

Public Document Pack



SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Dear Councillor

ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 9TH MARCH, 2017

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Thursday, 9th March, 2017 meeting of the Environment and Housing Management Committee, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item
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- | | |
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| 5. | <u>Housing Strategy</u> (Pages 3 - 66) |
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Yours sincerely

Chief Executive

Encs

9 March 2017

Environment & Housing Management Committee

Housing Strategy 2017-2020

Report of: *Angela Williams, Interim Head of Housing*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The current policy document 'Housing Strategy 2013-16' has expired. To forward the aims of the Service and Council a new document is required to outline in strategic terms proposed service provision.
- 1.2 A draft version of the 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' was put to Committee on the 7th December 2016 which was approved to move forward to public consultation prior to ratification.
- 1.3 The 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' outlines a transparent and ambitious approach to the provision of housing services.
- 1.4 The draft 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' was put to public consultation for six weeks, ending on the 28th February 2017. The consultation was widely advertised and included representations from tenants, residents and professionals.
- 1.5 The public consultation strongly supported the new 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' and its implementation. Only some minor technical alterations have subsequently been made; no substantive change has been made to the draft version.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee formally approve the final 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' for immediate adoption (Appendix A).**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 It is a legal requirement that the Tenancy Strategy and Homeless Prevention Strategy are produced and updated. As both documents are due to expire, and given radical changes and challenges post their implementation it is now service critical to review these documents.
- 3.2 The Tenancy Strategy presents and directs the relationship with Housing Associations and other Registered Providers.
- 3.3 The Homeless Prevention Strategy demonstrates the Council's plans for how to deal with homelessness and the causes of homelessness.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that the proposed Homelessness Reduction Bill currently laid before Parliament will introduce more rigorous prevention duties upon Local Authorities and housing providers. It is therefore timely to produce a revised approach.
- 3.5 The 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' fully outlines the confirmed, proposed and potentialities of future service provision. Having obtained Committee approval on the 9th December 2016 it also contains the Tenancy Strategy and the Homeless Prevention Strategy. The 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' is intended in both format and scope to enable a transparent and rigorous approach to the challenges within the contemporary housing market.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 The provision and renewal of both the Homeless Prevention Strategy and Tenancy Strategy are statutory requirements. The combination with the Housing Strategy allows for a single document which will clearly evidence the combined strategic planning of Housing Services in an open and transparent manner.
- 4.2 The proposed Housing Strategy focuses on key priorities, such as homeless prevention, and outlines those mechanisms through which to improve our service offer. The anticipated benefits of this will include:
 - Providing a targeted housing service; offering a range of housing solutions to differing household types and needs.
 - Outlining new accommodation provision, as per the Building Programme previously recommended to, and approved by, Committee.
 - Creating an effective and practical document for 'real life' use and reference by the Council, residents, tenants and partner agencies alike.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- The proposed Housing Strategy will allow the Council to:
- Meet its legal requirements
- Target housing solutions within the Borough.
- Broaden the housing range for residents.
- Highlight to tenants and residents the forthcoming challenges which both the Council and they themselves will face.
- Support the implementation of the Welfare Reform agenda (which Brentwood Council is committed to, particularly within existing written policy)
- Structure the Council's approach to housing, in particular as relevant to the Local Development Plan.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Staff, tenants and member consultation events were conducted on the 1st September, 8th November and 16th November 2016 respectively. Strong direction was given to provide a more robust approach to service provision.
- 6.2 The public consultation in 2017 returned a low response rate, despite being widely advertised in the Local Press, online media sites, internal electronic and traditional display boards, posters throughout the Borough, direct communications, and corporate website exposure.
- 6.3 The results of the consultation (Annex B) strongly suggest that the priorities and mechanisms identified within the 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' are correct.
- 6.4 The principal concerns of the sample were for greater access to affordable housing, particularly by younger households and to promote an aspirational culture within the local community.
- 6.5 Clear support was given at all stages of consultation for the current direction of travel by Housing Services and to implement the 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020'.

6.6 Given the level of clear support only a few technical alterations have been made to the 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' document; no substantive alterations have been included.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 The Council's Corporate Plan aims to:

- Find new ways of working with partners and embrace support of communities.
- To deliver safe and comfortable homes which are efficient and sustainable
- Develop effective partnership arrangements with key agencies
- Manage our stock to recognise the limited resources available and supporting those in greatest need.
- Review the future delivery of housing services to provide the best outcomes for Brentwood residents.

7.2 The final 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' feeds directly into each of the aims listed above and will serve to provide clear guidance to all in strategic terms as to how those aims will be achieved.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

Name & Title: Ramesh Prashar, Financial Services Manager

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8.1 Any costs arising from the new strategy will be funded from existing budgets.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Daniel Toohey, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

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8.1 None.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

8.2 None.

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

9.1 None.

10. Appendices to this report

Appendix A - Housing Strategy 2017-2020

Appendix B – Housing Strategy Consultation Overview

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Housing Strategy

2017-2020



**BRENTWOOD
BOROUGH COUNCIL**



Accommodation through Innovation

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Introduction

Foreword

I am extremely pleased to present our proposals for a new and ambitious Housing Strategy.

Our aim is to provide the residents of Brentwood with a flexible and innovative service which meets the demands of the changing housing environment. We recognise that there are a wide range of housing needs and expectations within the Borough and we are constantly seeking to overcome together the challenges which we face.

Housing is a critical element of all our lives and this is being increasingly recognised at all levels of government. The Council is committed to providing the best service possible and is determined to provide effective and innovative solutions for the benefit of all our residents.

Cllr Louise McKinlay
Leader of the Council



The new Housing Strategy presents both a framework and set of solutions which Brentwood Borough Council seeks to implement within the next three years and beyond.

I am determined that both the Housing Strategy and the wider direction of our Service is to fully engage with the modern realities of housing and to provide a meaningful response.

Increasingly the Council is working with our partner organisations and the public to ensure that innovative approaches and ideas both strengthen and extend our service provision.

I am personally committed towards targeting our resources to ensure delivery of the most effective range of housing products and services to the wider community. The Council is not looking to produce a 'one size fits all' service but rather to offer a full range of community solutions.



Cllr Chris Hossack
Chairman of the Environment &
Housing Management Committee



Introduction

Why have a Housing Strategy?

Brentwood Borough Council is not required to produce a written Housing Strategy. So why do it?



The Council's previous Housing Strategy was written in November 2013; three years later much has changed. Central government is requiring Local Authorities to deliver more and to spend less. Social housing is in huge demand and supply across the country is insufficient. Tenants require certainty; non-tenants require new housing solutions.

Working Together

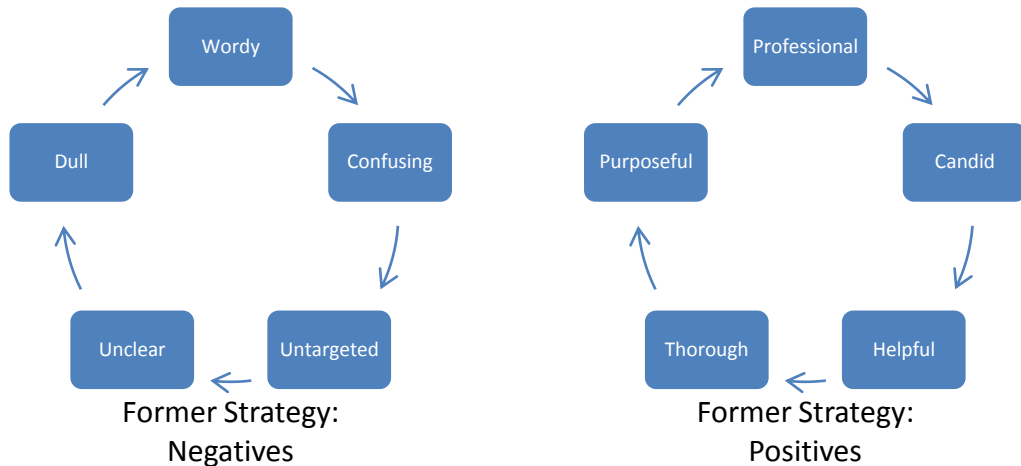
There is a huge need to address the increasing challenges of providing the right types of products and solutions for a continually divergent housing market. Those challenges include providing not only the right homes and support for vulnerable individuals, as well as those more fortunate, but to meet a range of community needs. The provision of housing services requires greater co-ordination of housing, social and health care services by a range of providers. It is for this reason that a focus of this strategy is providing community solutions.

Working Smarter

We do not pretend that we have all the answers. Many of the issues facing the housing industry are complex, contradictory and beyond the control of any single Authority. What we are looking to achieve is using the resources we have in a more efficient and effective manner. Before we can attempt the solutions however we need to identify the challenges.

How are we writing the Housing Strategy?

The answer to the question above may appear to be obvious. So why does it need answering?



Before writing this strategy we undertook a series of research focus groups with tenants, councillors and staff members to review the previous strategy document. The above positive and negative comments have informed our approach throughout the rest of this document.

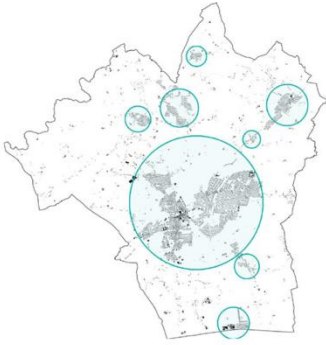
The new Housing Strategy has been designed and developed to retain the thorough professional focus of the previous version, but to cut through the more confusing technical language. It is intended that this document is as accessible as possible to all with the minimal use of jargon and the maximum use of plain English.

What Happens Next?

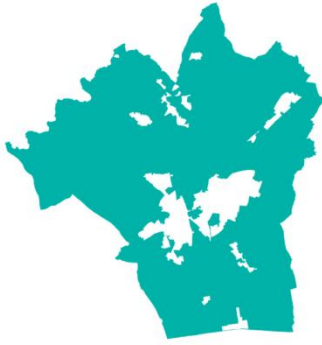
This version of the housing strategy is the one approved by Committee, following a public consultation. The public consultation was for residents and partner agencies to participate in. The results of the consultation informed the final version of the Housing Strategy.



