to B&B use;
 - b. Much more effective customer assessment processes arising from the combination of Council management and support;
 - c. Far superior accommodation for customers (for example, all have access to cooking facilities) at lower cost to customers;
 - d. Far greater ability to detect customers that are not residing in accommodation and therefore likely not to be homeless.
 - I. Whether an increase in staffing resource would improve the hostels is a difficult point to quantify. Certainly, it is the case that, by-and-large, the management of incidents is after the event has taken place. To change this would potentially require 24 hour staff over 7 days per week (there is currently one full time hostel officer, although a significant number of officers input by way of customer support, enforcement, resident charges monitoring and control). A further problem is that the current budgets could not afford a staff resource increase of any kind. A review of staffing resource has already been completed from the Action Plan. Due to adverse changes in hostel rates of Housing Benefit subsidy (General Fund) and continuing uncertainty regarding negative subsidy (Housing Revenue Account) there is no scope to increase hostel staffing resource at this time.
 - II. The final hostel issue is that of the proposed redevelopment of the Barclay House Hostel, and whether increased hostel capacity is required. The option to re-develop Barclay House was reported to the November 2009 Housing Board and the matter was referred back to officers for more detailed consideration. Suffice to say here that this is a high priority within the Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation strategies and for this

reason is included in the Action Plan. The matter of possible increased hostel capacity is considered further below in paragraph 8.2

III. In terms of move-on accommodation, the Council has been able to readily access high quality self-contained private rented accommodation (RAPS scheme). Although more difficult since January 2010, the RAPS scheme remains popular with landlords. What has suffered since January 2010 is this Council's ability to access private lets as a prevention of homelessness (the Rent in Advance/damage bond scheme). We know from operating the Rent in Advance scheme for over twenty years that our ability to access the private rented market ebbs and flows in alarmingly severe swings. In the seven years the RAPS scheme has operated it has never delivered significantly less than has been needed.

IV. If the RAPS scheme failed to enable access to the private rented sector it is difficult to predict how any other scheme would work. The introduction of deferred qualifying offers for the RAPS scheme from 2009 has also provided a suitable exit strategy for the Council from each customer. The effectiveness of the deferred qualifying offer as an exit strategy should be reviewed and is in the Action Plan.

V. In contrast, supported housing move-on options are in severe short supply. Despite this Council's best efforts and success at leveraging more resource for the district through the Supporting People Strategy, this will remain a difficult area to progress. It is worth noting the successes of this Council in achieving new resources for the Gosport district here since 2008 (when the first re-investment opportunity arose, see 3.1 above):

- additional supported lodgings placements for young people;
- new supported lodgings placements for pregnant teenagers;

VI. The Council has concluded that it will continue to be the primary emergency placement provider for the above reasons. Current hostel capacity is sufficient to address demand most of the time. A small excess hostel capacity is evidenced most of the time and this has been used to further the partnership approach to 16/17 year olds with Children's Services (see section 12).

