

**Uttlesford District
Council
DRAFT Housing
Strategy 2012 – 15**

As I am sure you know Uttlesford is a beautiful rural area rated by many as one of the best places to reside in the country. This along with our commutability to London and proximity to Cambridge makes this district a most desirable place to live. This in turn inflates house prices making it difficult for young people and local families to get a foot on the housing ladder.

We also have a lack of availability in both the privately owned and rental markets of bungalows and other suitable types of property for our more mature residents. This is particularly a problem in many of our villages. This makes it difficult for people to move from larger family homes into something more appropriate for their changing needs.

Housing is a key priority for councillors in Uttlesford. The housing and planning departments are working together to help deliver the accommodation that meets the needs of those living and working in Uttlesford. We are doing this through both our new Local Plan and Housing Strategy.

I'm really proud to say that this Council is ahead of many as we started a building programme some time ago. Having completed our first phase of council built new housing last year in Leaden Roding we have just started phase two in the same area. We are already working on plans for our next development in Stansted which I hope will be underway in the near future.

As a council we have increased our contribution to the RCCE to buy more time and help for Parish Council to bring forward plans for exception sites. This will give local people an opportunity to continue to live in the areas where they already have roots and personal connections.

We believe that there are many ways of delivering housing, be it working with developers and housing associations or encouraging empty home owners to become landlords. We know times are very challenging in so many ways but we want to make the most of the opportunities that are available and I believe we at Uttlesford are up to the challenge!

Cllr Julie Redfern
Portfolio Holder, Housing

Chapter 1 – Summary and Introduction

The Council's new Housing Strategy has been written alongside the new Local Plan for the District. The documents show the future housing priorities in the District and how they can be delivered. The targets are challenging in a housing market that is still unpredictable.

The new Strategy will encompass many key documents the Council has published in the past and produce one key document and action plan to deliver our key priorities and objectives for the next five years.

Our Key Objectives

- To meet the housing requirement for Uttlesford and to make sure that the housing being provided creates balanced communities by delivering sustainable, safe, attractive and healthy places to live while meeting local housing needs in terms of type and tenure including affordable and special needs housing.
- To provide and maintain accommodation that meets the needs of older people living in Uttlesford.
- Maintain our housing to a high standard ensuring our tenants have a good quality of life

Our Successes

Since the last Housing Strategy was published in 2009, the Council has:

- Gained HCA funding and built 5 new bungalows in Leaden Roding
- Progressed a further Local Authority new build scheme which will deliver 8 houses during 2012.
- Restructured the Planning and Housing departments to deliver a joined up service
- Continued to exceed the affordable housing target of 100 homes per year.
- Provided a young parents scheme in partnership with Epping Forest and Brentwood Council's
- Provided temporary accommodation at Molehill Green and Stansted
- Continued development of Bromfield House in Saffron Walden
- New Housing Options team set up which has been providing advice and assistance to those at risk of homelessness
- Successful Homeless Partnership set up, working on joint initiatives and sharing best practise
- Worked with Hastoe to deliver a Passivhaus scheme in Wimbish.
- Introduced a full responder service for those with our Careline service
- Economic Development Strategy published

- Successful Tenant Forum who actively take part in key housing decisions
- First internet café opened in one of our sheltered schemes
- Programme of Council new build planned for next 5 years
- 98.5% of properties meet decent homes standard

Scene Setting – The Uttlesford Area

Uttlesford is a sparsely populated rural locality in Northwest Essex. The District borders Hertfordshire to the West and Cambridgeshire to the North. It is the largest District in Essex at 63,752 hectares and is mainly rural in character with four market towns - Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted and 56 parishes.

Uttlesford has a population of around 77,500 (2010 figure) which is set to increase over the next 10 -15 years with new housing development. 41% of residents are aged 30 – 59 with relatively few residents aged 20 -29 (9%) compared with the county average. The proportion of younger (0 – 19) and older (60 plus) residents is on par with the County (25% and 25% compared with 23% and 25% for County [from SNPP for 2012])

There are good road and rail links into London, Cambridge and Harlow from settlements in the Stansted-Cambridge and Stansted-Braintree corridors, although public transport in the more rural locations is poor. Stansted Airport lies within its boundaries.

There are approximately 32,611 dwellings in the district, made up of the following tenures:

Tenure	Nos.
Social Rented-Local Authority owned	2,852
Social Rented-Registered Social Landlord	1,257
Stock owned by other Public Bodies	216
Private Sector (rented and owner occupied)	28,286
Total	32,611

Source: ELASH April 2012

The attractive rural nature of the district and its good accessibility to employment opportunities has led to high house prices. Unemployment remains low at 1.7% and household incomes are relatively higher than the national average. The average full-time wage for people in employment who live in the District (but may not necessarily work here) is £30,006 per person per annum. However the average full-time wage for people who work in the District (and may not necessarily live here) is £26,660 per person per annum. This could be due to the number of people who live in the District but commute to London to work.

This tends to give an initial impression of an affluent district with little or no need. However, because of high house prices there are some members of the population, particularly younger people and those on low to modest incomes, unable to access the housing market. This has led to an increasing pressure for more subsidised affordable housing. The average house price in Uttlesford is £312,892 (BBC website Oct – Dec 2011) significantly higher than the national average of £228,385 (BBC website Oct – Dec 2011).

High housing costs have also led to a growing number of households who do not necessarily require subsidised affordable housing but, due to inflated house prices, are financially restricted from entering the private housing market. This applies particularly to 'Key Workers' and other workers on modest incomes who are key in providing public services and supporting the commercial businesses on which sustainable economic growth depends.

The Housing Market

Since the last Housing Strategy was written, the market has started to show signs of a recovery. Figures from the Nationwide Building Society in August 2012 show that

“UK house prices rose by 1.3% in August, the largest monthly increase since January 2010, reversing the declines recorded in the previous two months. Given the difficult economic backdrop, the extent of the rebound in August is a little surprising. However, we should never read too much into one month's data, especially since monthly price changes have been impacted by a number of one-off factors this year, such as the ending of the stamp duty holiday for first time buyers. These are factors that cannot be controlled by the usual process of seasonal adjustment.

“Nevertheless, the fact that the annual pace of house price decline moderated to -0.7% in August from -2.6% the previous month provides evidence that conditions remain fairly stable. This may be explained by the surprising resilience evident in the UK labour market, with further increases in employment in recent months, even though the UK economy has remained in recession”

*Robert Gardner,
Nationwide's Chief Economist, August 2012*

Consultation

A Housing Strategy conference was held on 4th July 2012 and key partners, Parish and District Councillors were invited to attend and help shape our future priorities for housing in Uttlesford. This was followed by an open event for members of the public the following day. Both were well attended and the information provided was very useful.

Officer also attended key groups and meetings in the local area to gain input into this key document for Uttlesford.

The draft document was then written and was sent out for consultation to all interested parties and also placed on our website for 4 weeks.

A final document was then published in November 2012.

Partnership Working

Strong partnerships are an essential part of this strategy and ensures that key projects can be delivered even with limited resources. Partners include all of the Local Authorities in Essex through the Essex Housing Officers Group, the Stansted Area Housing Partnership, Housing Association partners, the Homes and Communities Agency and Essex County Council. Another key partner for Uttlesford is its Local Strategic Partnership, Uttlesford Futures which is the key driver for Uttlesford's Community Strategy.

Housing Strategy Partnership

Since the successful Housing Strategy Conference held in July 2012, the Council have agreed to set up a Housing Strategy Partnership that will host a yearly conference to share best practice, monitor achievements and set future objectives.

Homelessness Partnership

The Council has a homelessness partnership that meets quarterly. This is the forum for partnership working and to discuss and implement the Action Plan of the Homelessness Strategy. Partnership working underpins the delivery of a comprehensive and holistic housing options and homelessness service. Invariably the delivery of sustainable housing solutions requires the addressing of non housing problems, this requires a multi agency approach. As advice and support services can be delivered by an often complex and fragmented range of organisations, without partnership working and a co-ordinated approach, it is easy for people to slip through the net.

Private Sector Landlords Forum

Locally and nationally some of the worst housing is in the private rented sector, and the Council has recognised the need to work proactively with landlords and letting agents to achieve improvements. The Council organises a private sector landlord forum once a year. Topics have included the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation, tenancy deposit protection schemes, the Local Housing Allowance and bringing Empty Homes back into use.

Stansted Area Housing Partnership

The Stansted Area Housing Partnership (SAHP) was developed as a partnership between Harlow, Uttlesford, Braintree and East Herts councils following the granting of planning permission by Uttlesford to British Airports Authority (BAA) to increase passenger through put to 25 million. BAA Stansted contributed £2.2 million towards the funding of affordable housing

within a ten mile radius of the airport. A key feature of SAHP is the development of a cross boundary nomination agreement, giving the opportunity for residents of the four councils to move across local authority boundaries.

Funding is slowly being spent with a scheme being completed in Braintree and one on the way in East Herts.

Housing Board

The Housing Board was set up to champion housing issues within the authority, to monitor the Housing Strategy and Business Plan and work on specific time limited housing projects. The group are currently progressing the redevelopment of Holloway Crescent phase 2, the councils new build programme and the redevelopment of Mead Court Stansted. The group includes Councillors, Tenant Forum members and Council officers and reports to Cabinet.

The Tenant Forum

Tenant Participation is seen as a vital link between the Council and its tenants. There is one Forum representing Uttlesford, made up of 12 Council tenants and one leaseholder from within the District. The Forum members are consulted on a multitude of different areas of the Housing Service including rent setting, repairs, housing policy, etc.

Two tenants from the Tenant Forum (one of whom is the Chairperson) also sit on the Housing Board covering housing issues.

Chapter 2 – Key Policies

National Policy

Governments Housing Strategy

In November 2011, the Government published “Laying the Foundations, A Housing Strategy for England” with two main aims. First to help drive local economies and create jobs, secondly to build an economy that works for everyone, one in which those that work hard and play by the rules can expect to own a decent home of their own.

The national policy drivers for housing are to:

- Increase the number of houses available to buy and rent, including affordable housing
- Improve the flexibility of social housing (increasing mobility and choice) and promote homeownership
- Protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged by tackling homelessness and support people to live independently
- Make sure that homes are of high quality and sustainable.

Changes to Housing Benefit and Universal credit

In addition to publishing a national housing strategy, the Government is making significant changes to Housing Benefits, introducing a Universal Credit system (designed to simplify the benefits system and improve work incentives) and introducing a cap on benefits payable. These changes present a significant challenge to landlords, their tenants and local authorities responsible for meeting housing needs in an area.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework was published in March 2012, it provides a framework within which local people and their accountable Councils can produce their own local and neighbourhood plans which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

The Framework requires Councils to develop a wide choice of high quality homes, creating opportunities for sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.

Local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community.

HCA programme

The Affordable Homes Programme 2011-15 (AHP) aims to increase the supply of new affordable homes in England.

Throughout 2011-15, the HCA will invest £4.5bn in affordable housing through the Affordable Homes Programme and existing commitments from the previous national affordable homes programme. The majority of the new programme will be made available as affordable rent with some for affordable home ownership, supported housing and in some circumstances, social rent.

HRA refinancing

From April 2012 the national housing subsidy system will end. This will mean that the Council will no longer have to make annual payments to government. Instead the Council will make a one off payment to government (currently estimated at around £86m) in March 2012. After that point it will be able to retain all surpluses from its landlord activity, and use these to support its future business plan on a self-financing basis. It will continue to have to account for its landlord activity in a separate ring fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Two elements of national control of Council housing finance remain. The Council will continue to have to pay 75% of the proceeds of any right to buy sales to government. The remaining 25% will be ring fenced to be used to achieve the Council's broader housing objectives for affordable housing. Secondly the government has imposed a limit on the amount of money the Council can borrow, and reserves the right to reopen the settlement in the event of major changes in housing policy. The borrowing limit constrains the ability of the Council to consider major regeneration and new build projects financed from this HRA business plan. If the borrowing limit is relaxed, as a result of government decisions in future spending reviews, this would increase borrowing capacity and enable a wider range of options to be considered.