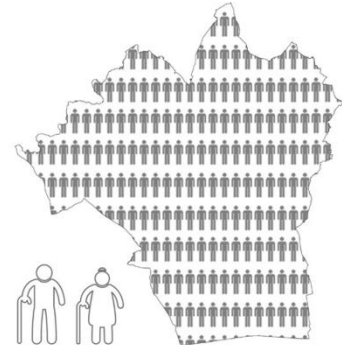
Brentwood Key Characteristics:



At the heart of the borough is the market town of Brentwood and its wider urban area, which is surrounded by villages set amongst the countryside and attractive natural landscape



89% of the borough is within London's Metropolitan Green Belt



The borough's population is over 73,500 with a significant retired population - an ageing population trend projected to continue



80%
of the borough's population own their home



£320,000
average borough house price
vs **£220,000**
average England house price



360
new homes per year
175
new homes per year



The current housing stock is largely made up of detached and semi-detached houses with less small unit accommodation

Partly because of higher average salaries in London and the south-east, house prices have been driven up making affordability a pressing issue in Brentwood

The old regional plan target of 175 new homes per year has been abolished (total 3,500 new homes 2001-2021). Now the borough's need is 360 new homes per year, which is 7,200 over 20 years



The borough has low unemployment and a good economically active population. However, there is currently an imbalance between skills and jobs because of the population working in London



Public transport, bus services in particular, are centred on Brentwood Town Centre, making accessibility an issue for villages with infrequent services and lack of evening running



The arrival of Crossrail at Brentwood and Shenfield will improve the existing metro service and provide new direct links through Central London. This could provide opportunities for development and investment, but also challenges for existing infrastructure capacity

National Housing Challenges:

Housing & Planning Act 2016

Voluntary Right to Buy: Whilst this concerns the stock of Housing Associations when implemented it will impact on the availability of affordable housing within the Borough.

Sale of Higher Value Local Authority Housing: Whilst the details have not yet been written by the Government Local Authorities are being required to make payments to central Government to support the 'Voluntary Right to Buy'. In turn this will impact on the availability of financial resources for both Housing Services and the Council as a whole.

In addition there is a duty to consider selling vacant higher value housing. The duty would likely impact on the availability of Council homes within the Borough and could see additional pressure on the Housing Register and homelessness services.

'Pay to Stay': Rents for High Income Social Tenants who hold Council tenancies may have to pay increased social rents up to full market value (dependent on income).

The Government altered its approach in November 2016 in relation to the 'Pay to Stay' legislation with its introduction now being an option for Local Authorities rather than being mandatory. The Council will consider the option dependant on the potential benefits and impact on future homelessness, particularly in light of the pending Homelessness Prevention Bill .

Welfare Reform Act 2012

The Act and subsequent regulations has impacted on employment and benefits and directly affects the financial and housing circumstances of individuals and families.

Universal Credit (UC): The gradual roll-out by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) is directly affecting the money available to our tenants and residents. In turn this impacts on their abilities to pay rent and taxes which affects service provision. The new benefit replaces not only work-related payments but also Housing Benefit for those applicants in receipt of it. Eventually virtually all households in receipt of benefits will be on UC.

Payments of UC (including the housing component) will be made direct to applicants. Increasingly those with social tenancies will need to budget for and make payment of rent for the very first time. It is anticipated this will lead to a rise in rent default and evictions. It is this that the Council needs to plan to prevent where possible and to reduce the financial impact of.

Benefit Cap: From 7th November 2016 the local Benefit cap will be a maximum of £20,000 per year, unless an exemption applies. A significant percentage of households will therefore see their combined benefit payments reduced and will need to budget more stringently. As with Universal Credit it is anticipated that there will be a significant impact on Housing Services.

What Guides our Service?

The Housing Strategy is the principle working document for Housing Services; it serves to provide the direction and vision for the delivery of services across the property; estates; sheltered and housing options teams. It is designed to complement and support key documents and policies within the Service and the Council as a whole. Further it has been developed as a response to Government requirements, policies and the law.

<p>Corporate Plan 2016-2019</p>	<p>Focuses on the Council's top priorities, which include environment and housing management. The plan highlights the need for fresh thinking to support the very best service provision.</p>
<p>Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2014-2044</p>	<p>Sets the overarching financial direction of the Service and details how the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is to be managed and the core priorities for expenditure.</p>
<p>Tenancy Strategy 2017-2020</p>	<p>Presents and directs the relationship with Housing Associations (HAs) and other Registered Providers (RPs). The new Tenancy Strategy is incorporated below for the first time to add consistency and focus within the wider Housing Strategy.</p>
<p>Homeless Prevention Strategy 2017-2020</p>	<p>Is required by statute (law) to demonstrate the Council's plans to deal with homelessness and the causes of homelessness. The new Homeless Prevention Strategy is outlined below as it is a key component of the Housing Strategy itself.</p>
<p>Local Plan 2013-2033</p>	<p>Sets out a long term vision for how the Borough should develop over the next fifteen years and the Council's strategies and policies for achieving it.</p>
<p>Allocations Policy June 2014</p>	<p>Provides the framework for the Housing Register, through which members can access the Choice Based Letting (CBL) system to 'bid' on 'social housing'.</p>
<p>Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England</p>	<p>Government's core housing document which directs Local Authorities in achieving the twin ambitions of driving local economies and job creation and to spread opportunity. A core component of this strategy is the provision of 'Affordable Housing' and getting Britain building.</p>



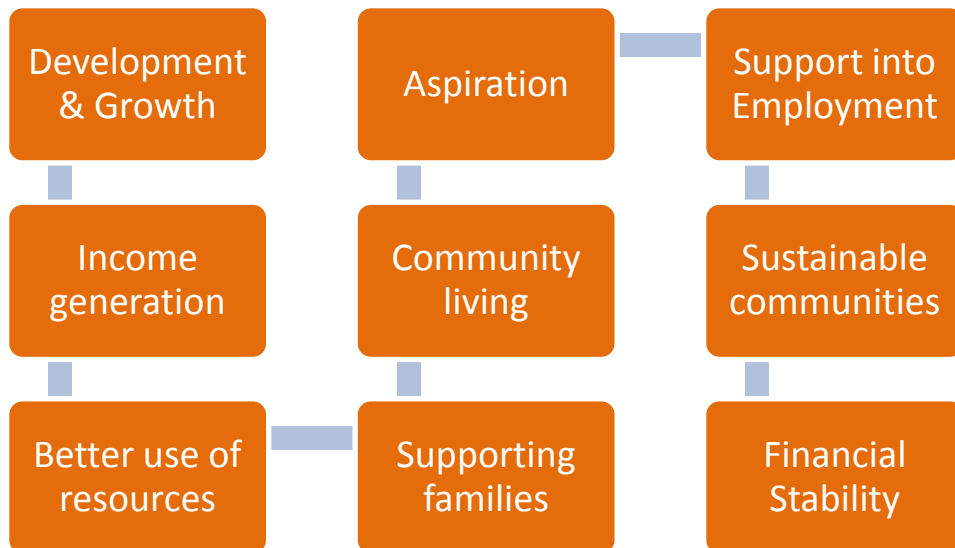
Homes

What are our objectives?

- **Maximise** the delivery of affordable housing within the Borough.
- **Enable** access to a range of different housing options for all residents.
- **Create** growth and mobility in the intermediate housing sector (see Glossary).
- **Encourage** aspirational tenants to access intermediate and private market housing.
- **Optimise** the value of our own assets.
- **Provide** quality housing through our own stock.



What do we hope to achieve?



Stock Condition Survey

- ✓ Brentwood Borough Council has to repair and maintain the homes it owns. As with any property the value is linked to its condition. Value is considered not only financially for the Council but practically and socially for the resident.
- ✓ We believe that our stock can be managed in a more targeted and cost-efficient manner. We are determined to utilise scarce public monies to the very best standards across the stock and for the benefit of all.
- ✓ In 2016 the Council commissioned a firm of experts to conduct a Stock Condition survey. The information gathered will be collated and analysed to inform our future repairs and maintenance services.
- ✓ In January 2017 the final report will be produced. As the result of this future plans will be developed to produce a less reactive and more targeted service. It will create the ability to improve performance and cut costs.

Building & Development Programme

New Builds

- ❖ The Council has embarked on new schemes of Council house building for the first time in over a decade. Currently the Council is focussing on small-scale achievable sites. The purpose of this is to create a robust programme which will provide the template for future projects. The Council are mindful of impacts on local communities and every consideration is being given to achieving sustainable and pleasant environments.
- ❖ The two schemes currently under development include sites at Fawters Close (sheltered homes for older residents) and Magdalen Gardens (family size homes). The consultation and planning stages have been completed successfully and a construction company will shortly be appointed to begin works. The sites will be physically developed in 2017 for occupation later in the year. The Council will develop specific Lettings Plans for each new site to ensure that the homes are targeted to households in the greatest need and who are most suitable for those properties. Details of the first Lettings Plan (Fawters Close) are available online and from the Town Hall (see the 'Useful Information' section below).
- ❖ New build general stock properties will be let with affordable rents (calculated as per the Rents Policy 2015) to ensure income maximisation and to support the development of new properties which require this additional income. Properties for older residents will attract a social or affordable rent (as per the Lettings Plan).

Acquisitions

- ❖ Council properties bought by tenants under the ‘Right to Buy’ legislation generate capital receipts (see Glossary). Formerly those monies have been returned to central Government and local communities have not seen the benefit of them. Whilst the rules governing the use of capital receipts are complex we are determined to return value from those sales to the Borough as a whole.
- ❖ In 2016 those monies were used by the Council to fund house purchases on the open market. The Council bought a small number of properties throughout the Borough to add to our housing stock. The properties attracted affordable rents to ensure maximisation of income to support the building and development programme for the future.
- ❖ In 2017 capital receipt monies are being targeted towards the new build property schemes but could be used in the future to replicate the success of the acquisitions. Whilst new acquisitions do attract a ‘Right to Buy’ under the law the Council is committed to ensuring the expansion of affordable homes in the Borough and will be focussing on mitigating any future losses if they occur.



Affordable Housing & Section 106 Agreements

- ❖ Private developers are required under the law to provide financial or physical contributions to develop facilities and amenities. Affordable housing is secured through section 106 agreements for delivery by RPs and specialist providers.
- ❖ As part of the new Tenancy Strategy below the Council is seeking to work even closer with RPs. To ensure this process is effective in producing valuable affordable housing and to target critical housing need Housing Services will be creating a new Section 106 Register. The new Register will be used to ensure that proposed schemes are structured towards the most relevant provision, and where the proposed plans by RPs fall short of this we will require them to offer an appropriate alternative.
- ❖ The Local Plan outlines in greater detail the scope of utilising section 106 agreements and alongside the Tenancy Strategy will be a key document developers will be required to observe. Through partnership working with key agencies (including health, transport and education services) we intend to create new sustainable communities built upon principles of affordability and access.