8.0 Efficient Temporary Accommodation Strategy?

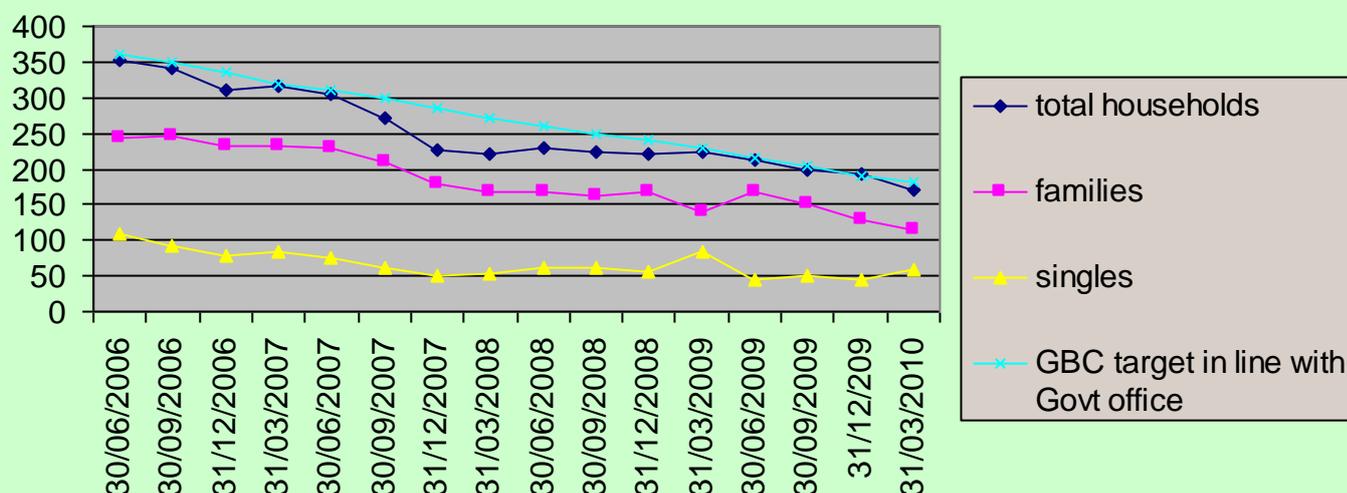
- 8.1 It is important to underline the fact that maintaining the hostels at full working capacity is needed for budget efficiency and is being achieved. However, there is an extremely fine line between maximum efficiency and very poor efficiency as it only takes a few households requiring to be placed in B&B to shift the position to very poor efficiency. With national austerity measures upon us, the impact these measures will have on homelessness is of high importance.
- 8.2 Table One in the Temporary Accommodation Strategy Review 2009 (November 2009 Housing Board) shows that:
- a. B&B expenditure was minimal in 2008/09. In the early 2000's spend was in excess of £500,000 with net budget loss to the Council of over £300,000. The savings achieved here have in part been re-invested into prevention of homelessness (Rent in Advance/Damage Bond scheme).
 - b. Rent in advance/damage bond spend creates the largest financial losses to the Council because the only income achievable in this scheme is the recovery of loans. The recovery methods have been reviewed and the Housing Options Section is supporting the Housing Services project for loans recovery and this is part of the Action Plan.
 - c. It is worth noting that, to some extent, the Council would be financially better off by allowing more customers to become homeless and to accommodate these people in temporary accommodation such as the RAPS scheme. However, there are practical limitations on this approach, these being:
 - I. Limited capacity of hostels to cope with increased load pending move-on to longer term temporary accommodation;
 - II. The current workforce could cope with more RAPS properties as they previously had up to around 220 (compared to the current 140) tenancies. However, there would come a point very close to a capacity of 220 when additional officers would be needed, thus altering the cost/benefit equation.
 - d. The RAPS scheme (which provides longer-term self contained accommodation for homeless households owed a full duty) continues to deliver an effective means to fulfil the majority of the Council's obligations to accommodate customers. Key issues about this scheme are:

- I. Council costs have been reviewed and an increased income per property commenced from 2009/10. This has improved the budget balances and contributed significantly to a reduction in losses down to around £13,500 (see Table Three at paragraph 10.6)
 - II. The new Housing Benefit subsidy scheme clearly show that the Council has considerable scope to increase charges for its management costs from 2010/11 so there is no reason why this scheme could not operate at break even. Accordingly, a further review of management charges is scheduled and in the Action Plan.
 - III. The deferred qualifying offer introduced in 2010 should start to see the total number of RAPS reduce from October 2010. Reductions are dependent upon tenants being assessed as independent of support and as a good tenant. This model of temporary to settled accommodation should be reviewed and this has been put in the Action Plan.
- e. Barclay House homeless persons hostel is running at a loss and income through rents can be increased at this Councils discretion. Housing Board have already agreed to set Barclay House rents in relation to costs of running the hostel (see section 6 -8). A review of rent control is recommended in the Temporary Accommodation Strategy Review and is in the Action Plan.
 - f. Stoke Gardens Homeless persons hostel will probably run at a loss from 2010 due to the Housing Benefit subsidy changes and accordingly the lease has been favourably re-negotiated to reduce probable losses.