Self financing means that for the first time the Council can set long term plans for the future of its housing stock and housing services. The self financing settlement represents an increase in resources compared with the existing subsidy system. The change means that responsibility for long term business plan and debt financing moves from central to local government.

The Council will take responsibility for long term asset management. Although borrowing levels are limited by current government spending restrictions, in general there will be less top down regulation. The change means that the Council faces increased risks, particularly around long term asset management, inflation and interest costs. This business plan is designed to manage those risks and to put the Council in a position to take advantage of the freedoms and flexibilities offered by self financing in order to improve its housing stock and services.

A Fairer Future for Social Housing Consultation

This document brought about a proposal to remove lifetime security of tenure for new social housing tenants and replace them with a fixed term tenancy. It

also introduced affordable rents with providers being able to charge up to 80% of market rent for an affordable house.

It placed a duty on Local Authorities to publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy.

It introduced legislation to enable Local Authorities to fully discharge a duty in to secure accommodation by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

Regional/Sub Regional/Essex Wide Partnership Working

Since the last Housing Strategy, we have seen the abolition of regional government and the splitting of the London Commuter Belt sub region. It was felt that many of the projects/initiatives were County wide or based on smaller sub sub regional working so the group agreed to cease meeting as a sub region.

Uttlesford works closely in West Essex with Harlow and Epping Forest Councils and felt that this grouping delivered effective partnership working. We also work across Essex to deliver supported housing services through the County Council and with Essex Housing Officers Group to share best practice.

Supporting People

Since the last Housing Strategy was written, the Essex County Council Supporting People programme has been absorbed into Adult Social Care and the funding has been cut. This has had implications in Uttlesford and it has meant that the Council have had to absorb some of the cuts to services for older people. This has also had implications for our partner Housing Associations who have suffered cuts to other supported housing services in Uttlesford.

A new partnership has been set up by Essex County Council which monitors services for vulnerable people and the Council are still represented on the group. A new strategy will be published by the County Council in early 2013 and be published on their website www.essexcc.gov.uk

Local Partnerships and Policies for Uttlesford

Local Strategic Partnership

Our Local Strategic Partnership, Uttlesford Futures has recently evaluated its vision, structure and workplan and set the following:

Vision - Bring partners together to help determine community priorities and to resolve challenges, with a view to maximising effectiveness and sustainability in making Uttlesford a better place to live in.

There will be 4 workstreams to deliver this key vision.

- Health and Wellbeing,
- Community Safety Partnership,
- Employment, Economy, Skills, Environment & Transport,
- Children and Families,

Officers attend some of the workstream meetings and Housing is high on the agenda of the LSP.

Corporate Plan

The Council has recently published its Corporate Plan 2012-17. This is made up of 6 objectives.

By 2017, we will have

- Reduced the Council Tax burden for our residents in real terms
- Built partnerships that make a difference with Councils, volunteers and other providers
- Built more affordable homes
- Recycled more
- Protected and enhanced our environment
- Improved prosperity

Local Development Framework

As part of the work to develop a new Local Plan – the series of policies, plans and other documents that will set out where new homes and businesses will be built over the next 15 years – the council's Cabinet has approved the distribution strategy. This strategy will set out in broad terms the number of houses in various key locations in the district. This work has been completed jointly with planning and housing officers to ensure that the new Local Plan works jointly with the new Housing Strategy to deliver the housing requirements of the future. The draft Local Plan will be submitted in 2013.

Housing Inspection

The Council had a Strategic Housing Inspection in 2008 and was rated fair with no prospects for improvement. The Audit Commission reinspected in September 2010 and declared that Strategic Housing had improved considerably and regraded it as Fair with promising prospects for improvement.

Chapter 3 – Housing Needs, Supply and Demand

The Housing market

There are approximately 32,611 properties in the Uttlesford District. 28,286 of these are in the private sector and almost 2,852 are owned by the Council. Smaller numbers are owned by Registered Providers and the Ministry of Defence.

Renting in Uttlesford

As with most areas, there are three main types of landlord in Uttlesford – The Council, Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and Private Landlords. The Government's subsidy system for building and maintaining Council and RSL homes leads to them being able to charge a lower rent than most private landlords. The average monthly private rent in Uttlesford and for our surrounding districts is:

	Saffron Walden	Stansted	Great Dunmow
1 bed	£545	£602	£512.50
2 bed	£785	£738.75	£748.66
3 bed	£922.50	£933.33	£1133.46
4 bed	£1329	£1580	£1737.50

Research completed on Rightmove, August 2012

The lack of private rented properties in Uttlesford has meant that rents charged are high. This has implications for low earners and those living on Local Housing Allowance. As can be seen in the tables below, the LHA rates do not cover the costs of a rental property in the District.

Local Housing Allowance Rates

Cambridge area
(i.e. North of the Uttlesford District)

Number of Bedrooms	Weekly Amount	Amount
Monthly Shared Room Rate	£75.00	£325.00
1 Bedroom	£120.00	£520.00
2 Bedrooms	£135.00	£585.00
3 Bedrooms	£156.92	£679.99
4 Bedrooms	£206.54	£895.01

Harlow and Bishops Stortford
(i.e. South of the Uttlesford District)

Number of Bedrooms	Weekly Amount	Amount
Monthly Shared Room Rate	£69.27	£300.17
1 Bedroom	£126.92	£549.99
2 Bedrooms	£160.38	£694.98
3 Bedrooms	£196.15	£849.98
4 Bedrooms	£275.77	£1195.00

House Prices

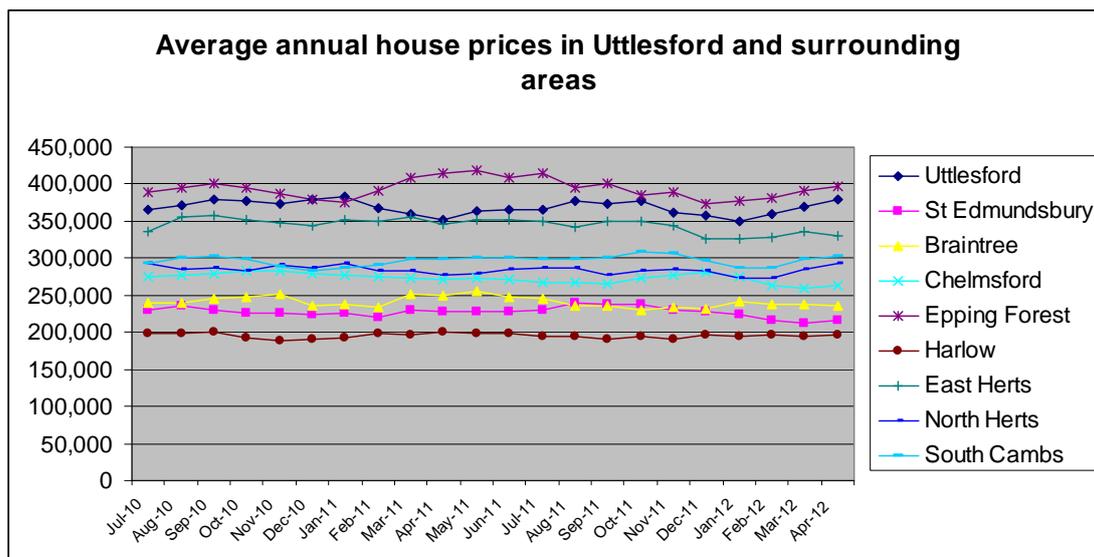
The attractiveness of Uttlesford as a place to live has led to high house prices in the District. The average house price is £309,082 which shows an annual change in house price of -5.3%.

All	Detached	Flat	Semi	Terrace
£309,082	£431,085	£167,318	£255,869	£219,388

BBC Website, house prices, Jan – March 2012

Affordability is still a problem in Uttlesford; in 2010 the ratio of lowest quartile mean house price to mean household income was 10.3, worse than the affordability ratio for the East of England (7.7). This makes owning a home very difficult for first time buyers and those on low incomes.

Average annual house price over time in Uttlesford and surrounding areas



Uttlesford consistently has the second highest house prices of the districts/boroughs shown above. The house price in Uttlesford has shown a consistent month on month rise from January – April 2012. The trajectory of

this rise is slightly steeper than that for Epping Forest which has the highest average house prices.

Housing need and demand

Housing need and demand is measured and assessed from a variety of sources, this can include formal studies and information already held by the Council.

Identifying Housing Needs

For some years, Government guidance on housing and planning has emphasised the requirement for local authorities to assess local housing need and develop strategies to address that need. This assessment process has generally been achieved by conducting Housing Needs Surveys. The Council last undertook a District-wide Housing Needs Survey in 2002, covering the period from 2002 to 2007 and an update of this work took place in 2004. In 2006 a framework was introduced under Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) for carrying out Strategic Housing Market Assessments, with final guidance published in March 2007. These assessments continue to provide information on the level of need and demand for housing locally, but they also contribute to the sub regional and regional levels of planning.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) analyses the entire local housing market, which is likely to be wider than the local authority boundaries. It forms a crucial part of the evidence base that informs the Local Development Framework. Uttlesford District Council is within the Eastern region for planning purposes, and part of the London Commuter Belt (LCB) sub region. The LCB sub region comprises 15 local authorities and was considered too large an area for the production of a detailed and meaningful study. Six districts in the sub region, including Uttlesford, joined to form London Commuter Belt (East)/M11 and commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a comprehensive SHMA. The other five districts in the SHMA area are Brentwood, Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping and Harlow. The research used secondary data from sources such as the UK Census, Homes and Communities Agency, HM Land Registry and the Office for National Statistics, along with a qualitative consultation programme with a wide range of stakeholders. A report was published in 2009 and the key findings are as follows.

31,100 households are considered to be unsuitably housed, including 3,300 in Uttlesford. The term 'unsuitably housed' is used to encompass households that are homeless or have insecure tenure; households that are 'mismatched' to the dwelling they live in; households living in dwellings that lack amenities or are in a poor condition; housing with social needs that can only be resolved through a move

5.5% of households in the LCB M11 east are overcrowded. However when looking at those living in the social rented sector, 11% were overcrowded in Uttlesford.

It is predicted that across the study area there are 4,800 households in housing need, 400 of those are Uttlesford residents.

Around a quarter of all households contain only pensioners while nearly 50% contain an adult couple with or without children. Over a fifth of households contain only one adult in the form of a single person or lone parent. Younger people tend to dominate the private rented sector.

Over the 25 year period between 2004 and 2029 it is projected there will be an additional 62,000 people living within the SHMA study area. In Uttlesford, the number of people aged 65 or over is projected to increase by 8,400 over the period, 3,700 of those people being aged 80 or over.

The SHMA is currently being updated to take into account current house prices, changes to Housing Benefit, increases in homelessness and the new Right to Buy initiative. Further details will be available on our website www.uttlesford.gov.uk when the document is published.

Housing Register

As at April 2012, there were 1182 applications on the housing register, of those applications over half were in housing need.

Choice Based Lettings

In 2007 the Council agreed that a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme should be developed for Uttlesford. The government had set a target that all housing authorities should be operating a CBL scheme for allocating social housing by 2010. The government considers that CBL schemes can enhance mobility between areas and tenures and provide a balance between the needs of prospective tenants and choice and so may contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods.

The Council joined a Consortia of five other Local Housing Authorities (Broxbourne, Epping Forest, Chelmsford, East Herts and Brentwood), and 25 registered social landlords and successfully bid for government funding to assist with the development and initial set-up of a CBL scheme. The CBL scheme called HomeOption went live in November 2008.

Since that time, the Council have also introduced an online application form and moved from a points based lettings system to a banding system. This has made it clearer for applicants to understand the process and know where their application sits in terms of priority.

Between April 2010 and March 2011, a total of 350 properties were let via the HomeOption system, 207 of these properties were Council owned. Where properties become empty the Council have set targets on its various

properties from the date the key is returned to the date the next tenant gets the key to their new home.

The Council needs to ensure that with an increase in demand for social housing that its own stock is used in the most effective way. In some cases an increase in the void period may be because possible tenants did either not bid or did not wish to take up the offer of that property. This is particularly an issue for some of the Council's sheltered housing schemes where average re-let times are 128.11 days compared to 28.28 days for general needs properties.