Tenant & Leaseholder Responsibility



Brentwood Borough Council tenants and leaseholders are overwhelmingly positive, respectful and proactive.

Yet, as in any Borough, a small proportion of individuals fail to adequately care for and maintain their homes. Council accommodation is a limited resource for both current and future users and needs to be respected. Petty vandalism within blocks, by residents and their families, creates unpleasant living environments for all.

In consultation with Tenant Talkback the Council has developed a Recharge Policy to require tenants to pay for damages they have deliberately or negligently caused. We aim to promote a responsible attitude amongst residents. Public monies spent on deliberate damage and negligence are monies wasted.

Those residents who fail to adhere to their Tenancy/Leasehold Agreements and who cause unnecessary damage will be re-charged and/or evicted for breach of tenancy. Unpaid re-charges may be sent to private debt collectors and Transfer applications may be terminated.

Leaseholder Service Charge Review

❖ Private homeowners who live in Council owned blocks have the legal status of a leaseholders. It means they have certain obligations in relation to upkeep of both their individual home and the building. Historically the Council has only applied very low service charges to these properties, choosing to financial support from the HRA budget (see Glossary).

❖ As maintenance costs rise the Council is having to review the level of service charges and how they are applied and pursued. To enable transparency and fairness a Councillor-led Working Group will be considering this issue in 2017. As a result of a wider Service Charge Review we will be developing a revised Service Charge Policy from 2017 onwards.

Flexible Tenancies & The Future

Brentwood Borough Council offers new tenants flexible fixed term tenancies. The two exceptions to this relate to Sheltered Accommodations and Transfer applicants.

The purpose of using flexible tenancies is to:

- ❑ **Increase** mobility by encouraging tenants to move between properties and sectors as their housing needs change.
- ❑ **Target** social housing towards genuine need; by supporting and encouraging those people earning higher wages into alternate forms of accommodation.
- ❑ **Manage** social housing to meet the needs of the community, for example by addressing under-occupation of properties and over-crowding.
- ❑ **Promote** localism through decision making at community level.

The key objectives we hope to achieve are:

- ✓ Making the best use of housing stock.
- ✓ Encouraging tenants to explore their housing options and housing future.
- ✓ Maximise revenue for development, by using fixed terms in conjunction with affordable rents.
- ✓ Support aspirational tenants, for example in gaining employment.
- ✓ Enable tenancy sustainment.
- ✓ Tackle specific management issues, such as anti-social behaviour and tenancy breaches.



In 2017 the Council will be producing a new Flexible Tenancy Policy outlining the circumstances in which fixed-term tenancies will be ended and/or alternative accommodations offered.

The significant majority of tenancies will be renewed. The new Policy will be in conjunction with tenant consultation.



the
baytree
centre

BE
 Thomson
BUREAU de change

scrivens
opticians
THE HEARING
COMPANY

People

What are our objectives?

Relieve
Over-crowding

Assist
vulnerable
people

Improve
health through
housing

Increase
Tenant
Involvement

Enable the
elderly to stay
in their home

Promote family
cohesion

Tackle
Anti-social
behaviour

Focus on
housing local
people

Encourage
employment

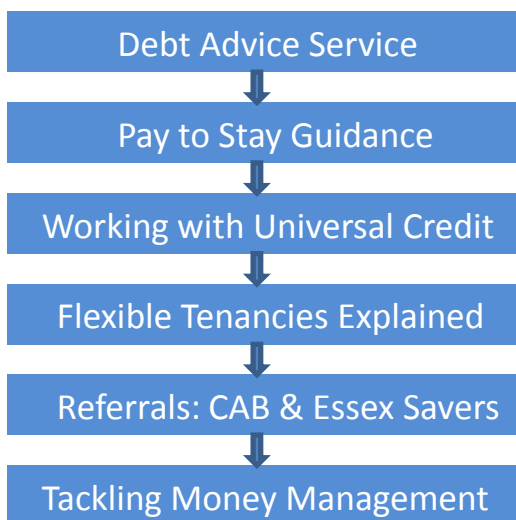
Re-model
Sheltered
housing
services



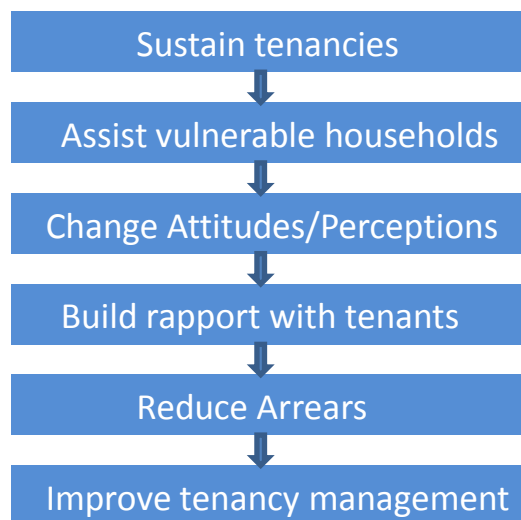
Pre-Tenancy Service

❖ A pre-tenancy service starts from the moment a customer has been provisionally selected for one of our homes. It will give new customers an opportunity to learn more about our homes and what having a tenancy with the Council actually means. It helps us better understand the tenant and their needs. It also allows us to focus upon any potential risks in tenancy sustainment so that we can offer the right level of assistance to ensure the tenancy benefits all. We are currently working to expand our service to include all the features listed below.

How?



Why?

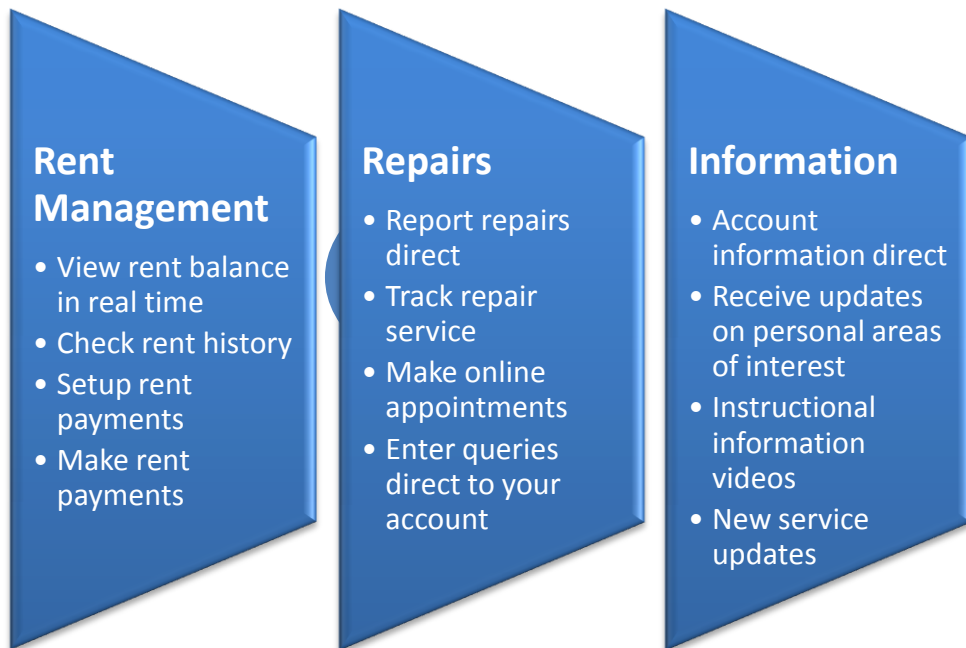


❖ Our Estates Management team now operates a ‘traffic light’ system to identify both risk and vulnerability. The purpose of this is to ensure that potential problems are avoided by working with the tenant. We anticipate that the impact of issues such as Universal Credit and tenants having to pay rent direct for the first time will require preventative action. From a people perspective evictions benefit neither tenant nor Council. We want to avoid crisis situations where possible and to reduce the costly and traumatic experience of eviction where we can.

❖ A ‘Pay-to-Stay’ Taskforce has been setup within Housing Services, to consider whether to implement the new voluntary scheme or not. We are working on joint-funding bids with other Local Authorities to try and access monies to put in place additional resources to assist people with practical problems when it really matters. Such trailblazer funding is limited but we are determined to provide a robust, practical, tenant-focussed service which will work at both pre-tenancy and mid-tenancy stages to inform and assist our customers.

Housing Portal

Housing Services is working towards the implementation of a brand-new 'Housing Portal'. The portal will be an online website enabling tenants and leaseholders to access services 24/7. Whilst traditional methods of communication will be retained it will allow tenants to take greater control of their own service provision.



The Housing Portal is anticipated to reduce response times for customers and will enable the Council to target resources in a more cost-efficient manner.

Town Hall HUB: Partnership Working

- ❖ As part of the Council's wider redevelopment key local services, such as the Police and MIND, will physically be moving into the Town Hall. This will enable customers to access services more simply and for professionals to streamline working relationships.
- ❖ The redevelopment of the Town Hall will include new reception and private interview facilities, plans for which are already available.
- ❖ Currently housing is participating in a pilot scheme with Citizen's Advice to offer personal appointments for advice at the Town Hall. It is anticipated that this will become a permanent arrangement whereby customers can access and interact with both services in a more efficient and streamlined manner.

Resident Involvement

❖ The Council is committed to transparency and openness. We take consultation of residents, tenants, leaseholders and our partners seriously.

❖ Currently the main forum for tenants and leaseholders is 'Tenant Talkback'. As part of Housing's transformation programme we are looking how best to re-model this service.

❖ The Council has commissioned TPAS to produce an insight document in relation to the wider Resident Involvement Structure. Following further consultation both through Tenant Talkback and engaging with all tenants/leaseholders throughout the Borough we will reform our Resident Involvement Structure. We are determined that it should be reformed with tenants, by tenants and to improve services for tenants.

❖ Housing has undertaken a series of local consultation events, particularly in relation to the building development at Fawters Close and Magdalen Gardens sites. We have listened to local residents, which highlighted their concerns, including parking and security. Following consultation we have re-modelled our project for the benefit of all.

❖ The response of local residents to consultation events has been overwhelmingly positive and constructive. All future prospective sites will be subject to the same rigorous consultation processes to ensure responsible development and provision of sustainable housing within our communities.



'Community Housing' (Sheltered Accommodation)

As a stock-holding Authority the Council has a number of Sheltered Accommodations, ranging from 'in-house' schemes to 'satellite' properties. In the 2017-2020 period the Council will be working towards creating a new 'Community Housing' team:

- ❖ **Re-Branding:** Producing a clear corporate vision and simplifying how we operate.
- ❖ **Re-modelling:** Improvement of service offer to residents and targeting of resources to ensure maximum customer gain.