9.0 How did this Council achieve the ODPM target of 50% reduction in all temporary accommodation by 2010?

- 9.1 Gosport Council achieved the Governments ambitious target of a reduction of 50% by March 2010. Graph two below outlines the efforts achieved against this target.
- 9.2 The target was slightly surpassed, but only with some significant interventions in the last few months (and unplanned expenditure of around £10,000) to achieve qualifying offers, thus reducing numbers.

Gosport homelessness: Households in Temporary Accommodation



Graph Two

- 9.3 In the current absence of Government direction, the question is what will this Council do now? Without a directive from Government the Council is free to set its own aims and objectives and it is likely that the current Governments stance on localism would support this notion in any case.
- 9.4 Although the reduction in temporary accommodation required was achieved, it is not sustainable and created additional cost to this Council. This is because that reduction was achieved through prevention of homelessness and the biggest contributor to prevention of homelessness in Gosport is by way of securing alternative private rented accommodation (see Table Three in paragraph 10.6 for cost information). We have also concluded that for some homeless customers the services offered were not wholly appropriate, but prevention of homelessness was the mantra to be followed and so they were placed in unsupported private lets when these were likely to not have fully met their needs.
- 9.5 The underlying problem about using the private sector as one of the tools to prevent homelessness is that floating support which is so often needed (Supporting People funded services) cannot be guaranteed. Indeed, floating support is so over-subscribed in Gosport that the chances of receiving support are low and this is likely to get worse over time if Supporting People are going to be cut as predicted (see paragraph 10.2). The DCLG have suggested that this Council's homeless persons Supporting People service be re-channelled to support those customers who the Council places in the private sector as a prevention of homelessness. The problem here is that this team is

already at its capacity to maintain a limited level of support for our homeless customers and has no capacity to divert resource as suggested. As outlined earlier at paragraph 5.10 available resources are tightly matched to demands. It is impossible to deliver increased floating support without more resources.

9.6 The next section considers why the present numbers in temporary accommodation are lower than the number needed to enable costs to be matched by income.

9.7 For the above reason it is clear that a shift in the balance between homeless prevention, via securing alternative private lets, and homelessness is required.

10.0 How are the national austerity measures going to affect the service and what options are there for responding?

10.1 The simple answer to this question is that whilst we know some things, there is much more that we do not know about what the future holds for the service in Gosport. For example, indicative figures from the DCLG suggest that a very significant number of Gosport households will be negatively affected by Housing Benefit changes from April 2011. These changes are concerned with the reduction in levels that Housing Benefit awards will treat as eligible costs. Excess charges above the new limits will not be claimable under standard rules. A large proportion of these households may be vulnerable to homelessness because the level of benefit award cut will make their rent unaffordable. Even if a small fraction of these become homeless the service will struggle to cope. However, how many of these households avert homelessness themselves and how many will seek assistance is far from clear.

There is an emerging expectation, which appears reasonable, that homelessness is going to increase in the short to medium term at least. This covers the period of this strategic review.

10.2 One issue that is perhaps more clear is the scale of expected public spending cuts in respect of local Government. As previously stated, Supporting People are projecting savings targets of 23% on each spending review (3 year cycle), and similar cuts could reasonably be expected in Children's and Adult Services. Inevitably, there will be a knock-on effect on related services and clearly homelessness services will be affected in some way but it is not clear now, nor will it be clear for the best part of another year, how this will pan out.

10.3 Inevitably, district council funding will also be cut. Given an expected increase in homelessness, and this reviews assessment that resources are very tightly matched to present demands, there is no scope for staff resource reductions without severe risk of cost inefficiencies that will far outweigh any cashable savings. This does mean that alternative methods of finding budget savings for this Council are needed.