Housing Supply

Delivery of Affordable Housing

The Council are very successful in delivering affordable housing in partnership with registered providers. During 2011/12, 111 properties were completed. Further information is detailed in the Affordable Housing Strategy in Chapter

Rural

Since 1989, we have provided 300 affordable homes in rural areas through the rural exception policy. Further schemes are planned in Hatfield Heath, Newport, Great Chesterford and Arkesden.

We also have a good relationship with the Rural Housing Enabler working for the Rural Community Council for Essex and have recently entered into a partnership with them to extend our programme. This will involve extending our programme of housing needs surveys and support to Parish Councils.

After a rural scheme has completed, we survey the residents allocated the properties, the local residents living close to the scheme and the parish Council.

Research has shown that

- 100% of respondents were allocated a property based on the local connection criteria.
- 86% rated their property either excellent or good, 14% satisfactory
- 95% of local residents agreed that the affordable housing had benefitted the local community
- 48% were attending local groups in the community.

The research has given the Council a greater knowledge of what is successful/not successful in a scheme, has shown how it has allowed young people to remain in the village and that they were allocated to those with a local connection. It has also encouraged Parishes to move forward with affordable housing schemes in their area.

Older Persons Housing

The Council currently provides 460 units of older persons accommodation spread across the District. This ranges from one and two bedroom bungalows to flats and bedsits. Some of these schemes are no longer fit for purpose and we have been updating and regenerating them during the life of the last Housing Strategy.

Holloway Crescent, Leaden Roding

Over the last few years, we have been working on a scheme in Leaden Roding which had gradually become unpopular and hard to let. Many of the units were very small bedsits.

The scheme was split into 2 phases and the first phase was completed in March 2011 on a redundant garage site adjacent to the scheme. This provided 5 x1 and 2 bed bungalows for those living in the Holloway Crescent scheme. This part of the scheme was funded by the Homes and Communities Agency through their LA New Build scheme.

The second phase has involved demolishing the sheltered block and will provide 8 houses for social rent during 2013. This part of the scheme is being funded by the Stansted Area Housing Partnership and Council borrowing.

Mead Court, Stansted

With the successful work being carried out at Holloway Crescent, members agreed to look at another sheltered scheme that was no longer fit for purpose.

Mead Court is a mix of small bedsit and 1 bed accommodation which has been difficult to let for some time. The scheme cannot be upgraded due to the layout of the units and the only option is to demolish the building and reprovide.

A task group was set up in January 2012 comprising of members, representatives of the tenant forum and officers and a report taken to the Housing Board and Cabinet in May 2012. It was agreed that the Council could develop the scheme as a Local Authority new build and use newly available HRA funding to build the scheme. £2.6 million has been allocated in the business plan and Officers are working towards a planning application being submitted by the end of 2012/13. The scheme will provide up to 28 units with a mixture of general needs flats and houses and elderly bungalows.

Supported Housing

Learning Disability Schemes

There are two learning disability schemes in Saffron Walden. They provide 12 units of accommodation at Ferguson Close (Family

Mosaic) and 3 at Gallows Hill (Family Mosaic)

Officers from the Council are represented on the local Learning Disability Action Group and housing sub group, this group looks at future and current need in the District and effective partnership working.

Mental Health

There are two schemes for mental health consisting of 8 units at Station Street, Saffron Walden managed by Metropolitan and 3 at St Edmunds Field, Great Dunmow managed by Genesis that have been refurbished.

There is a requirement for a new scheme to replace the units at Station Street as it is no longer fit for purpose. The residents currently share a bathroom and kitchen which does not encourage them to live independently. Officers are working with Metropolitan Housing to identify a future location for the scheme that will meet the needs of those with mental health needs.

Young Parents Scheme

This scheme is in partnership with Brentwood and Epping Forest Councils and has provided 12 units of supported accommodation for young parents living in Uttlesford, Brentwood or Epping Forest. The scheme has been provided on a new development in Ongar and provides the three Councils with nominations to the project. It provides the young parents with the skills they need to care for a child, access benefits and housing to ensure they can move on to manage their own tenancy.

As can be seen below, the Council do not have a significant problem with young parents presenting as homeless and could not justify a scheme in the District, partnership working with Epping Forest and Brentwood meant a more viable option.

Bromfield House

The Council continue to work with St Matthews to develop Bromfield House as a first class facility offering supported housing to 16 – 25 year olds. It is staffed 24 hours 7 days a week and residents have support plans which they work on with staff. They are regularly reviewed to ensure that goals are being achieved. Staff meet with Council staff on a quarterly basis to update on residents progress and the Council facilitate move on accommodation when clients are ready to move out of a supported environment. This has worked really well and residents are moving on successfully and living an independent life.

The future need for Housing in Uttlesford

Gypsy and Travellers

Planning Circular 01/2006 *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites* sets out guidance for local planning authorities to identify appropriate land for Gypsy and Traveller sites through the planning system in line with need in their area, to deal with the growing shortage of sites and prevent unauthorised sites in problem locations.

Uttlesford currently has the following sites within the District:

Private sites

Location	Sites	Total Caravans
Broxted	3	3
Clavering	1	1
Dunmow	1	1
High Easter	1	1
High Roding	3	3
Little Canfield	1	1
Little Hallingbury	1	5
Pleshey	1	5
Radwinter End	1	2
Stansted	3	21
Stebbing	1	1

Data taken from www.iform.co.uk, August 2012

Public site owned and managed by Essex County Council

Location	Pitches occupied	Total Caravans
Felsted	17	25

Data taken from www.iform.co.uk, August 2012

Unauthorised sites yet tolerated

Sites	Total Caravans
1	2

Data taken from www.iform.co.uk, August 2012

As part of our work on the Local Plan, we are progressing a call for sites for gypsy and travellers. This is taking place during October and November 2012 to ensure we meet the needs of this specialist group.

A gypsy and traveller housing needs survey is being commissioned jointly by Essex Planning Officers and Essex Housing Officers to identify the current need in Essex.

BME

The Council must promote and monitor the needs of those in minority groups. As part of this requirement, Officers took part in the Essex wide research Facing the Facts. This was delivered through the Essex Housing Officers group and looked at the Housing requirements of the BME population in Essex.

The current population of Uttlesford indicates the following:

Ethnicity	Population	%
White: British	65,564	95.09
White: Irish	534	0.77
White: Other white	1,587	2.3
Mixed: White and black Caribbean	119	0.17
Mixed: White and black African	51	0.07
Mixed: white and Asian	169	0.25
Mixed: other mixed	119	0.17
Asian or Asian British: Indian	164	0.24
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	22	0.03
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	153	0.22
Asian or Asian British: other Asian	37	0.05
Black or Black British: Caribbean	48	0.07
Black or Black British: African	54	0.08
Black or Black British: Other Black	9	0.01
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese	124	0.18
Chinese or other ethnic group: Other ethnic group	192	0.28
Total	68,946	

Census 2001

Uttlesford has a very small BME population and the highest other ethnic groups are Chinese or other (192 people) white and Asian mixed (169 people), Indian (164 people) and Bangladeshi (153 people)

The Council recognises that the information it holds on needs and demand for this group is not complete. The data we hold is now very out of date and will be updated when the new Census data is released. Further research then needs to be carried out over the life of this strategy to investigate the housing needs of this group further.

Future Supported Housing Requirements 2012-17

As we highlighted in our last Housing Strategy, Uttlesford lacks provision of specialist supported housing. It was agreed as part of our joint working with the Planning Policy team to highlight in the Local Plan, our requirement for specialist affordable housing and require developers to provide this as part of their Section 106 obligations.

The following are also key priorities in our Business Plan.

Learning disability scheme for young adults in Saffron Walden, HASTOE and EAST THAMES

We have been working for a number of years to provide a scheme for young adults with learning disabilities in Saffron Walden to live independently. This scheme would need to provide 6 x 1 bedroom flats and space equivalent to a 2 bedroom flat which would provide communal space and sleepover/office for carers.

Reprovision of mental health scheme in Saffron Walden, METROPOLITAN

We remain keen to undertake a reprovision of our mental health scheme in Station Street, Saffron Walden with Metropolitan Housing. It would need to be within Saffron Walden to ensure that current residents could still access services they currently receive and would ensure clients can maximise their opportunities for social inclusion. Supporting People and Adult Social Care/Mental Health both provide revenue funding into the existing service and are aware of our aspiration to reprovide this service. The scheme would need to provide 12 self contained units with a mixture of 1 and 2 bed properties.

Scheme for vulnerable adults – similar to Bromfield House

A scheme is required in Great Dunmow similar to Bromfield House in Saffron Walden, providing support to vulnerable adults who are homeless. This scheme could provide intensive support bedspaces, a number of bedsits for those who are learning to independent, move on flats and emergency crash pads. This would complement the service already provided at Bromfield House.

Reprovision of UDC temporary homeless accommodation

The Council currently use accommodation in a sheltered scheme in Stansted as temporary accommodation for the homeless. This scheme will be demolished and general needs accommodation provided during 2013/14. A new site needs to be identified.

Supported housing scheme for those at risk of domestic violence

Domestic violence is one of the most complex issues requiring the co-operation of numerous statutory and voluntary agencies at a national as well as regional and local level. It is not a popular issue or one that easily attracts funding. It is however an issue that has been under resourced within Uttlesford where there has never been refuge provision within the district for victims of domestic abuse.

In the period April 2011 – November 2011 there was a 36% increase in the number of reported cases of domestic violence within Uttlesford. It is recommended that Local authorities provide 1 refuge space per 10,000 of population, depending on local needs. This would indicate that Uttlesford should consider providing a refuge of between 7 – 8 spaces. Currently Uttlesford victims of domestic abuse are referred out of area when they require a refuge, which may be appropriate; however Uttlesford is not providing any reciprocal services.

Further work needs to be carried out as to whether this can be provided on a garage site or a redundant sheltered scheme. It needs to be hidden and not be obvious as to what it is. Further Discussions need to be had with Womens Aid as to size and preferred location.

Older Persons Housing

Population growth

As can be seen in the table below, the number of people living longer will grow considerably in the next 20 years. This has an impact on the type of housing provided in the future.

Uttlesford population aged 65 and over, projected to 2030

	2012	2015	2020	2025	2030
People aged 65-69	4,700	5,100	4,500	5,200	6,100
People aged 70-74	3,200	3,700	4,800	4,300	5,000
People aged 75-79	2,500	2,800	3,400	4,500	4,000
People aged 80-84	1,900	2,000	2,400	3,000	3,800
People aged 85-89	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,900	2,400
People aged 90 and over	700	800	1,100	1,400	1,800

Total population 65 and over	14,200	15,800	17,800	20,300	23,100
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Source: www.poppi.org.uk version 7.0

It highlights that we have a high ageing population, with varying levels of need. We require 1 and 2 bed bungalows for those with low needs to create move on from larger council properties.

Medium/High Need - Extra Care

We also have a requirement to meet the medium/high need of older people in Uttlesford. Our main priority is to provide an extra care scheme in Saffron Walden however a second scheme in Great Dunmow would help meet the increasing need we have in the District.

The current population of those aged 75+ (2010) in Uttlesford is 6,000. This gives us an estimated requirement of 150 extra care units (Source: Essex CC Market Position Statement 2012).

We also have a growing number of older people with dementia, as the chart shows below; this is set to increase dramatically in the next 15 years. An extra care scheme will also help to meet this need.