Delivery
Of new
homes

Joint working
with Health
Authority



Housing
Support
Officers

Pooling
Resources

Enhanced
Under-
Occupation
offer

Self-financing
projects



Community Alarms Service

The community alarms service ('CAS') is run for vulnerable people of all ages to give peace of mind 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is a service for all residents of Brentwood, whether living in private or social housing. The touch of a button connects to an emergency communications centre where the call for help is immediately dealt with.

Alarms may be needed for a variety of reasons including:

- ❖ Medical Needs
- ❖ Learning difficulties
- ❖ Living with a partner or alone
- ❖ Neighbour abuse
- ❖ Domestic Violence

The CAS operates as a self-funding project which requires a small payment for service users. It may be used in addition to wider Tele-care Services which the Council operates.

We are looking to expand the Community Alarms Service through new promotions direct to potential service users. Through maximising the usage of technology and by providing re-assurance and support we aim to assist people to remain in their homes.

Tenancy Audit: Targeting Fraudulent Persons

A very small percentage of individuals fraudulently occupy Council accommodation and/or receive related social benefits they are not entitled to. The Council has resources dedicated in general terms to combat fraud.

Housing Services will be looking to implement a full 'Tenancy Audit' to identify the scale of fraud directly affecting housing.

We will then be seeking to pursue the most efficient and cost-effective methods of preventing, resolving and prosecuting tenancy fraud, for the benefit of law-abiding residents.





SPIRITUALIST CHURCH &
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

MULTI-STOREY P 

CROWN STREET SHOPS

LIBRARY

ROPERS YARD SHOPS

Places

The Council is committed at a corporate level to enable communities to take a more active role in delivering a cleaner and safer environment. Housing Services seeks to contribute to this vision as landlord and through wider environment and housing management.

Re-Development of Garage Sites

❖ The Council has identified that the current rate of supply of affordable housing in the Borough will not meet growing housing need.

❖ Between 2007 and 2026 it is estimated there will be a need for 3,200 new affordable homes, which equates to 233 homes per year. Housing Associations constructed around 39 dwellings per year between 2001/2 and 2010/11, illustrating the shortfall in housing provision.

❖ The Local Plan identifies in broad strategic terms how the future provisions of accommodation in terms of planning and space will occur (see 'Useful Information').

❖ In order to increase affordable housing supply the Council has identified a number of garage sites across the Borough, which would be suitable for affordable housing for rent.

❖ Two sites at Fawters Close and Magdalen Gardens and have been identified for the first phase.

❖ Once the two sites have been re-developed the Council will be looking to roll-out the development programme, with consultation on each project.



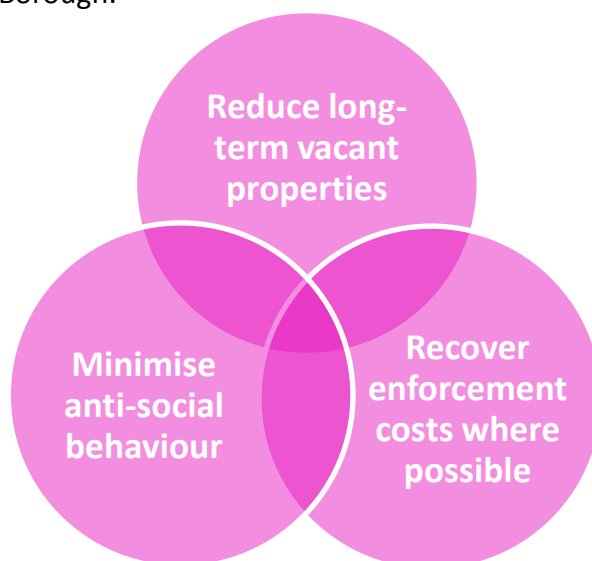
- ✓ Regenerate local areas
- ✓ Build new homes
- ✓ Invest capital receipts
- ✓ Rolling development
- ✓ Expertise in delivery
- ✓ Retain Council stock
- ✓ Target housing supply
- ✓ Improve income
- ✓ Create range of housing solutions



Empty Homes Strategy

The Council does not currently have an Empty Homes Strategy in relation to privately owned vacant properties. Issues are dealt with on an ad hoc basis, principally in line with environmental health concerns.

We will conduct a scoping exercise to see if it is viable and cost-effective to pursue those options available to us under the legislation. The Council will look how to best tackle issues surrounding empty properties to reduce the number of empty homes, and to facilitate and assist in the unlocking of good quality and affordable accommodation for local people in the Borough.



Returning empty homes to use can have a number of positive effects, addressing social, economic and wider public health issues.

For Owners:

- Leaving a property empty can become costly and a source of anxiety.
- Increased risk of vandalism and crime.
- Raised insurance costs.

For the Local Community:

- Issues of damp and structural problems from adjoining properties.
- Effect on house prices.
- Vandalism and crime.
- Lack of pride in an area.
- Unlocking housing within the Borough.

Special Unit Projects (SUPs)

- ❖ The Council is looking to investigate the usage of a small number of local buildings to see if they could be used as a mixed development to relieve homelessness through prevention.
- ❖ The accommodations would contain a mix of those in employment and those seeking employment. Through cross-subsidisation rents would be set at a level to promote and enable workers to access local accommodation. The accommodations would be used as a stepping-stone to securing longer term housing by meeting an immediate housing need. It would create a potential route, particularly for younger residents to achieve their housing goals.
- ❖ Unemployed tenants would be eligible for this accommodation if they are prepared to work in a social enterprise initiative, potentially in partnership with existing providers. The impetus would be on securing employment to build towards their housing pathway.



Fielding Way Depot

- ❖ Housing Services own a former depot in the Hutton area and is looking at alternatives to generate income to support the HRA budget.
- ❖ It is anticipated that the depot could be leased at a commercial rate to a private business or enterprise thus creating an additional revenue stream.
- ❖ In the alternative the site may be re-developed as an affordable homes area.
- ❖ Issues of concern to local residents, including parking in the local area, will be the subject of public consultation as may be relevant.
- ❖ The utilisation of the depot in this manner is part of the strategic ambition to maximise asset values and promote economy within the Service.



Futures

- ❖ Housing Services is working towards creating new products for customers. It is clear that a range of options are required to anticipate future housing needs. To enable this vision we believe that innovation is required to drive forwards service provision.
- ❖ Currently the Council only offers social and affordable tenancy properties. In line with the Government's published Housing Strategy we need to look wider than this. We may have an opportunity to present alternatives when considering potential areas for development.
- ❖ Each different option would be considered fully prior to any implementation and consultation will be conducted as appropriate.

Shared Ownership: We would retain a percentage of the equity to reinvest in future developments and maximise income with an affordable rent.

Shared Equity: We could sell a percentage at 35% less of market value and retain the 35% equity share for a fixed term.

New Builds: Consider selling 65% of a development at market rate and retain 35% for affordable housing.

Out-of-Borough: Purchasing land outside of the Borough for new build opportunities for market purchase or rent.

Affordable Housing Register

❖ It has been identified that there is a growing need for alternate options for customers, aside from the current social Housing Register. Some residents may not be eligible for the current Housing Register, or may face the reality that the wait for social accommodation will be extensive.

❖ Both the Brentwood SHMA and Local Plan highlight a need for greater affordable accommodation, including in the intermediate range (see ‘Glossary’ for explanation of terms). As per policy 7.5 of the Local Plan and the embedded requirement in the Tenancy Strategy residential development proposals (11+ dwellings) will be required to provide:



❖ In conjunction with alternate measures for increasing the provision of Affordable Housing within the Borough the Council is considering creating a new ‘Affordable Housing Register’. The new Register would have its own separate allocation policy and application process. It would work alongside the existing Housing Register to offer a targeted and coordinated housing provision. The new Register potentially could also include intermediate housing options wider than simple provision of Affordable Rent tenancies.

❖ The tenure mix (i.e. the type of accommodation built) shall be provided by developers in agreement with the Council. The introduction of the new s.106 Register will contribute towards a more robust determination of planning applications and integration with the requirements of Housing Services. Those properties would become available on the affordable housing register.



Income Generation Vehicles

The following options are currently at the embryonic stage and would require full scoping before any potential adoption. Financial pressures, reduced funding and rising overheads mean that the Council will need to adopt income generating measures to ensure financial viability for the future. The purpose would be to support the Council financially to enable future provision of services for the benefits of residents.

Professional Services Company

❖ Letting Only Service

Suitable for practiced landlords who wish to remain heavily involved in legal details and the day-to-day activities, such as rent collection, arrears and general maintenance.

❖ Rent Collection Service

Suitable for landlords who require the service of someone to collect rent, chase arrears and pay bills. Fees are paid as a percentage of rent collected.

❖ Full Management Services

Comprehensive management services aimed at landlords who prefer not to have the inconvenience of dealing with day-to-day issues.

Housing Development Company

By setting up a legally distinct housing company the following benefits could be obtained:

- ✓ Greater borrowing power
- ✓ Flexibility in rents and tenures
- ✓ Exempting properties from the 'Right to Buy'
- ✓ Increased revenue
- ✓ Greater range of housing options within the Borough

With the housing market under increased pressure, providing long-term housing solutions can be the priority of housing companies.

By becoming a property developer it may be possible to plug funding cuts to generate long term income and savings.

Modular Housing

❑ Key issues preventing the development of social and affordable accommodation are the cost of construction and the limited availability of land.

❑ Modular housing is a home built 'off-site' rather than 'on-site' but to the same standards as more established 'bricks and mortar' dwellings. A modular home is not a mobile home but a permanent durable construction.



❑ Depending on the type of modular home utilised many are 'eco-homes' which are specifically designed to reduce the carbon footprint and to provide energy economy for the resident. The economic use of space would enable greater provision than traditional homes.

❑ The substantially reduced cost of modular homes means the greater potential to produce an innovative housing solution within the Borough. The flexibility of the system could allow the Council to use the homes for homelessness accommodation (rather than the current use of expensive out-of-Borough bed & breakfast hotels). Further and in the alternative they could be used as permanent accommodations let through the social or affordable Housing Registers. It is anticipated that the homes could be the start of a housing pathway for individuals who currently have highly limited housing options.