- 10.4 There are options to save money within homelessness/ homeless prevention costs. Adjustments to charges for accommodation have been made in the last two years above and beyond normal scope. However, adjustments were cautious because the Housing Benefit subsidy arrangements were not known at the time. These have now been published and they have opened up the option to become far more ambitious in some areas. Out of necessity these options now need to be progressed.
- 10.5 The three areas where significant budget options apply are:
- a. RAPS scheme;
 - b. Barclay House hostel (Housing Revenue Account);
 - c. Rent in advance/damage deposit service (prevention of homelessness).
- 10.6 The distinction between the first two and last is that both RAPS and the hostel can deliver an income stream to pay for the staffing and costs associated with that service. The rent in advance /damages service has no income stream to pay for these costs, merely a method of recovering some of the money advanced in the first place. Work on the budgets over two years 2008/09 and 2009/10 has enabled improved accuracy of total costs assessments, causing significant variations to costs between the years. Additionally, apportionment of managers time has been included in 2009/10 costs. This has resulted in the specific scheme budget balances set out below in Table Three.

Scheme	Budget year	Losses to Gosport Council by scheme
Rent in Advance/Damage service	2008/09	£180,284
	2009/10	£127,564
Barclay House Hostel	2008/09	£18,975
	2009/10	£39,770*
RAPS scheme	2008/09	£86,303
	2009/10	£13,452

Table Three

* Increases in staff cost apportioned to Barclay House and higher repair costs.

- 10.7 Table Three shows significant negative budget balances. Reviews of Barclay House and RAPS charges are underway. There is no reason why these areas cannot achieve a budget breakeven point (homelessness law enables reasonable charges to be made for the provision of accommodation, but making a surplus would not be with the realms of reasonable). For these schemes there is an element of

projection of costs as income will depend upon numbers of people accommodated so precise outcomes are impossible to achieve.

- 10.8 The most significant area of loss for the Council is the rent in advance/damages scheme. These losses were enabled previously by savings from not using B&B. We now need to make real cashable savings and this is the area where that can be done. This Council has long advocated to the Government that the specific grant provided for homelessness prevention (maximum of £46,000 per annum, but this is now at risk) was completely inadequate for the Council's spend. It would not be sensible or practicable to stop the service. What is being proposed here is a significant shift away from prevention to homelessness and a consequent increase in the RAPS scheme. The limiting factor on that swing away from prevention will be the hostels capacity to cope with additional homeless households. Alternatively, an increase in hostel capacity needs to be achieved.

11.0 Is the homeless strategy integrated with other strategies?

- 11.1 The 2006 review evidenced better linkage with Corporate Strategies, a sound interface with the Hampshire Supporting People Strategy, improved linkage with Community Safety Strategy but a poor interface with Social Services and Health Authority.

- 11.2 The changes since then can be summarised as follows:

- a. Community Safety Strategy. Further convergence has been achieved and has resulted in:
 - I. The Family Intervention Project being established in Gosport;
 - II. A Gosport Housing Services officer represents all Hampshire
 - III. Districts, Unitary Authorities and Isle of Wight on the Wessex Youth Offending Team Board;
 - IV. Revitalised interest in the partnership approach to accommodating, supporting and managing prolific offenders.

The new scheme should be reviewed by the end of December 2010 and is on the Action Plan;

- V. Extension of multi-agency, multi-case conferencing systems: JAAG (prolific offenders) and MARAC (domestic abuse);
- VI. Community Safety is now linked to the Hampshire Supporting People Strategy which will improve strategic alignment;

VII. Development of shared database information.

- b. Partnership with Hampshire Adult Services. Previously a poor interface but now viewed as much more constructive due to:
 - I. Partnership arrangement with the Locality Housing Officer (now managed through Hampshire Supporting People, but located in this Council);
 - II. Adult Service improved engagement with the Gosport and Fareham Supported Housing Panel. This Panel is the cross district forum to progress customers plans to achieve support with housing
 - III. Partnership with Children's Services. This is mainly discussed in the next section due to the complexities involved. However, the interface has improved since 2006 due to joint work on family support/intervention gaps analysis which resulted in the creation of the Family Intervention Project. Additionally, Gosport continues to lead district housing authorities in 16/17 ear old joint working protocols.