Numbers			% increase	
2010	2015	2030	2010-15	2010-2030
911	1073	1896	18%	108%

Projected increases in Dementia (Source POPPI)

Future Actions

- Investigate the Re-provision of a new Mental Health facility
- Work with partners on the delivery of a supported unit for people with Learning disabilities
- Investigate potential for a scheme for vulnerable adults in Great Dunmow
- Work with partners to deliver an extra care scheme in Saffron Walden
- Investigate potential for a second extra care scheme in Great Dunmow
- Work with Planning Policy to identify sites for gypsy and travellers
- Work with partners to support those fleeing domestic violence, investigate potential for a supported housing scheme.
- Research BME Housing Needs

Chapter 4 – Affordable Housing Strategy

Key Successes

- Gained HCA funding and built 5 new bungalows in Leaden Roding
- Progressed a further Local Authority new build scheme which will deliver 8 houses during 2012
- Continued to exceed the affordable housing target of 100 homes per year
- Worked with Hastoe to deliver a Passivhaus scheme in Wimbish

Since the Affordable Housing Strategy was published, the Council has worked with its Registered Provider partners to deliver affordable housing across the district. The Council's corporate target for affordable housing is 100 properties per year and in 2011/12, it enabled the delivery of 111 properties across 12 different sites. In addition to the provision of affordable housing through S106 sites, the Council made parcels of its own land available and worked in partnership with Registered Providers to increase affordable housing supply.

The Council is pleased to have enabled one particular scheme on a rural exception site in Wimbish, which has gone on to win several awards. The scheme was developed by Hastoe and was the first affordable rural housing development to achieve Passivhaus accreditation in the UK. Passivhaus properties are built to high environmental standards which use up to 90% less heating energy than equivalent sized standard homes. Further information is available at: <http://www.wimbishpassivhaus.com/>

In total, Council owned sites have provided 15 properties so far, including three elderly bungalows and one disabled adapted family home to meet a specific housing need.

Through close working with the Homes and Communities Agency and one of its Registered Providers, the Council has also developed a scheme of five bungalows on its own land.

The schemes completed in 2011/12 are detailed below:

Scheme Name	Registered Provider	Social Rented	Affordable Rented	Shared Ownership	Total No of Units
Manor Road, Stansted	CHP	2			2
Carnation Drive, Saffron Walden	Hastoe	4			4
Tye Green, Wimbish	Hastoe	10		4	14
Pinkneys, Chrishall	CHP	3			3

Frambury Lane, Newport	CHP	1			1
Former Dunmow Primary School	CHP		12		12
Bell College (Phase 2a), Saffron Walden	Hastoe		10	4	14
Priors Green (Phase A), Takeley	Moat		12	5	17

Priors Green (Phase B), Takeley	Moat		7	3	10
Priors Green (Phase C), Takeley	Moat		14	6	20
Rochford Nurseries (phase 3), Stansted	Moat		10	4	14
Sub Totals		20	65	26	111

Current Situation

Uttlesford District Council's current Affordable Housing Strategy was approved in November 2009, and was subsequently superseded by the Affordable Housing Policy Update Statement in October 2011. These documents set out Council's requirements and expectations for affordable housing, the most recent was developed in line with the policy changes put in place by the Coalition Government since May 2010.

The Council will no longer publish a standalone document relating to Affordable Housing Provision, but details are now set out within this section of the Housing Strategy, superseding the above mentioned documents. The requirements and expectations contained in this section have been written in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

In 2011, the Homes and Communities Agency set out plans to change the way in which affordable housing is delivered. The main change in the way affordable housing is delivered was a move from Social Rented Housing to Affordable Rented Housing. Rents for Affordable Rented dwellings are set by the Registered Provider at up to a maximum of 80% of Open Market Rents and are inclusive of service charges. Registered Providers were asked to set out their proposals for a four-year programme which would then form their framework contract with the Homes and Communities Agency for that period. It is important to note that as part of the changes, funding is no longer available for S106 sites

National Policy

A definition of affordable housing can be taken from The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states:

‘Affordable housing: Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.’

The Affordable Homes Programme implemented by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in 2011 saw the introduction of the Affordable Rented Tenure to replace the Social Rented Tenure. These properties are made available to tenants at up to a maximum of 80% of market rent (inclusive of service charge) and allocated in the same way as social housing. Registered Providers were required to develop an offer to the HCA for funding to enable schemes to be financially viable. However, funding on S106 sites is not available.

Provision of Affordable Housing

The Council’s enabling role identifies housing need and brings together key partners to generate new opportunities for affordable housing development. As part of a planning submission, developers will be expected to demonstrate how the affordable element will be realised within the overall development. The Council encourages meeting affordable housing requirements through one of their preferred Registered Providers (RP) who have the management abilities and local knowledge to effectively manage new affordable housing

If a developer seeks to enter contract with a Registered Provider who is not on the Council’s preferred list, they should arrange meetings with the Council’s Development and Enabling Officer so the Council can liaise with the Registered Provider in order to ensure that they will be able to effectively manage and deliver the future homes. Developers should ensure that Housing Quality Indicator standards are adhered to in order to meet the HCA standards for affordable housing. Further information is available through www.homesandcommunities.co.uk

Every scheme will be considered and assessed on its merits, and should be discussed and agreed with the Planning and Housing Policy Department before a planning application is submitted. However, aside from the policy position for the provision of affordable housing on S106 sites, the following requirements will be applied to all sites:

- Affordable housing provision
 - 40% on sites of 15 or more dwellings;
 - 20% on sites of 5-14 dwellings;

- Financial contribution on sites of 1-4 dwellings
- Tenure split
 - 70% Affordable Rented or Social Rented Tenure (Rents in line with Government guidance)
 - 30% Shared Ownership Tenure (Affordability to be a maximum of 30% of total household income) (Maximum of 2.75% charge on remaining rent)
- Housing mix
 - Predominantly a mix of two and three bedroom houses (2 bedroom:4 person and 3 bedroom:6 person houses to be provided)
 - 5% one and two bedroom elderly bungalows
- Other requirements
 - Properties provided in clusters of no more than 10 units
 - Lifts in blocks of flats over two storey

The Council's position is that affordable housing should be provided on site, and off site provision or financial contributions, except on sites of 1-4 dwellings, will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. In such circumstances, this would need to be robustly justified to the Council, and of broadly equivalent value, being agreed on a site by site basis. All monies received from commuted sums will be ring-fenced for affordable housing purposes in the District.

The calculation for a commuted sum will be based on the free serviced land that would have been provided for affordable housing, and a proposed affordable housing mix, as agreed with the Council. The commuted sum would then be the difference between:

- a) Land value of the whole site without affordable housing
- b) Land value of the whole site with affordable housing

It should be noted that an independent valuation would be necessary to make this assessment and will be appointed by the Council. The cost of this will be borne by the developer or landowner.

Housing in Rural Areas

The Council will support development on rural exception sites in line with the Council's policy meeting all the following criteria:

- a) The development will meet a demonstrable local need that cannot be met in any other way;
- b) The development is of a scale appropriate to the size, facilities and character of the settlement; and
- d) The site adjoins the settlement.

The Council works closely with the Rural Housing Enabler (RHE), Parish Council's and Registered Providers to instigate the development of a Rural Exception Site. The RHE will carry out a Housing Need Survey within the Parish to establish whether a need exists and make a recommendation for provision to meet that need. It is essential to ensure that these properties are made available for those people who have a genuine need for housing in the locality that cannot be met in the market.

Rural Exception sites will usually be developed and managed by a Registered Provider, who should liaise with Planning at an early stage. The NPPF now allows for a small number of market houses to be provided on rural exception sites at the local authority's discretion. This is deemed appropriate to facilitate the delivery of affordable homes for local people and will be supported provided that:

- a) Viability appraisals demonstrate that the need of the market housing component is essential for the successful deliver of the development;
- b) The proportion of market housing is the minimum needed to make the scheme viable; and
- c) No additional subsidy for the delivery of the scheme is required

Future Actions

The Council has an ambitious programme of affordable housing to deliver over the next three years. These schemes will be delivered through the Council's new build programme, and through its RP partners. Over the next two years, the Council is looking to deliver in excess of 280 affordable homes, which will exceed the corporate target and help meet the housing needs of the district.

The table below shows the future provision of affordable housing on sites that currently have planning permission:

Scheme	Parish	No. of units
Rochford Nurseries (Ph 4)	Stansted Mountfitchet	51
Rochford Nurseries (school site – Taylor Wimpey)	Stansted Mountfitchet	8
Rochford Nurseries (school site – Persimmon)	Stansted Mountfitchet	8
Holloway Crescent	Leaden Roding	8
Hampit Road (rural exception site)	Arkesden	4
Oakwood Park (village centre site)	Flitch Green	46
Rochford Nurseries (Ph 5)	Stansted Mountfitchet	4
Rochford Nurseries (Ph 6)	Stansted Mountfitchet	10
The Orchard	Elsenham	21
Wedow Road	Thaxted	22
The Street/Clavering Road	Manuden	4
Woodlands Park (sector 4)	Gt Dunmow	50

Ongar Road South	Gt Dunmow	40
Lt Walden Road	Saffron Walden	15
Ashdon Road	Saffron Walden	37
		328

Key contacts

For further information on the Council's policy for Affordable Housing and the development of affordable housing in Uttlesford, please contact the Housing Enabling and Development Officer as set out below:

Housing Enabling and Development Officer
(01799) 510633

For a list of the Council's preferred providers please contact the Housing Enabling and Development Officer.

Chapter 5 – Delivering the Homeless Strategy

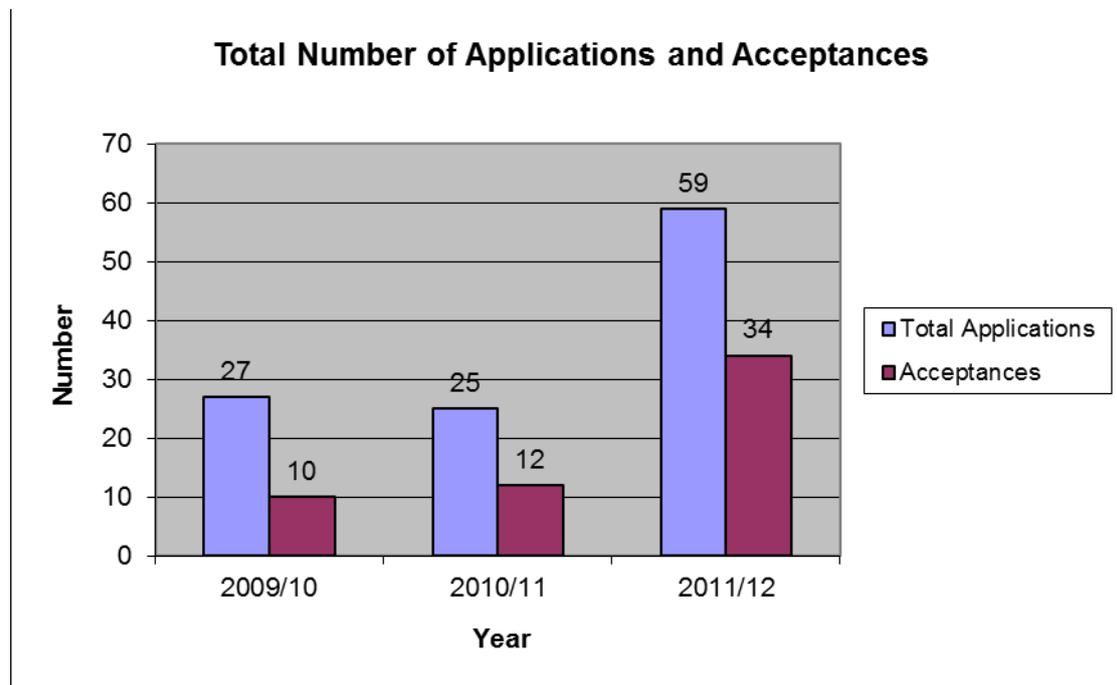
Key Successes

- Worked in partnership to deliver a young parents scheme in Ongar shared with Epping and Brentwood Councils
- Provided temporary accommodation at Molehill Green and Stansted
- Continued development of Bromfield House in Saffron Walden
- New Housing Options team set up which has been providing advice and assistance to those at risk of homelessness
- Successful Homeless Partnership set up, working on joint initiatives and sharing best practise

Current Situation

Uttlesford has seen a steep increase in homelessness presentations in the past year. This is a trend being reported by all local authorities. The government's official homelessness statistics show that from July to September 2011 there was a 14% rise in applicants accepted as homeless by local authorities over the same quarter in 2009. Even on a seasonally adjusted basis, this was 12% higher than the first quarter of 2011. Research shows that the number of homeless households will continue to rise as the economic downturn and benefit reforms take affect.