Re-Development of Sheltered Accommodation Sites

It is common to have 'hard-to-let' properties within our Sheltered Housing Stock. Options to maximise the value of those properties include:

- ❖ **Leasing units** to the Health Authority for 'Respite Care' provision.
- ❖ **Pooling resources** with Social Service to provide tailored care packages.
- ❖ **Re-developing** sites on a longer term basis to generate income and availability of general housing needs stock.
- ❖ **Selling** the land and/or buildings to make a capital receipt gain to invest in future housing projects.





PIZZÆ EXPRESS

Gazette

at the heart of your community

Wi-Fi

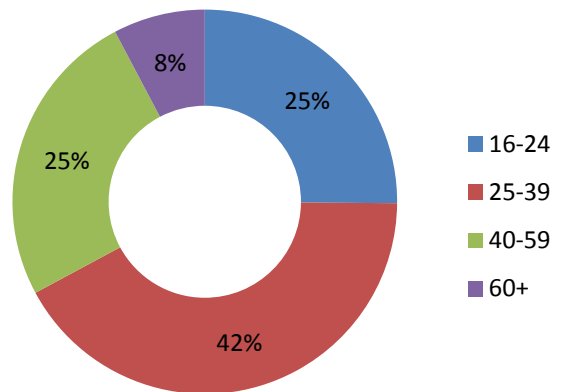
Homelessness Prevention Strategy

What is the problem?

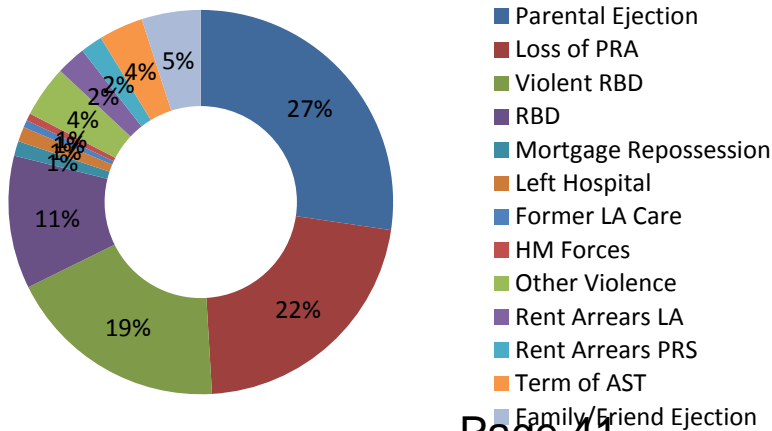
It is abundantly clear to housing professionals, tenants, home seekers and any party remotely connected to housing that there is a very significant issue relating to homelessness. The Borough of Brentwood faces many challenges shared by neighbouring Local Authorities and the growing 'housing crisis' emanating from London. The SHMA and Local Plan provide ample statistical evidence of this.

The difficulties in housing, as already highlighted in the wider Housing Strategy, are magnified in scope in terms of immediate pressures relating to homeless provision. Local Authorities have certain legal duties to provide accommodation; but not to all homeless individuals or families. Local Authorities alone cannot adequately prevent or relieve homelessness. A sober and rational realisation of this must inform the Homeless Prevention Strategy which we adopt. Recent figures provide a snapshot of the key challenges we face within the Borough.

Homelessness By Age



Reasons for Homelessness



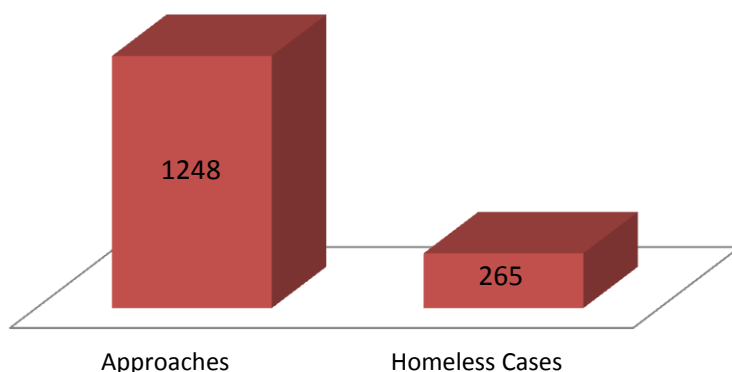
RENT	£ pcm	LHA	Shortfall
1 bedroom	1275.00	555.49	719.51
2 bedroom	1488.00	698.79	789.21
3 bedroom	1822.50	816.10	1006.40

May 2016 Snapshot Figures: Private sector renting compared to maximum Housing Benefit (LHA). The shortfall is the amount of money a family would have to find per calendar month (on average) from their personal income.

HOUSE PURCHASE	£ TOTAL***	£DEPOSIT***	£PCM
1 bedroom	204,997	30,749	712
2 bedroom	344,997	51,749	1284
3 bedroom	500,000	75,000	1735.91

May 2016 Snapshot Figures: Average cost prices within the Borough with indicative figures for deposit and monthly mortgage repayment requirements.

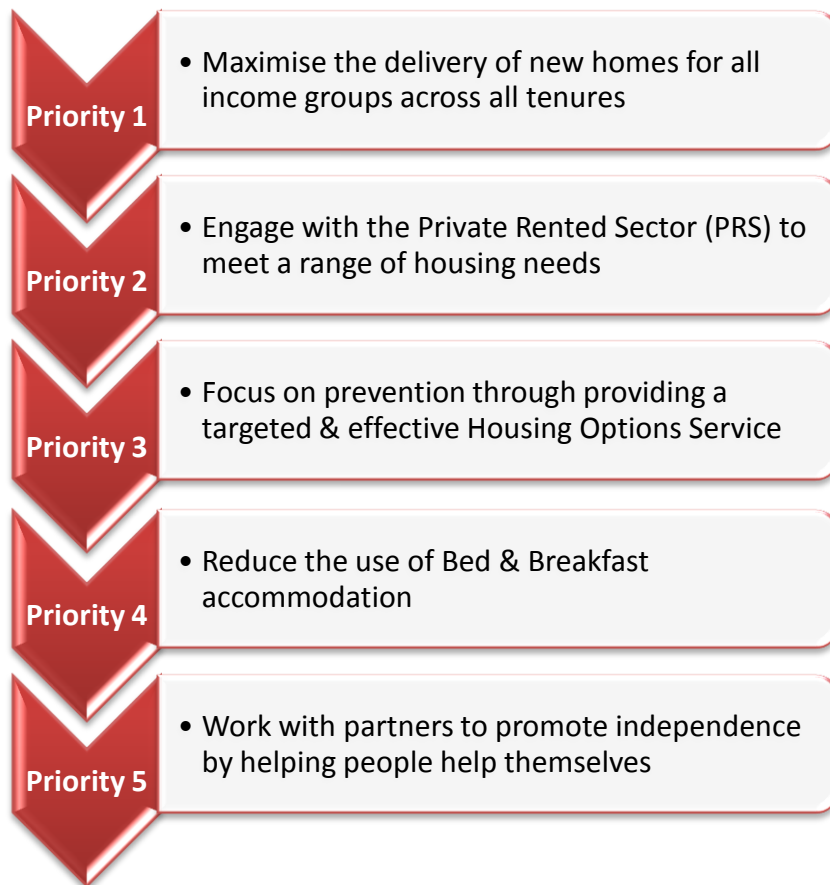
Service Demand 2015 & 2016: Brentwood



Key Points

- PRS is increasingly unaffordable for many.
- Housing Benefit does not fully finance PRS.
- Home ownership is very expensive.
- Homelessness hits under 39s the most.
- Loss of PRS and Parental Evictions are the two main reasons for homelessness.

Strategic Priorities



Priority 1: Delivery

The key mechanisms to achieve this priority are explained within the wider Housing Strategy. These include, but are not limited to:

- Progress** development opportunities on HRA land.
- Maximise** gain from s.106 Agreements through a targeted register.
- Review** opportunities available through pooling resources and self-financing.
- Promote** mutual exchange schemes.
- Improve** under-occupation incentives and target opportunities through tailored Lettings Plans.
- Examine** use of existing stock and re-develop where appropriate.

Priority 2: Access to the Private Rented Sector

Issues of affordability prevent many accessing accommodation through this sector and can also create reasons for later homelessness. Core issues are: provision of information; accessibility; affordability and sustainability. Focussing on these challenges the Council will look to:

- ❑ **Improve access:** through information sharing and highlighting the new Government rules removing many Letting Agents fees for customers.
- ❑ **Utilise powers** afforded to the Council by the Localism Act to discharge homeless duties into the private rented sector.
- ❑ **Work to improve** the quality of private sector rented accommodation.
- ❑ **Analyse the potential** for an assertive Empty Homes Strategy to bring vacant properties back into PRS circulation.
- ❑ **Seek to establish** a dedicated resource, preferably through joint funding with other Local Authorities to actively seek PRS partnerships within the Borough and beyond.
- ❑ **Provide ongoing support** to PRS placements, both client and landlord, to ensure tenancy sustainment.
- ❑ **Continue** the Rent Deposit Scheme to assist qualifying households into PRS accommodation; seeking to ring-fence and re-invest deposits to maximise self-sustainment.

Priority 3: Prevention Focus & Options Provision

The national and local context for homelessness prevention and housing options work creates an escalating demand for our services. We must find rational and innovative ways of responding. A key focus of this will be offering advice in more efficient methods and working in more effective and data-smart ways. Service improvement is key in a climate where ‘more’ needs to be delivered for ‘less’.

- ❑ **Improve IT systems:** Through adopting internal efficiencies and introducing new technology the Housing Options service is committed to improving performance through reducing waiting times and providing targeted housing option programmes and delivery.
- ❑ **Mitigate the impact of welfare reform:** as outlined in the wider Housing Strategy.
- ❑ **Early signposting of individuals** to advice agencies, particularly through partner referrals.
- ❑ **Offer prevention service** to enable customers to work to resolve their own housing problems.
- ❑ **Maximise the use** of the Homeless Prevention Fund, and/or alternate funding where possible.
- ❑ **Engage** in increased partnership funding bids to obtain maximum available resource.

Priority 4: Reduce the Use of Emergency 'B&B' Accommodation

The Council uses B&B accommodation where a legal duty to provide emergency accommodation is triggered. Increasingly this is an unavoidable component of any Local Authority's homelessness service, we recognise that it is an expensive and often unsuitable form of accommodation. Given a rise in homeless applications and decrease in available social housing this continues to be a key challenge. We intend to approach this challenge by:

- ❑ **Sharing resources** by securing alternatives in neighbouring Authorities.
- ❑ **Working with** PRS providers to secure suitable accommodation for temporary accommodation within the Borough, including through our Private Sector Leasing (PSL) scheme.
- ❑ **Accessing** hostels, such as through Family Mosaic, for supported, safe and sustainable alternatives.
- ❑ **Mitigating the benefit cap** through targeted intervention and providing financial support through Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP).
- ❑ **Seek to establish** a dedicated resource, preferably through joint funding with other Local Authorities to actively seek PRS partnerships within the Borough and beyond.
- ❑ **Dedicating management resource** to monitoring the use of B&B to ensure every alternate option is pursued and that our customers are in B&B for the shortest time possible.