11.3 In the current year existing cross authority work in Gosport is migrating to new structures and new structures are being developed, such as the newly emerging Gosport Partnership (replacing the Local Strategic Partnership). The opportunities for partnership work are substantial and a significant staff resource is being devoted to support this work from the Housing Options Section. This work is expected to continue and in all likelihood increase. This is a key area of work and accordingly is in the Action Plan to participate.

11.4 Another key strategy which interfaces with the Homeless Strategy is this Council's Lettings Strategy. Gosport has developed a Lettings Strategy that distances itself from focusing upon re-housing homeless customers. The Council does re-house more homeless people than proportionality would suggest (over 18% of all lets in 2009/10 compared to less than 10% of the Housing Register) as this is required by the law. However, the important point is that lettings to homeless to not overwhelm lettings to other groups. The message Gosport Council is trying to drive home is this:

Homeless customers can expect to be accommodated in a private let, or supported housing where needed.

11.5 Gosport has been able to drive a wedge between homelessness and social housing, but that distinction relies upon the homeless strategy delivering. Our ability to access the private rented sector is mission

critical to continuing the Councils Lettings Strategy as it is. It is recommended that the proportion of lets to homeless is reduced to just over the proportionality required.

12.0 How should this Council respond to the developing issues surrounding young people (16/17 year olds) and care leavers following the *Southwark* judgement (House of Lords)?

12.1 It is acknowledged that Gosport has a significant youth homelessness issue. This Council undertook a major piece of work on behalf of all Hampshire districts in 2009. That work considered the existing working agreement between Hampshire Children's Services and the Councils Housing Options service. As part of that work, a survey of districts which has evidenced a number of improvements that can be made (as reported by the districts to the Hampshire Children's Board.

12.2 This Council has approached this matter from a partnership perspective, freely offering what we can bring to the table and in return for Children's Services to do the same with an aim of improving the districts capacity and qualitatively improving services through the co-ordination of housing and welfare concerns. Whilst the work is still in progress what has been achieved so far is:

- a. Renewed funding by Children's Services (£12,000 per year) and the Council (£6,910) of the Accommodation Resource Centre (ARC) to enable it to be the reception and assessment front line for the district;
- b. Expansion of the Locality Housing Officer role to co-ordinate move-on referrals from Children's Services to the Supported Housing Panel (Council funding at £4,000 per year for 3 years, see June 2009 Housing Board, Grants to External Bodies);
- c. An accommodation protocol that will bring in around £10,000 marginal income for the Council to cover our losses (personal arrears and subsidy losses) in temporary accommodation. This partnership approach is expected to save Children's Services in Gosport around £25 - 30,000 per year and is dependent upon continued Children's Services funding of Gosport schemes.
- d. Draft customer processing maps:
 - I. For referral to Children's Services where the customer requests this;
 - II. Where statutory placements are required. Here the Council and Children's Services would work together to meet accommodation and welfare issues.

12.3 Gosport Council continues to provide leadership for the Hampshire districts in this area. The partnership has now moved to a full Steering Group. This area of work is likely to require at least another year of development and then ongoing partnership.

13.0 What has been/will be the impact of the Rowner re-development?

13.1 This re-development will result in over 500 households being decanted and re-housed by the end of the project. This is then, a major undertaking in a small district. This Council has so far waived nomination rights to First Wessex Housing Association (our biggest social housing partner) to enable them to re-house decants and is now in discussion with First Wessex Housing Association to agree processes and procedures over the following phase of the re-development.

14.0 What can be done to increase the availability of supported housing in Gosport given the high profile of single vulnerable customers in Gosport?

14.1 Gosport's Housing Board has previously considered this subject and agreed an approach which requires Gosport and Fareham Councils to work in partnership to administer:

- a. The waiting lists for supported housing schemes across the two districts;
- b. The monitoring of move-on plans for those in supported housing schemes to ensure effective move-on planning is evidenced;
- c. The monitoring of all customers move-on plans to provide strategic evidence of any bottlenecks in service delivery.
- d. The nominations to all voids in supported housing funded schemes across the two districts.