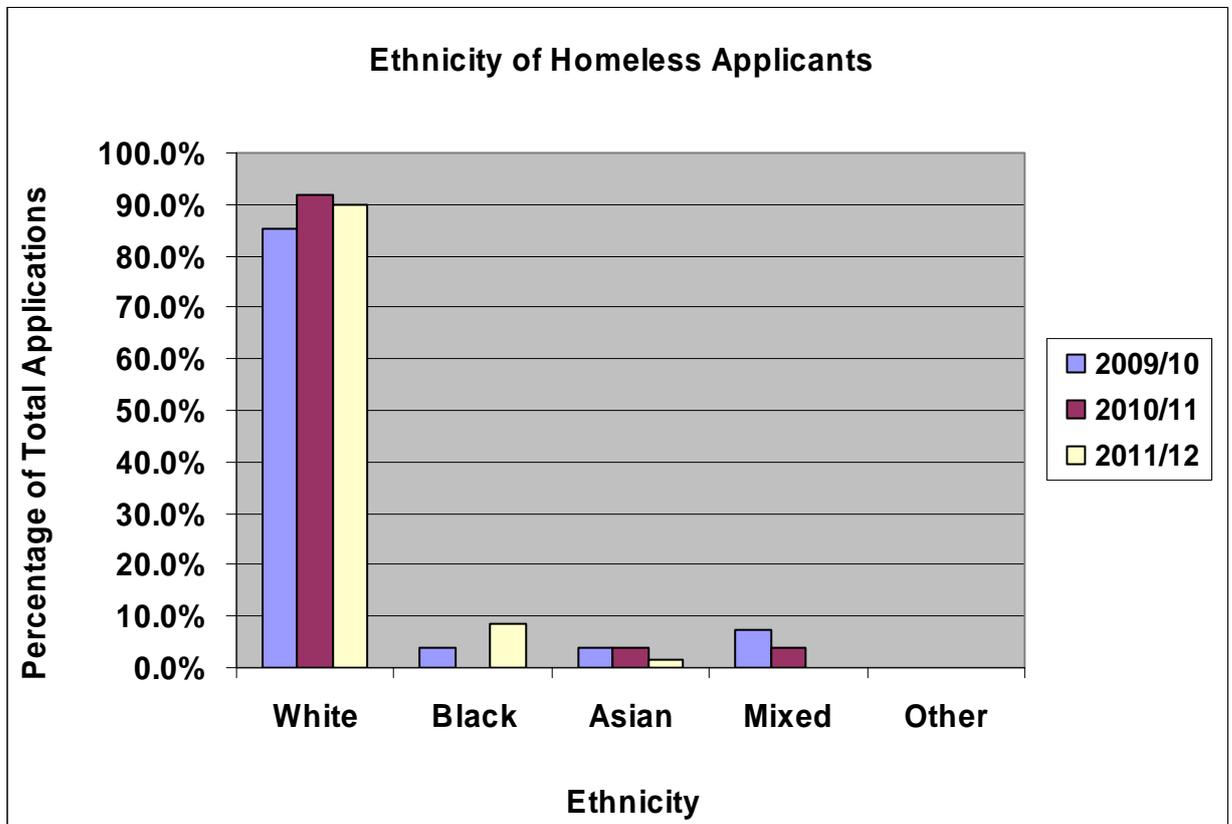
Facts and figures



Reasons for homelessness	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	10	6	16
Other friends/relatives no longer willing to accommodate	2	5	4
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	1	0	6
Violent breakdown of relationship with partner	5	4	7
Racially motivated violence	0	0	0
Other forms of violence	0	2	1
Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0
Other forms of harassment	0	0	0
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	2	0	1
Rent arrears; LA or other public sector dwellings	2	0	0
Rent arrears; RSL or other HA dwelling	0	2	3
Rent arrears; private sector dwellings	0	2	2
Termination of assured short-hold tenancy	0	2	4
Loss of rented or tied accommodation other than termination of AST	1	1	5
Required to leave national asylum support service accommodation	0	0	0
In institution or care	1	1	5
Other including emergency, ex HM forces, sleeping rough, in hostel	3	0	5
Total	27	25	59

Priority need category of accepted cases

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Homeless because of an emergency	0	0	1
Household with dependent children	8	6	21
Applicant pregnant with no other dependent children	0	0	0
applicant aged 16/17 years	0	0	0
Formally in 'care' and aged 18/20	0	0	0
Old age	0	0	2
Physical disability	0	0	0
Mental illness or disability	1	3	6
Drug dependency	0	1	0
Alcohol dependency	1	1	0
Former asylum seeker	0	0	0
Vulnerable for other reasons	0	0	1
Having been in 'care'	0	0	0
Having served in HM Forces	0	0	0
Having been in custody/on remand	0	0	0
Domestic violence	0	1	0
Having fled their home due to violence/threat of violence	0	0	0
Total	10	12	34



Services provided in Uttlesford

Supported Housing - Young People and Vulnerable Adults

Uttlesford currently only has one scheme of general needs supported housing. Bromfield House in Saffron Walden, which is part of the Genesis Group, provides 17 units of shared supported housing for people, predominately but not exclusively young, who need support to develop life skills before they are ready to live independently. They also assist clients to claim appropriate benefits and to get back in to work or on education or training programmes.

Whilst this scheme can assist clients with mental health, drug and alcohol issues, it can only do this for those at the lower level of support needs.

The Scheme runs at full occupancy which means that clients requiring this level of support cannot always be accommodated appropriately. It has been identified that a similar scheme in the Dunmow area of the district is required to meet the demand for this type of supported accommodation.

Temporary Accommodation - Molehill Green and Stansted

The stock consists of 8 units of ready to occupy furnished temporary accommodation. 2 x 3 person bedsit flats and 2 x 4/5 person 1 bed flats in Molehill Green, Takeley and 4 x 3 person bedsit flats at Mead Court in Stansted. We also have a 3 bed house and 1 bedroom bungalow which are carpeted and have white goods provided.

The Mead Court properties are due to be demolished as part of the re-development of this site, plans are therefore being made for the provision of this accommodation.

Young Parents Scheme

Railway Meadow is a supported housing scheme built in partnership with Brentwood and Uttlesford Councils in Ongar for young parents and is designed to help young people overcome challenges during their pregnancy and the first year of their child's life. The scheme consists of 13 self-contained flats with a communal lounge, activity area, training kitchen and office. The accommodation is offered to young Mothers, Fathers and couples aged 16-25 years. The support gives young people essential parenting and life skills to enable them to move on and live independent lives. The scheme is owned and managed by East Thames and referrals are received from the Council, and Brentwood and Epping Councils, with residents being re-housed by their host authority at the appropriate time. Uttlesford District Council has nomination rights to 4 of the flats.

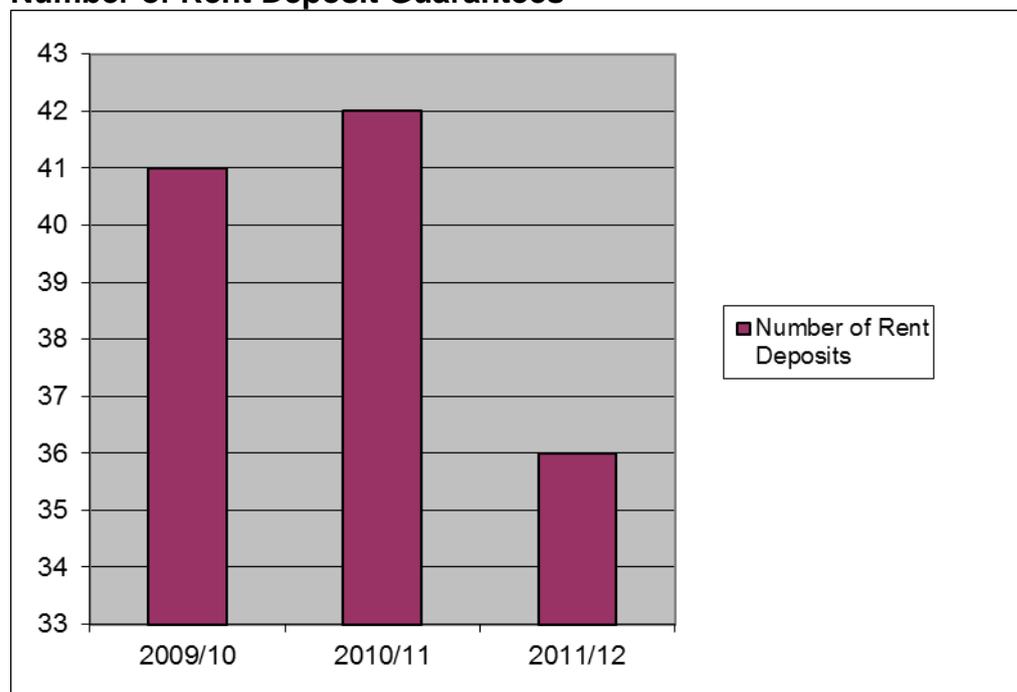
Rent Deposit Scheme

In 2004 the Council in partnership with King Street Housing Society set up a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme. The Scheme is managed for the Council by King Street Housing Society which is based in Cambridge and runs similar schemes for neighbouring local authorities. The scheme aims to help potentially homeless people to access homes in the private rented sector that they would not otherwise be able to consider because they do not have the money needed to pay the necessary deposit. The Scheme does not pay cash deposits but King Street arranges with the landlord a deposit guarantee.

Applicants for the scheme are first interviewed by the Council and then if eligible are referred on to King Street Housing Society who will give them advice on how to find a property and then negotiate with the prospective landlord about the deposit and any rent in advance. King Street will also do credit checks on applicants and arrange for them to set up an account to pay the deposit back at an agreed monthly rate.

Funds for this scheme are restricted therefore the Council is able to help only a limited number of applicants each year.

Number of Rent Deposit Guarantees



Source: Council data

As can be seen from the above table the Scheme has been less successful in the past year helping people into the private rented sector, this has been due to the buoyant nature of the private rented sector within Uttlesford. Landlords and agents are resistant to taking clients without cash deposits and who may be claiming housing benefit. For this reason we are looking to find other ways the council can work with the private sector.

There is also the issue around the affordability of the private rented sector with the changes in Local Housing Allowance levels. The levels are now set annually but they do not reflect the cost of private renting within Uttlesford and often leave people with a shortfall between what they can claim in local housing allowance and the actual rent of the property. Below is an example of the LHA rates that cover the Saffron Walden area for 2012.

Number of Bedrooms	Weekly Amount	Amount
Monthly Shared Room Rate	£75.00	£325.00
1 Bedroom	£120.00	£520.00
2 Bedrooms	£135.00	£585.00
3 Bedrooms	£156.92	£679.99
4 Bedrooms	£206.54	£895.01

Mortgage Rescue

In January 2009, the CLG announced the introduction of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme. The intention of the scheme is to assist the most vulnerable households who are at risk through re-possession. Referrals can only be made where householders have between 20% negative and 40% positive equity. Mortgage Rescue is a last resort when all other lender "hardship tools" have been exhausted. Following consultation with the Citizens Advice Bureau's (CAB) debt advisor on the financial viability of the rescue, the case is referred to the lead provider for Essex being Moat Homes Limited. Depending upon the available equity, the applicant will be assessed for either "mortgage to rent" or a shared equity loan.

Between 1 July 2009 and mid-2011, the Council, in partnership with the, Moat Homes Limited, assisted a total of 4 households to keep their homes through Mortgage Rescue. However, since then no households have been assisted because of restrictions that were been placed upon the scheme by the Government. These included a price cap on the value of a property being reduced to less than £200,000 with only freehold properties being rescued (i.e. houses not flats). As the values of most, if not all eligible properties in the District were well above the cap, the use of Mortgage Rescue has been limited. A more recent problem has also been the lack of a partner for MOAT in this area to actually take on any 'rescued properties', this has now been resolved with Hastoe Housing Association agreeing to work with MOAT in this district. There has also been a relaxation on the caps limit. This has meant that the Council has now been able to re-advertise the Mortgage rescue scheme and is currently assisting one family through the process.