Priority 5: Promote Independence with Partners

The Local Authority is often seen as the only choice for some vulnerable households. With the correct support alternate housing pathways need to be explored and made viable. Customers can be enabled to help themselves through effective partnership working.

- ❑ **Joint-working** protocols with Social Care and Health enable a focussed response to enable access to correct services to prevent homelessness and/or support tenancy sustainment.
- ❑ **Targeted support** to vulnerable PRS households: working on producing a range of options not exclusively focussing on Local Authority housing.
- ❑ **Assisting rough sleepers** to access homeless facilities. Enabling those with substance misuse and mental health difficulties to access the correct services.
- ❑ **Supporting ex-offenders** to access services through an integrated process with Police and Justice agencies to prevent homelessness and reliance on Local Authority provision.
- ❑ **Championing mental health** services and the focus on supported living, rather than placing in unsupported general needs stock.
- ❑ **Working with ECC** Children's services to ensure vulnerable 16/17 year olds are safe at home, or in supported accommodation suitable to their needs.

Tailored Provisions

Rough-Sleeping

- All incidents immediately investigated by Officers.
- Support to access services to ensure 'No Second Night Out'.
- Signposting and assistance to medical, social and substance abuse services.
- Partnership working with Police.

Domestic Abuse

- Working in partnership with Police, MARAC & IDVAs (see Glossary) and health services to provide a multi-agency solution.
- Prioritising safety – enabling where appropriate to stay in home through a 'Sanctuary Scheme'.
- Referral process to Refuges and support services, including 'Changing Pathways'.

Ex-Offenders

- Partnership working with Police, Prisons and Justice agencies.
- Working to ensure homeless prevention pre-release.
- Enabling ex-offenders to secure PRS accommodation.
- Providing accommodation where appropriate to aid rehabilitation.
- Working with the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) on appropriate cases.

Older Persons

- Enable access to appropriate sheltered accommodation.
- Work with ECC where there are higher support needs for referral to supported care.
- Assist with practical advice and support to remain at home.
- Offer Disabled Facilities Grants

Young Persons

- We will continue to work with Children's Services, other statutory and voluntary sector to prevent homelessness. Including utilising the new ECC 16/17 year old Joint Protocol.
- Working with the Brentwood Foyer (supported accommodation for 16 – 25 year olds) in Brentwood. Sitting on the Joint Referral Panel to ensure suitable placements.
- Family Mediation: Enabling young people and their families to remain in stable accommodation for wider family support. Professional work undertaken by the independent provider 'Changing Pathways'.
- Accessing floating support through Family Mosaic for practical assistance.
- Collaborating with other Local Authorities to use supported accommodation for young families (Railways Meadows; The Gables and Bartletts).

Making it Work Together

To prevent homelessness we have to work with and rely on our statutory and non-statutory partners. The information below is intended to provide a strategic insight into how we engage in partnership working.



Citizen's Advice provide invaluable housing, debt and employment advice. We are working to bring CA even closer, locating them within the Town Hall HUB and offering bookable appointments, supporting them through direct Council funding.



Provide NHS community health, mental health and learning disability services. In particular the Brentwood Community Mental Health Team work closely with the Council to ensure vulnerable residents are able to access facilities and to ensure homelessness prevention where possible.



BRENTWOOD COMMUNITY PRINT
a community interest company

Are a community interest company helping people recover from mental illness. BCP engages with the Council directly and through the 'Community Tree' project.



Run the Brentwood Foyer. The Council sits on the JRP (see Glossary) to consider applications, sanctions and evictions. The emphasis is on prevention and tenancy sustainment. The Foyer remains a key resource for the young people of Brentwood, which the Council is committed to.

we can



Operate a 'floating support' service within Brentwood for any person with support needs who requires practical assistance. The Council works closely with support workers to enable customer access to suitable housing solutions. The service is also a key tool for tenancy sustainment both within the PRS and social sector.



Brentwood Borough Council and Essex County Council work together, particularly in relation to young persons and vulnerable adults. We aim to ensure that timely referrals are made and that information sharing is effective and proportionate to ensure successful service delivery.



Is the Housing Association which runs 'Richard House' a supported living accommodation for individuals with low-level mental health needs. Through our 'move on' programme the Council works with Sanctuary to ensure customers are tenancy-ready. Sanctuary provides a core facility for homeless prevention at first instance.



Are the independent provider of 'Railway Meadows' - supported accommodation for young families. The Council has nomination rights to accommodations within the Ongar scheme and attends regular service meetings. The focus is on enabling vulnerable young families to access supported accommodation as a method of current and future homelessness prevention. Tenancy sustainment remains central to this.



Is a domestic abuse charity working to provide free and confidential services to support victims of abuse. Refuge services are provided, as well as counselling and personal and safety support. Changing Pathways accepts referrals by the Council for family mediation. The Council directly funds this as a homelessness prevention tool. The focus is on reducing parental/family ejections to create a more functional family unit.



The Council has established a home improvement agency in partnership with the Papworth Trust to assist elderly and/or disabled home owners to improve, repair or adapt their houses. As a leading disability charity Papworth Trust provide a wealth of experience which in partnership allows us to enable individuals to remain safe and secure in their existing accommodation.



Is a partnership between Citizen's Advice and Shelter, funded by the DCLG. It was formed to ensure that high quality advice about homelessness prevention is given. NHAS regularly provides training on all aspects of housing law and provision and is utilised by the Council to ensure consistency of approach to homelessness and prevention.



Provide support to those who are suffering from substance dependency, to achieve recovery and full re-integration into their family and society. The Council recognises that alcohol and drug abuse are routinely part of a potential homelessness case. Signposting to these services remain part of a tenancy sustainment approach to prevention (particularly for our tenants). Working together to improve lives is core to this approach.



Brentwood MIND provides support for those in the community suffering with mental illness and assists them in leading full lives. The Council's Housing Options service regularly works with MIND to ensure equality of service provision and opportunity. Brentwood MIND is now physically located within the Town Hall HUB.



We work directly with the Police and through the Local Action Group to intervene in anti-social behaviour matters and to try and prevent evictions and homelessness. We engage to try and ensure safe and effective housing solutions and prevention wherever possible.



Tenancy Strategy

Why?

The Localism Act 2011 requires a Local Authority to produce a written Tenancy Strategy. Previously this has been a 'stand-alone' document which was based on similar facts, statistics, ideas and rationale found in other Council documents – in particular the Housing Strategy.

To increase understanding and transparency we decided, following consultation with our Members, Tenants, Residents and Staff to combine the Tenancy Strategy into the revised Housing Strategy. It has been developed to work with both the Allocations Policy 2014 and the Homelessness Prevention Strategy. It has been informed by the Corporate Plan and the Local Plan and is designed to complement and support the objectives of these approaches.

Who?

The purpose of a Tenancy Strategy is to set out a framework for Registered Providers (RPs) of social and affordable housing to follow within the Borough. A further consultation of the draft Housing Strategy (including the Tenancy Strategy). It is to assist those RPs in relation to:

- ✓ The kinds of tenancies they grant;
- ✓ The circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind;
- ✓ Where they grant tenancies for a term certain, the lengths of the terms, and
- ✓ The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of the existing tenancy.

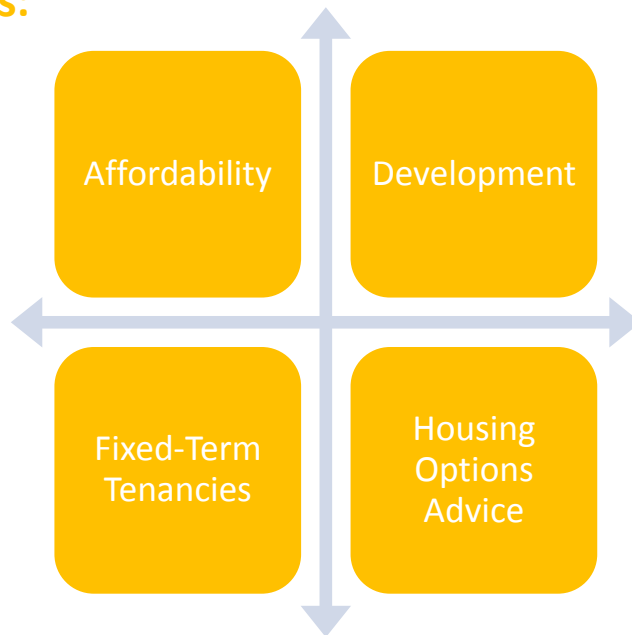
The Tenancy Strategy provides a summary of the above and explains where else related policies may be found.

Where?

In particular RPs are directed towards the following documents which reflect the approach of Brentwood Borough Council in relation to critical elements of housing provision to residents within the Borough (see 'Useful Information').

- Allocations Policy 2014
- Rent Policy 2015
- Local Investment Plan

Core Principles:



Key Guidance:

The Localism Act 2011 introduced key changes to housing provision and the types of tenancies which local Authorities and RPs can provide to their tenants.

Every RP will publish its own strategies and guidance in relation to the tenancies they offer their tenants. The Tenancy Strategy seeks to guide those RPs, both current and future, in their service provision. There is the expectation that RPs will have regard to this strategy:

- ❑ By considering the draft of our strategy at the consultation period and by engaging with us, particularly if there are elements with which they do not or could not comply.
- ❑ When reviewing their own policies. The Council requires developers to use HCA approved Registered Providers, particularly to discharge s.106 obligations.
- ❑ By openly discussing with the Council if they feel unable to meet the core principles and objectives of this Tenancy Strategy and housing vision as contained within the wider Housing Strategy itself.

It is acknowledged that RPs in the Borough value their independence and are answerable directly to its board, tenants, lenders and to the regulators. RPs consequently produce their own policies and strategies and these should be properly reviewed in any consideration of housing within this Borough. The Council encourages RPs to publish links to these through the Council website.

Flexible Tenancies

The Localism Act 2011 created two new forms of fixed-term tenancies:

- ❖ Flexible Tenancies for Local Authorities.
- ❖ Fixed Term Assured Shorthold Tenancies for Housing Associations.