Implementation work is now at an advanced stage and go live is expected by mid November 2010.

14.2 The background to this significant application of resource is the comparative lack of supported housing options becoming available for vulnerable customers. The key question here is whether existing systems are using the accommodation resources efficiently or whether the lack of opportunities is due to gaps in resource. It is suspected that the latter is the biggest contributor to the current lack of opportunities but without the changes being implemented as stated above it is not possible for us to pin down the answer to this question. Supported

Housing Panel data is considered to be an improvement on previous Housing Needs Survey data in determining this question.

15.0 Are there any significantly different homelessness profiles (including prevention) in Gosport compared to the national average? Why are there differences?

15.1 The statistical analysis set out in Annex A reveals one very important Gosport factor that differs from both Hampshire and all-England results. That factor is this Council's very impressive, sustained and ever improving results in the prevention of homelessness.

15.2 In the last year of publication (BVPI 213) in 2007/08, Gosport was in the top half of the top quartile of all-England results. Since then performance has significantly improved. There are a number of things worth raising about these results:

a. With prevention interventions outnumbering homelessness duty acceptances by a factor of 3.5:1 it is clear that the predominate outcome for customers is one of prevention;

b. Preventing homelessness is easier with some types of customers than other customers. In simple terms, if you are in a family, prevention is generally much easier than if you are a single vulnerable person. This uneven outcomes profile creates some statistical skewing of homeless decision results which go most, if not all, the way to explain variations in results between Gosport and all-England results.

c. By far the biggest reason for preventing homelessness is by securing alternative accommodation in the private rented sector. Gosport has done exceptionally well in this regard. In 2009/10, despite difficulties from January to March 2010, Gosport achieved over double the rate of preventions than the national top quartile average (Gosport result 7.15 preventions per 1,000 households compared to the national top quartile average of 3.06). This does however, emphasise how dependent this Council is upon the private sector. In paragraph 9.4 it was noted that three drivers (casework evidence, expected increase in homelessness and cost drivers) indicate that the historical levels of use of the private rented sector for prevention of homelessness will not be matched. However, we need to be clear here. If we stopped doing this, or were unable to access the private rented sector completely as a method of prevention, the temporary accommodation services would be overwhelmed within weeks. Clearly, the private rented sector, and access to it as a prevention of homelessness is the mission critical factor that needs to be achieved to underpin this strategy.

- 15.3 As an aside, the issue of unequal distribution of decision results dependent upon the type of household you happen to be in, has been investigated through the Councils Equality Impact Assessment framework. The conclusions of that assessment is that whilst Council only results evidence unequal outcomes, when the contribution of our external partners work is taken into account (primarily the Accommodation Resource Centres work with young people) no discernable differences in outcomes was evidenced. It is therefore of more than academic interest to include our partners' homeless prevention results in official homelessness returns. This was achieved from 2009/10 onwards so an Action Plan item has already been achieved.
- 15.4 In conclusion then, it is Gosport's exceptional record of homeless prevention that, being such a predominate outcome, skews homeless decision types results. As such differences are considered to be due to statistical skewing rather than a deep seated profile issue. This conclusion represents a step forward in our understanding since the last review in 2005/06. There is no point in our considering this matter further unless the Government publishes the detailed data for both prevention and homelessness decisions nationally.

It is therefore recommended that this theme now be closed.

- 15.5 There is one key distinction to be made here. Discussion about homeless decision types is shorthand for the **different types** of decision (i.e. on the one hand: acceptance of full duty, intentional and differing priority need categories such as family or 16/17 year olds). One area where it is accepted that Gosport varies from certain groupings that could be used for benchmarking, is that of **total number of acceptances** of full duty per 1,000 households in the district as discussed in sections 2-4.