Sanctuary Scheme

In November 2007 the Council launched its Sanctuary Scheme. The Scheme assists those suffering from Domestic Violence who wish to remain in their current home, where it is considered safe for them to do so and where the perpetrator is no longer in residence. This has been set up in partnership with the police, the fire service and an approved locksmith.

The Scheme has various levels of increased security that it can offer to clients ranging from new door locks to full sanctuary room. The Scheme is funded by the Council but is open to all tenure of clients identified by the Council or other agencies.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) draws together key agencies in a local forum to co-ordinate actions and resources towards addressing the highest risk victims of domestic violence. The Housing Options Team participates in the MARAC process and attends meetings.

Floating Support

Family Mosaic provides housing related floating support to vulnerable people irrespective of tenure across the Uttlesford District.

This is particularly beneficial where we are placing young vulnerable people into temporary accommodation where they are without means of support and quite often have never had to manage on their own before.

The service also provides a high level of support to all homeless applicants placed in bed and breakfast accommodation or other temporary accommodation. The Support Worker provides agreed levels of support with the client and the support can move with the client from their temporary accommodation into their permanent housing thus increasing the chances of tenancy sustainment in the longer term.

Support Workers can also provide a service to people whom the Council does not owe a duty under homelessness legislation.

Essex National Probation Service

The Housing Options Section works with the National Probation Service's Housing Liaison Officer on cases referred by the Service. If a full housing duty is owed to the person referred, then the Council will continue to work with the Probation Service to ensure that they are able to sustain any permanent accommodation offered.

Housing Options Team

Local housing authorities have a statutory duty to offer advice and assistance on homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. They also have a duty to ensure that an Allocations Scheme for determining priorities for allocating social housing is available for inspection and that a summary of that scheme is available, on request, free of charge.

In Uttlesford, following the last Homelessness Strategy, a new dedicated team was established to provide this service. This is the Housing Options Team.

Advice and assistance on homelessness and the prevention of homelessness can encompass a wide range of issues, many of which require specialist knowledge. Some cases, for example those involving debt management, are referred to the CAB. The CAB has a dedicated "money advisor" who deals with debt referrals from the Homelessness Prevention Team. Some cases may be referred to other agencies included the Council's Benefit Division.

Advice is given on a range of other matters including:

- Harassment
- Illegal evictions by private landlords
- Properties in need of repair, including those which are unfit for habitation
- Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Charitable organisations assisting homeless people (including victims of domestic violence)
- Securing private rented accommodation
- Access to shared ownership schemes
- Property rights in cases of relationship breakdown or other domestic issues
- Interim and temporary accommodation
- Nominations to other local housing authorities

The Housing Options team has access to a range of advice and information leaflets,

some produced by the Council, others published by the National Homeless Advice Service and the CLG. Where English is not the first language of the client, assistance can be obtained through approved agencies and documents can be translated in appropriate cases. For the visually impaired, literature can be made available either in large print or by CD or Braille. Where a profoundly deaf client is a sign user, the Council can arrange "signing" through an approved agency. A loop system for people with hearing difficulties is available at the Civic Offices and. Home visits will be made in appropriate instances.

Citizens Advice Bureau

The CAB have offices in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, they also provide surgeries in Thaxted and Stansted. The Council has a Service Level Agreement with the CAB to provide a range of advice and to support those who have difficulties expressing their needs effectively. The Council contributed £xxxxx from its General Fund in 2011/12 towards CAB running costs. In 2012 the Council received extra funding for homelessness prevention work from the Government £6000 of which was given to the CAB to help them provide extra debt counselling.

The Council has formal arrangements for referring cases and, in addition to front-line liaison on a case by case basis the Bureau's office Manager is a member of the Council's Homelessness Partnership.

Where a client is pursuing a review of a homelessness decision made by the Council they are advised in writing to seek assistance from the CAB or Shelter.

The figures below show the range and level of housing related and debt issues that the CAB handle.

Debt issues	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2011/12	2010/11
Discrimination	1	0	0	0	1	
Mortgage+secd Loan Arrears	28	20	26	15	89	104
Hire Purchase Arrears	1	4	2	1	8	21
Fuel Debts	25	23	12	32	92	147
Telephone And Broadband Debts	12	15	11	13	51	82
Rent Arrears-las Or Almos	12	15	15	15	57	37
Rent Arrears-hsg Assocs	15	21	15	11	62	49
Rent Arrears-priv.landlords	5	6	3	14	28	29
Council Tax,comm.chg Arrears	29	26	38	35	128	112

Mag.cts Fines+comp.ord.arrears	1	1	0	2	4	9
Maint.+child Support Arrears	1	2	0	0	3	5
Bank+building Soc.overdrafts	41	38	42	44	165	331
Credit,store+chg Card Debts	82	63	88	103	336	512
Unsecd Personal Loan Debts	42	53	31	69	195	258
Catalogue+mail Order Debts	13	12	8	10	43	83
Water Supply+sewerage Debts	25	23	16	25	89	83
Unpd Parkg Penalty+cong.chgs	1	3	9	5	18	12
Overpayments Of Wtc+ctc	5	3	1	5	14	7
Overpayments Of Is+/or Jsa	0	0	2	6	8	3
Overpts.hou+council Tax Bens.	1	5	6	10	22	3
Social Fund Debts	0	12	1	2	15	1
3rd Pty Debt Coln Excl Bailiffs	1	5	4	6	16	28
Private Bailiffs	2	1	9	6	18	28
Debt Relief Order	48	93	100	113	354	223
Bankruptcy	55	63	49	65	232	239
51 Other Legal Remedies	3	0	6	7	16	15
99 Other	38	47	51	74	210	215

Housing issues	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2011/12	2010/11
Discrimination	0	0	0	1	1	1
Actual Homelessness	11	8	11	14	44	38

Threatened Homelessness	38	44	49	43	174	144
La Homelessness Service	6	1	3	6	16	13
Access To+provision Of Accommod.	14	24	8	12	58	67
Local Authority Housing	49	51	34	51	185	138
Housing Assoc. Property	23	12	16	14	65	86
Private Sector Rented Property	79	74	57	57	267	268
Owner Occupier Property	12	13	11	32	68	76
Environml+neighbour Issues	21	21	13	19	74	76
Other Housing Issues	16	30	16	16	78	89

Benefit issues	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2011/12	2010/11
1 Discrimination	0	0	0	1	1	2
2 Income Support	41	62	44	51	198	196
3 Pension Credit	40	37	32	54	163	176
4 Social Fund Loans-crisis	16	15	15	10	56	59
5 Social Fund Loans-budget	6	5	4	2	17	14
6 Sf Community Care Grants	5	3	3	7	18	16
7 Housing Benefit	137	132	135	151	555	450
8 Child Benefit	33	20	29	32	114	105
9 Council Tax Benefit	85	96	105	132	418	432
10 Working+child Tax Credits	96	103	81	105	385	400
11 Jobseekers Allowance	105	95	74	97	371	431
12 National Insurance	8	10	4	11	33	46
13 State Retirement Pension	16	20	11	15	62	81
14 Incapacity Benefit	12	16	15	8	51	48
15 Dla-care Component	589	621	573	459	2242	2810
16 Dla-mobility Component	512	516	528	382	1938	2350
17 Attendance Allowance	360	549	233	378	1520	1714
18 Carers Allowance	37	61	28	72	198	226
19 Employment Support Allowance	87	121	133	155	496	306
99 Other Benefits Issues	168	201	152	253	774	786

Homelessness Partnership

Following the publication of the last homelessness strategy the council has set up its Homelessness Partnership. Meetings are held quarterly and representatives of the following agencies are invited to attend:-

- Social Services
- CAB
- Probation
- Youth Offending
- Drug and Alcohol Services
- Community Mental Health
- PCT
- Family Mosaic
- King Street Housing Society
- Leaving and After Care
- Safer Places
- Housing Benefit

The partnership monitors the homelessness strategy action plan. Shares best practice and explores gaps in services and how these can be met by members of the partnership or other agencies.

Stansted Airport

Having an international airport within the district requires the homelessness service to deal with people arriving at the airport with no forwarding accommodation to go to and without the means to get accommodation. These clients may not be eligible for assistance from the Council, depending on their immigration status, or because they are not in priority need. They can however be both time consuming and difficult to resolve and often require a multi-agency solution.

Stansted Airport is also one of the designated airports used during evacuations from abroad or for a terrorist related incident.

The following is part of the Council's emergency response plans for the eventuality of the arrival at Stansted Airport of a large number of people requiring housing assistance.

Dealing with Passengers arriving at Stansted Airport who require assistance with Housing
1.1 From time to time passengers may arrive on flights at Stansted Airport, who for a variety of reasons request leave to enter the United Kingdom and due to circumstances in their country of origin then require permanent or temporary accommodation in this country.
1.2 Under current United Kingdom Housing legislation, Uttlesford District Council has a legal responsibility to provide housing advice and assistance for persons who arrive at Stansted Airport and on arrival are unable to return to the country they have come from and have no where to live in the United Kingdom.

1.3 Notification times of such arrivals will depend upon the circumstances, but often the numbers arriving; their immediate housing needs; and the numbers requiring such assistance from the local authority may not be known until they actually arrive through immigration controls at the airport. This makes it difficult to plan in advance for this eventuality.
2.1 On receipt of notification of the arrival/imminent arrival of a flight at Stansted Airport the Emergency Planning Officer, in conjunction with Housing staff will attempt to ascertain the approximate needs of these people.
2.2 An early decision should be made on what accommodation will be needed for these people and where this will be sourced from i.e. local hotels or rest centre type accommodation in a local school or leisure centre. Based on this decision contact should be made with local providers to source the accommodation prior to the arrival of the persons requiring it.
2.2 An early decision should be made on what accommodation will be needed for these people and where this will be sourced from i.e. local hotels or rest centre type accommodation in a local school or leisure centre. Based on this decision contact should be made with local providers to source the accommodation prior to the arrival of the persons requiring it.
2.3 Consideration should be given to special needs in terms of disabilities, medical conditions, dietary requirements, etc. and appropriate arrangements made.
2.4 Once it has been ascertained how many people will have to be dealt with, contact should be made with staff who have indicated a willingness to assist with rest/reception centre operations to put them on stand-by or if the response is more immediate, direct them to the appropriate location(s).
2.5 Contact should be made at an early stage with Essex County Council Emergency Plans & Business Continuity Team so that they are aware of the incident and to discuss any requirement for support and/or joint working such as transport, CSTE workers, etc. If it is outside of office hours, this contact should be made through the Emergency Plans Duty Officer.
2.6 Once it is known where accommodation will be located and what form this will take, contact should be made with appropriate support agencies and organisations such as WRVC, British Red Cross, etc. to provide the necessary welfare support structure

Social Services – Teams working with Housing

Leaving and After Care Team

The Leaving & After Care Team is quadrant-based and located at Goodman House, Harlow. The team takes casework responsibility for children up to the age of 15 years and six months. The team provide support whilst the young people are in care, for example: assessing need, creating “Pathway plans” and assisting in the transition process of young people moving on from care. The team also provides aftercare support according to the specific provisions of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children Leaving Care Act 2000.

The Council's Housing Options Team are notified by the Leaving and After Care Team prior to a young person leaving care in order that their housing needs can be assessed.

Homeless Response Team

The Homeless Response Team is a small, centrally based team (located at County Hall, Chelmsford) which seeks to engage with 16 & 17 year olds on the verge of parental eviction and mediates with families to avoid homelessness and the necessity of providing accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

The team works in partnership with the Council's Housing Options Team and carries out joint assessments either through planned sessions or in response to urgent requests (whenever this is possible).

Assessment & Intervention Team

The Assessment and Intervention Team is also quadrant-based and located in Goodman House, Harlow. The Team respond to the immediate needs of children and families referred to Children's Social Care where an assessment of that need is required and especially in relation to "Safeguarding" (Child Protection) and "Children in Need". Referrals to this service are through the central Initial Response Team, with reference to Essex County Council threshold criteria.

Family Support & Protection

The Family Support and Protection Team is Quadrant-based at Goodman House, Harlow responding in the longer term for those children subject to Child Protection Plans, and Child in Need plans, with reference to Essex County Council threshold criteria.