The Council supports the principle of fixed term tenancies. The affordable housing resources within the Borough are a precious asset for which demand exceeds supply. If the circumstances of a household is such that they no longer financially, or in terms of bedroom need, require that particular accommodation it is appropriate to assist them into alternate accommodation.

Exceptions

In respect of meeting long-term needs the Council considers that fixed term tenancies are generally unnecessary for Sheltered and Supported housing; normally these should continue to be let on secure or assured tenancies.

Creating a Tenancy

The Council seeks for an RP to use flexible tenancies in the same way that the Council is currently doing. By offering a one-year Introductory tenancy and then a minimum five year term. In exceptional circumstances a tenancy of between two and five years may be offered, but the RP should share the reasoning for this with the Council prior to granting that tenancy.

Ending a Fixed Term Tenancy

The Council would expect a fixed term tenancy to be renewed if there has been no significant change in circumstances. This general principle benefits all parties; tenants are able to remain in their homes and maintain their community ties and RPs do not have unnecessary turnover of stock and related costs.

The Council expects that RPs may consider the following as changes in circumstances requiring the ending of a fixed term tenancy:

- ❖ Increase in financial circumstances.
- ❖ Under-occupation of the property.
- ❖ Over-crowding of the property.
- ❖ Where allocation of that property was to meet particular needs which are no longer present.
- ❖ The terms of the tenancy have been breached (e.g. Neglect, rent arrears, anti-social behaviour).

Tenancies: Welfare Reform and 'Pay to Stay'

Given the introduction of Universal Credit and the recent changes relating to the Benefit Cap the Council expects all RPs to make significant efforts to:

- ✓ Inform & advise their tenants
- ✓ Support their tenants
- ✓ Prevent evictions wherever possible

Once the Government has provided clearer guidance on the new 'voluntary Pay to Stay' scheme the Council will decide whether to implement or not. If it is adopted then we will be publishing a guidance document, outlining how the Council intends to implement the policy. For RPs the scheme is currently discretionary and related to tenants with an income of £60,000 or more a year. The scheme for Local Authorities may mirror this but is currently undecided. The Council expects all RPs to publish their own policy in relation to 'Pay to Stay' type issues and to adopt relevant processes having regard to the Council's direction. The Council expects a similar approach to consideration of financial circumstances when RPs are deciding whether to end a fixed term tenancy or whether to increase the rent.

Disposal of Homes by RPs

The Council has two main concerns about the disposal (selling) of RP properties:

- ❖ Which properties are disposed of;
- ❖ Where the income from the property is reinvested.

The Council requests that RPs talk to us at the earliest stage about which properties they are proposing to dispose of prior to any decision being made as the Council may wish to:

- ❖ Seek to influence the choice of individual properties;
- ❖ Discuss alternative options;
- ❖ Acquire or enable others to acquire those properties to meet housing need.

In relation to disposals RPs should focus on the Local Plan published by Brentwood Borough Council in conjunction with this Tenancy Strategy. The Council wishes to work together with RPs to explore opportunities to maximise alternatives to disposal or potential joint redevelopments to meet both housing needs and RP development programmes.

The Council requests that RPs share details of monies gained from in-Borough disposals. We understand the need for strategic decisions relating to affordable stock but consider transparency essential so that we can aid in the cycle and retain monies within the Borough.

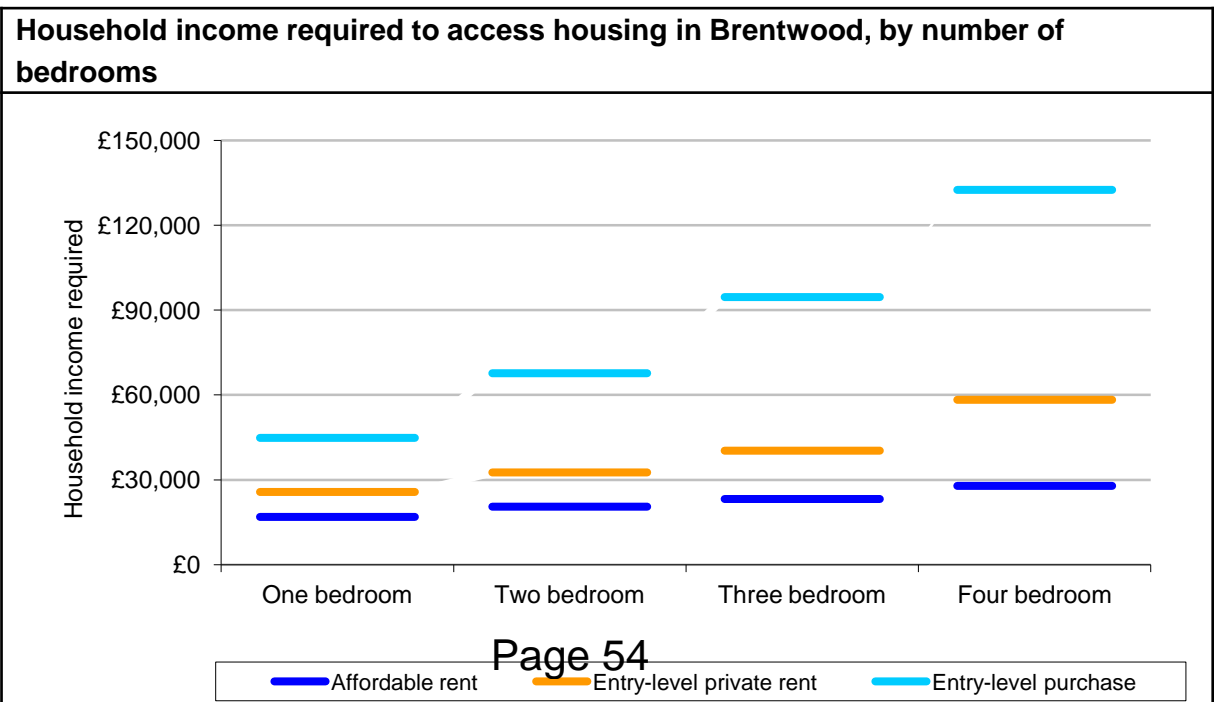
Affordability: Maintaining and Enhancing Mobility

'Affordable Housing' is a technical term for properties with sub-market rents. Which means at a rent level below the average of the local [private] market rate (LMR) sector. The Government typically refers to 'Affordable Rents' as being 80% or less of the LMR.

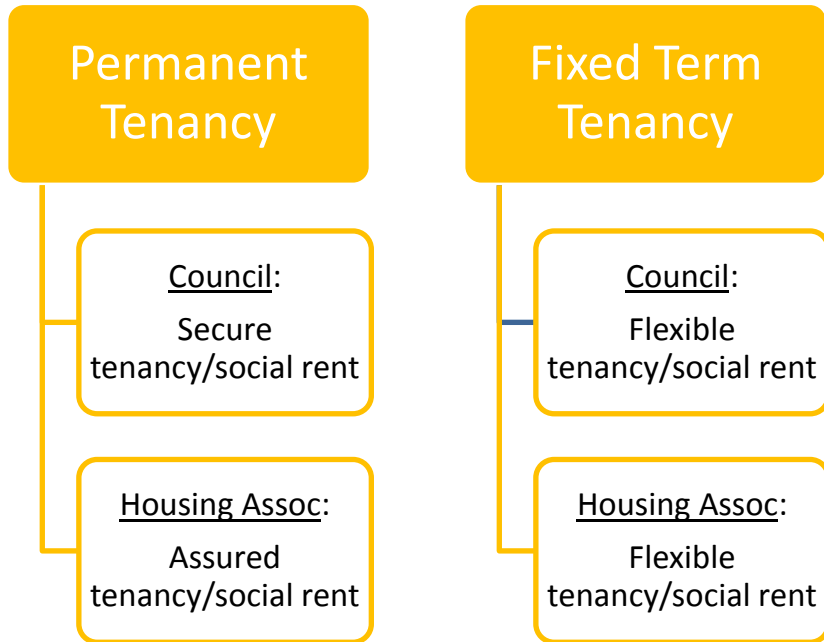
The Council sets out in its Rents Policy 2015 its own mechanism for setting 'Affordable Rents' which is currently applied to new build general stock properties and acquisitions (for example the purchase of housing from the private markets with monies received from Right to Buy sales of Council properties).

The Council recognises that RPs will already have their own policies and rent setting mechanisms in relation to their affordable housing stock. We do however expect RPs to make their best efforts to use income generated from affordable rents to develop further affordable housing within the Brentwood Borough which meets our housing need.

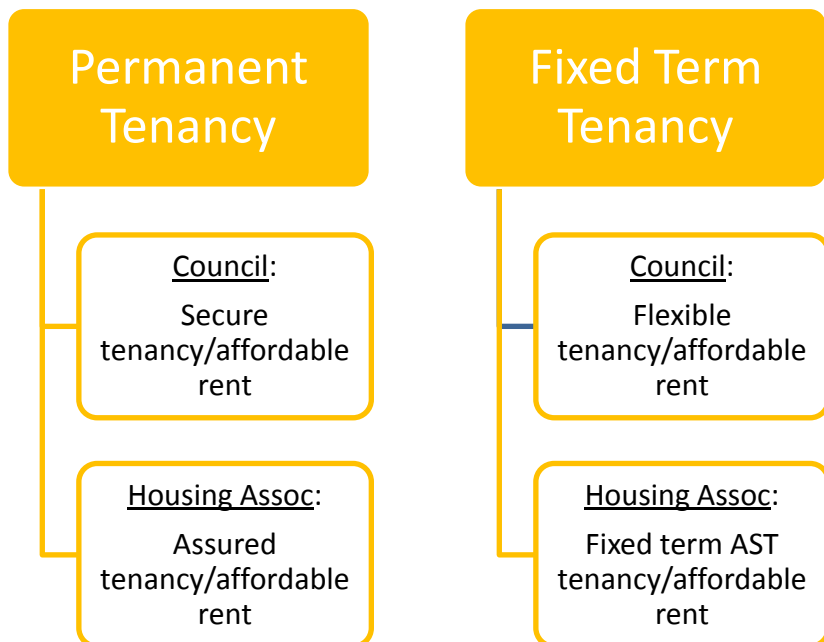
The Local Plan, Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAN) documents make it very clear as to the housing needs of this Borough and should be consulted as working documents. Links to all these documents are available via the 'Useful Information' section at the end of the full Strategy.