16.0 Conclusions

- 16.1 We have come a long way since the last review in our understanding of why Gosport's homelessness profile is as it is. It is accepted that Gosport has an unusual high incidence of homelessness, for deep rooted local reasons, that are likely to last at least another generation. The critical service issue is that the Council continues to choose to engage with customers and achieve tangible outcomes.
- 16.2 Local context and service response need not be re-examined (in future Homeless Strategy Reviews) in as much depth for at least 10 years.
- 16.3 The Current service is designed to achieve positive, tangible, outcomes for customers. The current configuration achieves a balance between competing demands that does not show scope to significantly shift that balance without potentially very serious outcomes. Shifts in the service

configuration require planning and resource considerations to minimise those risks.

- 16.4 Current temporary accommodation portfolio is fit for purpose. Achieving that status has shifted the issue over securing temporary accommodation from one of negative daily challenge (1990's to early 2000's) to one of enabling flexibility of service.
- 16.5 Primary limiting factor in any increase or decrease in temporary accommodation loading is that of hostel capacity at any one time. The hostels need to be a maximum occupancy for financial efficiency, but any excess demand results in very poor financial efficiency as households have to be placed in B&B.
- 16.6 The private rented sector is crucial in the short, medium and long term to deliver self-contained lets. This is a point often underplayed and is explored further under links with other strategies (see paragraph 11.4).
- 16.7 The current reduction in accessibility of the market, even for this Council's RAPS scheme, is a warning to this Council. There is only one other alternative way of approaching the matter of balancing accommodation supply to demand. That way is to abandon the current Lettings Strategy and give most, if not all social lets to homeless customers. This happens in many other Council areas. This is discussed more in paragraphs 11.4-5.
- 16.8 There is scope to increase charges made for some accommodation types within the temporary accommodation portfolio.
- 16.9 Gosport Council did achieve the last Government's directive to reduce numbers in temporary accommodation, but in the process, and with hindsight, it is recognised that the balance between homelessness and prevention of homelessness probably was imbalanced in favour of prevention. This statement is based on casework evidence and in recognition of the limiting factors applying in Gosport.
- 16.10 There is casework driven reasons for shifting the balance away from homelessness prevention, via securing alternative private rented accommodation towards homelessness. In addition, there is a general expectation that homelessness will increase during the period of this review, and cost reduction drivers also require a shift away from prevention. The limit of the shift from prevention to homelessness is limited by the hostels capacity to cope with the increase in homelessness.
- 16.11 Since the 2005/06 review there have been marked improvements in strategic partnership work with other agencies and their strategies.

- 16.12 The separation of the Councils Lettings strategy from the Homeless strategy is a key message to customers and is underpinned by an accessible private rented sector.
- 16.13 Gosport has a high demographic profile in respect of young people; a high homelessness incidence amongst young people; scarce accommodation resources for young people. Taking all this into account it is not surprising that Gosport has devoted the resources it has to the development of a Hampshire partnership to better address the needs.
- 16.14 The Rowner re-development has impacted on the Housing Options Service and will continue to do so for at least another year, before the benefits of the scheme are realised.
- 16.15 The partnership work undertaken by Gosport and Fareham Council's is vital to deliver any possible improvements in the use of supported housing schemes and to provide strategic information about gaps analysis.

APPENDIX B

GOSPORT BOROUGH COUNCIL HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2009 – 2014

ACTION	ACTION PLANNING STATUS AND LINKAGE WITH OTHER STRATEGIES/CORPORATE PRIORITIES	TIMESCALES (AND MILESTONES)	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
Fully report funded external agency prevention of homelessness results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Action plan; • Corporate Recession Responses • People & Prosperity Corporate Priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAB statistics incorporation into P1E returns – June 2009 ✓ • ARC statistics incorporation into PIE returns – December 2009; • Review service contracts – March 2010 • Complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAB funding 2008/09 = £31,270 • ARC funding 2008/09 = £6,910 Established budget costs- for review in 2010
Implement IBS system of recording prevention or relief of homelessness alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Action Plan • No links with other strategies; • Pursuit of excellence Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2011 	Staff development time resource – from existing staffing
Provide staff resources to support the Housing Services wide paperless files project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Improvement Plan • Climate Change • People & Pursuit of excellence Corporate Priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 09 – Feb 2010 • Complete 	7 hours per week staff resource –from existing staffing
Provide staff resources to support the Housing Services wide duplicate IBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section Management Plan • Climate Change • People & Pursuit of Excellence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2009 – January 2010 • Complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.5 officer days per week July – Sept 09 • 6.5 officer days per week