Community Drug and Alcohol Team (CDAT)

The Community Drug and Alcohol Team (CDAT) are based in Harlow.

The team assists clients suffering with drug and alcohol abuse. The staff includes a Clinical Psychiatrist, Clinical Psychiatric Nurse and a Social Work and Administration Team.

Clients are referred to CDAT through a number of channels including hospitals, the Alcohol and Drug Advisory Service (ADAS), GPs, family members and self-referrals, as well as The Housing Options Team, with a minimum age for clients being 16 years and no upper age limit. People with alcohol problems far outnumber those with drug problems.

All CDAT clients are risk assessed, with particular attention being paid to any risks linked to abuse, for example, mental health problems, risk of violence to self or others, and neglect. All clients have a physical assessment and a community care plan. A Panel meets monthly to prioritise cases.

Some clients may be referred for rehabilitation, which may be residential, usually for 6 months, or may be day attendance based. These services are provided outside the local area, which is seen as beneficial to clients.

Future Actions

- **Reprovision of temporary accommodation**

With the re-development of the Mead Court site, where 4 units of temporary accommodation are currently situated, it is being proposed that 4 purpose built units be part of the new development. These will again be 4 small units of accommodation that will be fully furnished and ready for immediate occupation.

- **Provision of Domestic Violence Services**

Domestic violence is one of the most complex issues requiring the co-operation of numerous statutory and voluntary agencies at a national as well as regional and local level. It is not a popular issue or one that easily attracts funding. It is however an issue that has been under resourced within Uttlesford where there has never been refuge provision within the district for victims of domestic abuse.

In the period April 2011 – November 2011 there was a 36% increase in the number of reported cases of domestic violence within Uttlesford. It is recommended that Local authorities provide 1 refuge space per 10,000 of population, depending on local needs. This would indicate that Uttlesford should consider providing a refuge of between 7 – 8 spaces. Currently Uttlesford victims of domestic abuse are referred out of area when they require a refuge, which may be appropriate; however Uttlesford is not providing any reciprocal services.

The Council is currently in discussions with a specialist service provider who works in neighbouring authorities around the delivery of a refuge within Uttlesford and the provision of an outreach service.

- **Discharge of duty into the private sector**

Under the Localism Act, although a Government Commencement Order is yet to be issued, it is proposed that councils will be given powers to discharge their Homelessness Duty by offering suitable accommodation in the private rented sector with or without the consent of the applicant. The accommodation must be provided for a minimum term of 12 months in order to end the Council's duty. If the accommodation is lost by the applicant within a period of 2 years of the offer then they can re-apply, regardless of priority need and if appropriate referred back to the host authority. When the Government Commencement Order is received, the Council will consider adopting the following amendment to the Allocations' s Policy. (This all depends on timing of Cabinets etc)

Accepted homeless households are applicants to whom:

The Council has accepted a duty under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (the duty towards households who are in priority need and unintentionally homeless)

and

the council accepts a duty to provide suitable accommodation.

In the first instance the Council will look to discharge its homelessness duty for all accepted homeless applicants within the private rented sector. The Council will ensure that any offer of private rented housing is appropriate to the needs of the household, that the length of any tenancy is a minimum of 12 months and that the property meets the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) order

2012. An assessment will also be carried out to assess the affordability of the property, including the eligibility to receive Local Housing Allowance/Housing Benefit.

Under the Choice Based Lettings Scheme all accepted homeless applicants housed in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, including Bed & Breakfast accommodation, hostels or homeless at home, will be placed in band B. Accepted homeless applicants in severe need will be placed in Band A.

Whilst the Council is looking for suitable accommodation within the private sector applicants will be allowed to make expressions of interest on suitable properties advertised through the CBL system. If after a period of 8 weeks (4 cycles) from when the applicant received their S.184 decision letter they have either not been offered a suitable private sector property or been successful through the CBL system, the Council will make the applicant one final offer of suitable accommodation. This will be in whichever tenure is available first. If this offer is refused, the Council's homelessness duty under the Housing Act 1996 to provide accommodation will be considered to have been discharged.

When a private rented property becomes available it will be offered on the same principles as the through CBL i.e. to the accepted homeless applicant who is suitable for that property and who is in the highest Band and has been waiting the longest.

- **Supported housing for vulnerable people**

It has been identified that a similar scheme to that of Bromfield House in Saffron Walden is required in the Dunmow area of the district to meet the demand for supported accommodation. This would be a scheme that provides supported housing with people of low to medium support needs, this may include those with mental health and drug and alcohol issues as well as young people from age 16 who need support to gain the skills required to live independently.

- **Delivering CLG funded project with Greater Haven Gateway**

The 'Greater Haven Gateway' (GHG) consists of eight local authorities; Babergh; Braintree; Colchester; Ipswich; Mid Suffolk; Suffolk Coastal and Tendring. GHG is working in partnership with Uttlesford District Council to develop a programme of services which will provide support to single people living on the street or who are homeless or threatened with homelessness across all nine local authority areas. This work will be funded from a one off grant of £360,000 received by the group from the Government specifically to help single homeless people.

Two areas of work have been identified that will help to reduce and prevent homelessness. These are:

- Specialist outreach support for single people living on the street – up to £100k grant
- Help to increase access to private rented accommodation for single people that are harder to house and support for tenants and landlords to sustain tenancies and keep people in their homes – up to £250k grant

- **Amendments to allocations policy**

Localism Act 2011 has made significant changes to the way in which local authorities can deal with applications for social housing and homelessness applications under Parts 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996. At present not all commencement orders for these changes have been introduced but the changes we proposing to make to the allocations policy are

- Discharging homelessness duty in to the private sector
- Removing local connection criteria from the following categories of person will be exempt from local connection criteria.
 - a) Applicants who are serving members of the regular forces or who have served as regular in the regular forces within five years of their date of application
 - b) Applicants who have recently ceased or will cease to be entitled to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner where:-
 - (i) the spouse or civil partner has served in the regular forces; and
 - (ii) their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service
 - c) Is serving or has served in the reserve forces and who is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service.
- Amending the bedroom size criteria to match that of Local Housing Allowance

Chapter 6 - Older Persons Housing Strategy

Key Successes

- New Careline system introduced with Carecall
- Out of hours full response service now available
- First internet café opened in one of our sheltered schemes
- Sheltered housing service reorganised

We have recently implemented a new Careline system with Carecall. This means that we can provide a full response service out of hours to those who need it. It also means that those older people who want to stay in their own homes can do so with support from our service. We have also reorganised our sheltered housing service to complement this change with sheltered housing officers managing two schemes each.

Our sheltered residents told us they wanted to be able to have Sky television and access to the internet in their properties, the Council have worked with them to identify a solution and adaptations are being made to the buildings to create internet cafes and communal satellite dishes so that residents have the option of accessing Sky television.

Current Situation

The growing older population will lead to an increase in the demand for housing and support services, particularly among the 85+ age groups. Some older people are staying active into their old age, while others are surviving for longer with disabling illness.

Consultation carried out by the Council shows that the majority of people would prefer to remain in their own homes and receive the appropriate level of care and support to meet their needs. Current government policy, set out in Section 2, seeks to help older people to stay independent and have more choice and control over how they receive care and support.

Housing plays a key part in enabling older people to stay independent. Their housing aspirations could be achieved through flexibility, design and choice in terms of size, location and tenure.

The Council's **objectives** are:

To provide accommodation that meets the needs of older people living in Uttlesford.

To provide homes for life that can be adapted to meet people's needs as they grow older and less mobile.

On new developments, requiring accommodation that meets the housing needs of older people including extra care housing and bungalows.

Older Persons Housing Supply in Uttlesford

Uttlesford has a growing older population who can either afford to live in their own homes, private rent or live in Council accommodation, many of these properties far exceed their needs now or in future years (three bedroom houses or larger). However Uttlesford does not currently have the type of accommodation that older people in Uttlesford are looking for. This was evident in our earlier survey.

Council Owned Sheltered Housing

The Council owns and manages 450 units of sheltered accommodation across the District. These range from very small bedsit accommodation to 2 bedroom bungalows.

The current Council owned sheltered housing does not meet need or expectations. We currently have 40 sheltered flats or bedsits that are empty and hard to let. Many of these properties are concentrated in a small number of sheltered schemes.

Work has been carried out by the Council to renovate and update schemes but it has not solved the long term problem we are experiencing.

Other Council Accommodation,

The Council also owns and manages 2424 units of general needs accommodation, 650 of these are bungalows that are let to older people but are not graded as sheltered and do not have support from a sheltered housing officer.

Housing Association Sheltered Accommodation

The District also has a number of sheltered housing schemes provided and managed by Housing Association partners. 296 units are provided through a mix of bedsits, 1 and 2 bed flats and bungalows.

Private Supply in Uttlesford

Uttlesford also has a high number of care homes, retirement properties with housing support and almshouse accommodation that is normally let to those over 55.

The number of care homes is increasing and we have seen an increase in planning applications for this type of accommodation in the last couple of years.

Housing Needs Survey

An Older Persons Housing Needs Survey was carried out between July and August 2011. The study had 1,116 respondents, representing a 6% response rate.

Only 6.9% of respondents stated that they did not feel Uttlesford required more housing for the over 60s, 47.2% thought that more housing for the over 60s was needed and 45.8% were unsure. Over 38% of households were either in affordable housing, renting, or still had a mortgage. 93% of households were living in a home with two or more bedrooms, and three quarters of respondents were currently living in a house.

18.5% of households stated that they were currently in receipt of benefits, and over 40% of respondents are currently marginally able to afford, or cannot afford the costs of running their household.

44% of respondents said that they would consider downsizing in the next 10 years, and 32% of households said that if they were to move, they would be looking to move into affordable housing. If the sample size is representative of the district, this could potentially equate to around 3,000 people over 60, looking to move to affordable housing in Uttlesford in the next ten years.

According to the study, suitable housing for the over 60's should include

- One/two bedrooms Apartment or bungalow
- Near shops and amenities
- Have good public transport links
- Contain a mixture of private and affordable units
- A service charge of less than £40 per week.

Changing Needs and Expectations

In the last five years, we have seen a change in the expectations of older people living in Uttlesford. The demand for high quality smaller accommodation for older people has increased dramatically with developers proposing high quality apartments, retirement flats and care homes.

Our housing needs survey showed that older people wanted to live in 1 and 2 bedroom bungalows and still have their own front door with independent living high on their priorities. The Council does have 2 bedroom bungalows as part of its stock but they are always in high demand and we need a greater supply.

The expectations of residents living in Council properties has also increased. Residents do not want to move from two or three bedroom houses into bedsit or flatted developments and this is causing a problem in the turnover of stock. Families are waiting in cramped small properties while older people are living

in family sized housing that does not meet their housing needs. The Council needs to provide high quality older persons accommodation that is desirable for those wanting to downsize.

We have found that the number of people staying in their own homes and having a lifeline fitted has increased. 850 residents have lifeline in their own homes helping to maintain their independence for as long as possible.

We are also finding that as people live longer their needs are changing. The Council does not have accommodation with care which means that carers are visiting our sheltered schemes up to three times a day to provide care to residents. 25% of those living in our sheltered housing are receiving care from either professional carers or family. This has illustrated a need for at least one extra care scheme in Uttlesford.

We also have residents living in our sheltered schemes with dementia, they have a need for specialist support that we cannot provide in a sheltered housing scheme. This need is expected to grow as the population gets older.

The table below illustrates this growing need.

Table 1 Uttlesford residents projected to suffer from dementia

	2009	2015	2020	2025	2030
People aged 65-69 predicted to have dementia	46	60	53	58	66
People aged 70-74 predicted to have dementia	79	96	123	107	124
People aged 75-79 predicted to have dementia	141	164	187	245	210
People aged 80-84 predicted to have dementia	228	262	298	345	439
People aged 85 and over predicted to have dementia	401	516	651	811	996
Total people aged 65 and over predicted to have dementia	895	1,097	1,312	1,566	1,835

Source: Projected older peoples population index

An increasing need for older person's accommodation

An analysis was carried out of those living in Council accommodation and it was found that:

543 residents aged over 55 were living in 3 bed houses
15 residents aged over 55 were living in 4 bed houses.