Social Rent Tenancy Models



Affordable Rent Tenancy Models

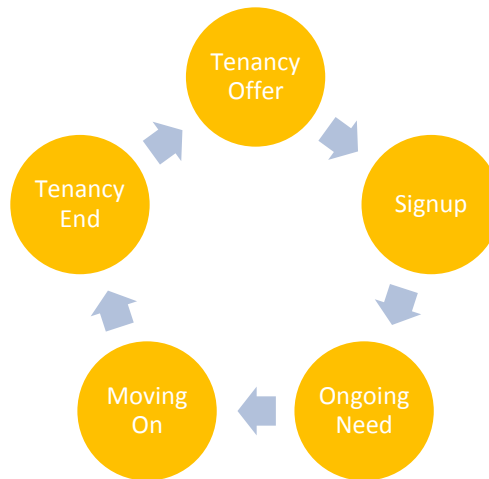


It is anticipated that the tenancy models above will form the principle offer to residents within this Borough, with increasing provision of affordable homes. Provision of accommodation with diverse tenancies is encouraged to meet the wider housing needs of the Borough.

Making Affordable Housing Work

- ❖ To achieve the above the Council wants to work with RPs to ensure that best use is made of affordable housing stock within the Borough, especially targeting and managing overcrowding and under-occupation.
- ❖ We want to manage the impact of Affordable Rents and fixed term tenancies so that there are not any unintended consequences that impede mobility and reduces effective use of the stock.
- ❖ The Council will be reviewing its Allocations Policy in 2017 and we will be ensuring that the revised policy supports and is consistent with this Tenancy Strategy and the wider Housing Strategy.
- ❖ The Council wants to support customers and RPs to remove barriers to downsizing to enable households to move to smaller properties that meet their aspirations, whilst ensuring they are aware of any relevant tenancy changes. To incentivise down-sizing the Council supports 'like for like' tenancies being granted.
- ❖ Pro-active downsizing offers, such as the Council's 'Enhanced Under-Occupation Offer' for older tenants, should be considered by RPs for replication to aid movement within housing stock.
- ❖ Households moving to larger properties are increasingly likely to be offered fixed term tenancies to ensure that such properties are kept available strictly for households with relevant needs. The Council encourages RPs to follow this approach, other than with highly adapted properties where flexibility in approach should be given to consider the often complex needs of the household.
- ❖ Increasingly RPs who hold properties as a result of a s.106 agreement (see Glossary) will be required to further the aims of those communities through affordable housing provision, particularly in line with the Local Plan. RPs commitment to contributing towards more affordable housing will be critical in tackling housing need within the Borough. Accordingly the Council will be looking to increasingly work with RPs and partner agencies to ensure that this becomes a reality.
- ❖ The Council openly welcomes suggestions and contributions from RPs as to how we can work together more effectively for the benefit of both residents and customers.

Housing Options Advice



- ❖ Provision of Housing Options Advice is available from the Local Authority for all customers. Tailored Housing Options Advice should also be provided by RPs to their tenants so they can assess their current and future housing needs, and to prepare them for their housing pathway.
- ❖ Following the Localism Act 2011 ‘tenancies for life’ will disappear as a housing option. Customers will need assistance to realise, appreciate, plan, prepare and engage in their own housing pathway.
- ❖ The Council proposes minimum standards for Housing Options Advice from RPs including delivery through a joint protocol. Increasingly this advice should be given not only at the beginning and end of a tenancy but at key points during the term of the tenancy.
- ❖ Housing Options Advice could be provided directly by the RP or through procurement with a professional advice agency, such as Citizen’s Advice, through a Service Level Agreement.
- ❖ The Council encourages and supports RPs to engage in effective pre-Tenancy work (as outlined above within the main Housing Strategy). The Council expects RPs to go beyond basic statutory requirements in providing support for vulnerable tenants.



Useful Information

For information published by the Council please see our online **Document Library** which contains the principal working documents of this Authority.

<http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/index.php?cid=1253>



Affordable Home Ownership Schemes

<https://www.gov.uk/affordable-home-ownership-schemes/overview>

Citizen's Advice

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/brentwood/>

Essex Savers

<http://www.essexsavers.co.uk/>

Housing & Planning Act 2016 LGA Guidance

http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7632544/5.7+Get+in+on+the+Act++Housing+and+Planning+Act_v02.pdf/fda42e8b-ab7c-4736-b3fb-01650fe1177a

Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7532/2033676.pdf

DCLG: Section 106 Information

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192641/Section_106_affordable_housing_requirements_-_Review_and_appeal.pdf

TPAS: Tenant Engagement Experts

<http://www.tpas.org.uk/>

Welfare Reform Government Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/welfare-reform>



Glossary

- Definitions of key terms

Affordable Housing

This is housing for eligible people who are unable to afford market housing. There are two different types which include Social Housing (let by Local Authorities or Registered Providers) and Intermediate Housing: homes for sale or rent which are below market prices but higher than social rents.

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

UK Government department with responsibilities for local government and housing, among other things.

Development Plan

The adopted Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents, and Neighbourhood Plans, as defined by section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Disposal receipts or Capital receipts

Money generated when a Council or Registered Provider property is sold. Currently there are strict rules as to how it may be spent and the amount which needs to be returned direct to central Government.

Estates Management Team

The Team at Brentwood Borough Council who are responsible for the tenants of the Council; including rents; anti-social behaviour and general tenancy issues.

Flexible tenancies

A specific type of fixed term tenancy that is granted by the Council as the result of the Localism Act 2011.

General Fund

The Council's primary account or fund which records all assets and liabilities that are not assigned to a special purpose fund, such as the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Glossary

Green Belt	A restrictive land use designation around certain major cities and towns that has existed since 1947 to restrict urban growth and safeguard the countryside. The Green Belt surrounding Greater London is called “Metropolitan Green Belt”.
Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)	The Government appointed organisation with the responsibility of funding new affordable housing and regulating providers of affordable housing. Focus is on prevention.
Housing Association	Independent, not-for-profit organisations that can use any profit they make to maintain existing homes and help finance new ones.
Housing Options Team	The service at Brentwood which gives advice, help and support to anyone that is, or is about to become, homeless.
Housing Revenue Account	The account which Council rents and service charges are paid into. It is kept separate from other Council accounts, such as the General Fund. There are rules and restrictions on how money in the account can be spent and on how much the Council can borrow against it.
IDVAs	Independent Domestic Violence Advisors
Intermediate Housing	Homes for sale or rent, which are below market prices but are higher than social rents. The most common forms are: Shared Ownership - where a minimum share of 25% in the home can be bought and a discounted rent is paid on the proportion which is not owned Intermediate Rent – where a sub-market rent is paid. The tenancy may be renewed or offered for a fixed period depending on the policy of the

Glossary

Local Plan	Plan for future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority (the Council) in consultation with the community.
Localism Act 2011	Act of Parliament that changed the powers of local government in England. The aim of the Act is to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government control to individuals and communities.
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Centres (for victims of domestic abuse/violence).
Objectively Assessed Need(OAN)	This relates to the development needs for both housing and economic development in an area. For housing it include the identification of the future quantity of housing, including a breakdown by type, tenure and size within both the affordable sector as well as market housing.
Registered Providers (RPs)	Also known as Housing Associations. Not-for-profit organisations which provide, develop and manage affordable housing.
Section 106 Agreements	Requirements of developers as part of planning permissions. These are agreed in the planning application process, to provide contributions (usually financial) to develop facilities/amenities for the local community (e.g. education, open space).
Service Charges	Specific additional charges, typically for leaseholders in flat blocks, to cover additional charges incurred by the landlord. These might include cleaning of communal areas, or, in the case of leaseholders, repairs to communal areas or equipment.
Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)	Study of the housing needs within the local housing market, including homelessness. Available online.
The Council	Brentwood Borough Council

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Appendix B

Housing Strategy Consultation Overview

Q1. The Introduction outlines the key housing challenges and evidence for the priorities we have identified. Do you think we have correctly identified the main challenges?

91.66% of sample agreed

Comment: The negative sample illustrated not that the main challenges were incorrectly identified, but that there was a higher expectation for the Council to deliver more.

Q2. A key aim of this Strategy is to establish a consistent introduction of new affordable housing and to implement a housing development programme. To achieve this we have identified key priorities to action. Do you think we have chosen appropriate priorities?

66.66% of sample agreed

Comment: Overwhelmingly the sample supported the introduction of new affordable housing; however there was a recognition it has to be truly affordable; environmentally sustainable and targeted towards younger households who have few housing options.

Q3. A key aim of this Strategy is to explore and develop housing options for younger households, particularly for those in employment/aspiring to enter employment. To achieve this we have identified key priorities to action. Do you think we have chosen appropriate priorities?

83.3% of sample agreed

Comment: A distinct majority supported the development of housing options and recognised a need to ensure employment is promoted to create an aspirational culture. A note of caution was raised that these efforts should not be to the detriment of core service provision.

Q4. A key aim of this Strategy is to establish how we can help people access private rented housing and find ways to improve housing conditions. To achieve this we have identified key priorities to action. Do you think we have chosen the appropriate policies?

75% of sample agreed

Comment: The negative sample either provided no clear explanation of why the priorities were incorrect or identified no alternatives. Indication was made that greater efforts should be made by the Council to engage with the private rented sector.

Q5. Do you feel that the design and layout of the draft Housing Strategy is clear and easy to understand?

91.66% of sample agreed

Comment: A key objective in re-designing the Housing Strategy was to ensure it was transparent and comprehensible. The sample showed direct recognition of achievement in this area.

Qualitative Responses:

- ❖ Whilst a very small percentage of the sample indicated personal issues unconnected with the Housing Strategy the majority of opinions were directly supportive of the direction Brentwood Borough Council is taking in relation to Housing issues.
- ❖ A key concern was the correct targeting of resources, with a distinct commitment towards younger households, and those in employment rather than NEETs (not in education, employment or training).
- ❖ Support has been identified for the use of alternate accommodations, away from traditional 'bricks and mortar' where it presents an opportunity for greater volume and affordability of housing.
- ❖ The use of Flexible Fixed Term Tenancies and the strategy to ensuring provision of a range of housing 'products' for those with differing needs was welcomed.
- ❖ A broad recognition of the crucial issue of affordability, particularly set against high private sector rentals was identified; again younger households were the main demographic identified as being in the greatest need of assistance.
- ❖ Concern was raised by a small section of the sample that NIMBY'ism within the Borough may prove an effective bar against creative housing solutions.
- ❖ The introduction of Universal Credit and engagement with welfare reform was commented upon as a key challenge for both customers and Brentwood Borough Council. The importance of partnership working with key agencies, notably the DWP, was urged by both local residents and professionals.