records projects	Corporate Priorities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 09 5.5 officer days per week November 2009 - January 2010 From existing staffing
Review measures to achieve 50% reduction in households in temporary accommodation by 31/3/2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Section Management Plan item No linked strategies People Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30/9/09 @ 45.5% reduction. 31/12/09 review Complete 	No new resources
Achieve target for 50% reduction in households in temporary accommodation by April 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section Management Plan; No links with other strategies; People Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal milestones to 31/3/09 met ✓ 184 count at 31/3/2010 Target achieved and surpassed 31/3/10 	No direct new resource implications
Undertake a Reception and Assessment service audit from the DCLG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Section Management Plan item; No links with other strategies; Pursuit of Excellence Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> November 2009 inspection; DCLG Report December 2009; Gosport response and action planning adjustments April 2010-12 Complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No direct resources
Review the level of staffing resource for the Council managed homeless persons hostels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Section Management Plan item; No links with other strategies; People Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2011 - complete 	To be assessed in review
Review the “deferred Qualifying offer” exit strategy from individual RAPS properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Section Management Plan item No links with other strategies; People Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2011 	Staff resource within existing establishment
Review the Family Intervention Project in consultation with partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Section Management Plan item Community Safety Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> June 2010 – completed March 2011 review for 2011/12 funding 	£60,000 has been set aside for further funding from 2010, subject to

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Corporate Priority 		Housing Board approval
Review scope to re-develop the Barclay House Hostel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New SIP item; • No links with other strategies; • People Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2011 	As set out to Housing Board
Review hostel capacity and hostel strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIP milestone • Corporate Efficiency strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2011 	To be assessed
Review RAPS scheme management charges post HB subsidy new rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Section Management Plan item; • Corporate Efficiency Strategy • Prosperity Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2010 review • September 2011 implementation completion 	Probable income increase
Review the control of rent setting and rent levels for Barclay House homeless persons hostel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Section Management Plan item; • Corporate Efficiency Strategy; • People Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2010 	Probable increase in income
Re-negotiate the lease price for Stoke Gardens homeless persons hostel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Section Management Plan item; • Corporate Efficiency Strategy; • People Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2010 	Reduction in losses
Review the effectiveness of the Prolific Offender partnership with Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Section Management Plan item • Community Safety Strategy • People Corporate Priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review December 2010 	From existing resources
Support the emerging structures of the Gosport Partnership through staff involvement, in support of Corporate guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Section Management Plan item • Gosport Partnership • People and Pursuit of Excellence Corporate Priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review April 2010 and set new actions • Complete • April 2012 review involvement 	From existing resources (currently management staff resources)
Progress inter-agency working arrangements for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Section Management Plan item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint agreement sign-off December 2009; • Review arrangements 	No new resources

16/17 year olds and care leavers in a partnership approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gosport Partnership • People Corporate Policy 	April 2011 & April 2013	
Complete Equality Impact Assessment-Homeless Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People & Prosperity Corporate Priorities • New Service Improvement Plan item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2011 	No new resources
Complete Temporary accommodation Strategy Equality Impact Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People & Prosperity Corporate Priorities • New Service Improvement Plan item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2012 	No new resources
Review Housing Options I.T. enquiry recording system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People & Prosperity Corporate Priorities • New Section Management Plan item • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2012 	No new resources
Review Housing Options Open Advice Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People & Prosperity Corporate Priorities • New Section Management Plan item • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2011 	Resource implications to be assessed in review
Review Supported Housing Panel database and Council Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Pursuit of Excellence Corporate Priorities • New Section Management Plan item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go Live November 2010 • Review March 2012 	No new resources