Some of these residents will be living alone with support from professional carers, family or lifeline. Others will still be working, living independently and not requiring supported housing at the moment. These will be the older people with housing requirements in the future. Our housing needs survey showed

that they had high expectations for future housing and the council need to be planning for this housing need.

The Council does offer an incentive scheme for those wanting to move from larger Council accommodation into sheltered housing.

Future need

This report has shown a future need for the following:

An extra care scheme with specialist support for those with dementia

2 bedroom bungalows for older people as illustrated by our earlier survey.

Future Actions

Review Council owned sheltered accommodation and decide if it is fit for purpose.

As part of the new Local Plan, request that 5% of all housing provided is 1 and 2 bedroom bungalows to meet the needs of the growing older population

Request that an extra care scheme is provided through S106 obligations in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow as part of the new Local Plan.

Continue to upgrade communal areas in our sheltered housing to include internet cafes for our silver surfers.

Chapter 7 – Delivering the Private Sector Housing Strategy

Key successes

- Bringing 5 empty homes back into use as a result of direct UDC action
- Holding a successful landlords forum
- Compulsory purchase of a property in South Road, Saffron Walden and resale into the housing market for refurbishment and occupation
- In the 2011/12 financial year 25 DFG grants were awarded totalling £111,793 from a total budget of £120,000.

Current Situation

Condition of Private Stock

The regime for controlling the suitability of housing for occupation is set out in the Housing Act 2004, which puts local authorities under a general duty to take appropriate action where standards are not met, whether or not the dwelling is available for letting. The action taken by UDC includes advice and guidance and enforcement action where necessary.

The means of assessment of housing standards conditions is set out in the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which provides a method of assessing the likelihood of harm arising from certain hazards. Identified hazards are categorised according to the level of risk. If a category 1 hazard exists, the authority has a duty to act, if a category 2 hazard exists it may take action.

For houses in multiple occupation, additional powers under management regulations and licensing provisions are used. A house in multiple occupation is a dwelling which is let to three or more persons who form two or more households sharing facilities such as a bathroom or kitchen. The Housing Act 2004 introduced mandatory licensing to ensure that higher risk HMO's are in good condition and adequately managed, the conditions cover such matters as fire safety and disrepair. A property must be licensed if it has 3 or more storeys, and is housing 5 or more persons, who form 2 or more households. UDC currently has one licensed HMO, and a further 9 are under consideration. The number of licensable and unlicensable HMO's in UDC is estimated to be around 150 with the number expected to increase with housing demand, particularly in towns and around Stansted Airport.

Empty Homes

Empty homes have the potential to cause problems for the surrounding neighbourhood, such as attracting anti-social behaviour and reducing the value of neighbouring properties. Empty homes are also a wasted resource that could be put to better use by helping to tackle homelessness and

providing an additional home to address housing need in an area with high demand.

UDC seeks to encourage owners to bring their empty home into better use through cooperation and using enforcement provisions if necessary.

At any one time there are approximately 250 long term empty properties, defined as not having been occupied for at least 6 months. A register is maintained with regular updates from the Council Tax section. Correspondence and contact with relevant owners is made on a regular basis to establish the status of the home and enter a dialogue over the future use.

Since 2006 UDC has been part of a Consortium of seven Local Authorities across Essex and Hertfordshire that successfully bid for capital grant funding from the Regional Housing Board (RHB) for an empty homes renovation and lease project. The funding enabled the PLACE scheme (Private Lease Agreements Converting Empties) to be set up in conjunction with a RSL, Genesis Housing Association.

The scheme provides grant and loan funding to bring the dwelling up to the government's Decent Homes Standard.

The largest grant of up to £60,000 per dwelling, is offered where the work is carried by Genesis HA and the property is then leased to them for a 3 year period, after which time the property is returned to the owner in good condition with no further obligation. The RSL have nomination rights to the relevant Local Authority for the duration of the lease. During the lease period the owner will not receive any rental income, and has the option of renewing the lease after 3 years depending on circumstances.

A smaller grant of up to £30,000 is available where the owner may choose the builder and will also benefit from receiving a rental income during the 3 year lease period.

Three properties in UDC area are currently leased under the PLACE scheme with several more under active consideration.

The option of a loan is also available, to enable the dwelling to be renovated for sale, whereupon the loan is repaid, or made available for letting, repaying the loan through rental income. The owner has full control over future occupation of the dwelling.

Where a property is unsuitable for PLACE funding, other options are discussed with the owners and further contact is made after a suitable period where necessary.

In the event of an owner being unresponsive to assistance offered, legal powers available, and in taking such action, UDC will carry out its enforcement duties in accordance with the enforcement concordat.

Compulsory purchase powers have been used for one property in Saffron Walden where the owner was not responsive to other assistance and the house had a negative effect on the neighbourhood. It has since been sold on for renovation and occupation.

An Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) gives the council the right to possession of the dwelling but not ownership. The Order may last up to 7 years and during the time the Order is in force, the dwelling may be made available for letting and sale by the owner may be prevented.

Disabled Adaptation Grants

UDC administers the provision of mandatory grants to meet the needs of disabled persons. Approximately 25 grants are awarded each year, either for adaptations or to assist relocation to more suitable accommodation. UDC works in partnership with Papworth Home Improvement Agency who are available to act on behalf of the applicant if the applicant chooses to engage their services.

During the year 2011-12, UDC have supported the introduction by Papworth HIA of fixed price adaptations, which have reduced approval time scales. The scheme is to be reviewed regularly **Home Repair Assistance**

UDC also offers discretionary grant assistance to occupiers of dwellings and mobile homes to carry out essential structural repair work or improvements. All applicants need to be on a means tested benefit to receive the grant, which is up to £3000 or up to £5000 in the case of mobile homes where thermal insulation or energy efficiency measures are carried out in addition to repairs. For additional work over the grant limit, an interest free loan of up to £7000 can be given, which becomes repayable once the property is sold or the applicant no longer lives there.

Mobile Homes

UDC is responsible for the regulation of mobile homes used for habitation, the main provision being by means of licensing to protect the health, safety and welfare of the occupants.

Future Actions

Approval has been given for the employment of a temporary contractor to carry out further work on tackling empty homes and accelerating the rate of their return to occupation. We hope to have a suitable person in place by the beginning of 2013.

Discussion with Essex County Council, who provide resources for Occupational Therapists to carry out the assessment of the home adaptations required for an applicant in order for a DFG to be approved, has resulted in the need to provide externally appointed OT's to be assessed. Papworth HIA

have engaged OT services directly, to supplement the rate of referrals for adaptations.

We will undertake an awareness raising campaign in conjunction with Papworth HIA to residents and landlords in the district on the availability of grants from the Council to improve the take up by eligible householders.

Liaison with Housing Associations has taken place to encourage a contribution towards the cost of adaptations in their own properties. To date one HA makes a 40% contribution, and further negotiations are taking place to increase the number who make contributions.

Chapter 8 – The Council’s Housing Stock

Key Successes

- Produced new 30 year HRS Business Plan with detailed analysis of the options and opportunities available under the new self-financing arrangements
- Successful restructure and relocation of the Housing Department
- Launched new response and monitoring service for those with support needs
- Reviewed and updated Conditions of Tenancy
- Reviewed and updated Housing Allocations Policy
- Implemented an on-line housing application
- Delivered first phase of a Council new build scheme
- 98.5% of properties meet decent homes standard

Current Situation

The Council has produced an HRA Business Plan covering the period 2012-2042. The plan sets out the Council’s overall aims and objectives for the housing service, as a landlord of just under 3,000 homes.

The Plan forms a key part of the Council’s preparation for HRA self-financing. This is a major change in national housing finance which introduces new opportunities for the Council’s housing service but also exposure to risks, which will need to be managed actively.

The information below is just a summary. For more information, please visit our website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Stock figures

The Council’s stock, as at 1 April 2011, was 2856 rented properties. In addition to the tenanted stock there are 122 right to buy leasehold properties that the Council continue to manage.

The Council’s stock consists of traditionally constructed houses, flats, and bungalows. The stock is mostly low rise, although varied in archetype. There are no high-rise flats. All non-traditional build properties, such as Airey and

PRC houses, have been re-built however there are a small number of Swedish units.

Other key points of relevance to this plan relating to housing assets are as follows:

- **The 2009 stock condition survey results demonstrate that the council has managed to use its resources effectively to maintain the stock**
- **The survey results indicate that over the next 30 years, the Council will need to spend a total of £152m or £50,876 per property, equating to £1,696 a year on each property**
- **A new stock condition database has been introduced and information from other databases have been transferred to it**
- **98.5% of the Council housing stock had achieved the decent homes standard**
- **A very small number of properties, 11 in total, were assessed as failing the HHSRS standard**
- **From the data collected the average energy rating was calculated as 68.89. This reflects the investment made in the stock in energy saving measures and compares favourably with other authorities**
- **Over 75% of the housing stock now has double glazing and all of the housing stock has central heating and high levels of insulation**
- **The Council is committed to the principle of sustainable development and schemes which have an impact on the quality of life**

Decent Homes

Based on survey information 98.5% of the stock complies with the Decent Home Standard. However approximately 10% of the stock annually would become non-decent without investment. The investment requirements in the current plan include all costs required to maintain the properties at the decent homes standard identified in the current stock condition database. It also includes costs for works that improve the stock beyond the basic decent homes standard including:

£1.5m over 30 years on sustainable energy

Decent Homes

This is a minimum standard that requires that the home:

- **Meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing**
- **Is in a reasonable state of repair**
- **Has reasonably modern facilities and services**

projects to provide affordable warmth and improve the energy efficiency of homes

£1.1m over 30 years for environmental improvements to fund works outside the home including improved parking provision.

and

- **Provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort**

Energy Efficiency/Sustainability

The Council has a strong commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability. A key strategic objective of the business plan is to tackle climate change by reducing the carbon emissions from the Council's housing stock. This will also address tenants concerns about fuel poverty, reducing the cost of heating by improving insulation and replacing electric systems with modern oil or gas central heating systems.

There are a number of homes (around 250) with solid walls that have poor thermal efficiency. Some of these have recently been upgraded and their thermal efficiency is being reassessed. Others will be prioritised for investment programmes in the short term.

New Build

Changes to legislation have provided new opportunities for councils to develop new affordable housing. They enabled the Council to undertake a regeneration scheme to make better use of an unpopular sheltered housing scheme in Leaden Roding and provide 5 new bungalows. The Council plans to continue to re-develop other parts of the site to provide an additional 8 houses in 2013.

In addition, with many of the financial deterrents to local authority new build that were inherent as part of the HRA subsidy system now removed under self financing, the delivery of new affordable housing, to be managed locally, has become even more of a viable option.

The Council has identified numerous development plots throughout the district that once formed the part of gardens of council houses. These could potentially be developed by the Council to deliver each year a modest number of properties for affordable rent or other appropriate tenure as determined through its Housing Strategy. Opportunities such as these for new build will be explored through the Housing Board.

However, opportunities to increase the supply of housing to meet need can essentially only be achieved through negotiation with developers and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in relation to housing developments as part of the planning process. The Council will therefore continue to work closely with partner RSLs to ensure that the maximum number of lettings to Local Authority nominees is achieved.

Future Actions

- Implement the agreed action plan of new housing improvements and service enhancements, funded from the additional resources made available by HRA self-financing
- Continue to manage and maintain council homes effectively and efficiently
- Set up a new framework with development partner to implement the new council house building programme
- Undertake a review of the council's Housing Allocations Scheme taking advantage of the new opportunities and flexibilities provided by the Localism Act 2011
- Explore the use of fixed term tenancies for certain types of housing applicants and formulate a clear approach to when and how they should be used
- Implement a more efficient and cost effective supply chain for repair materials
- Introduce a Tenant Scrutiny Panel to undertake detailed reviews of specific housing services

Chapter 9 - Sustainable Communities

Successes

- Economic Development Strategy published
- Successful Tenant Forum who actively take part in key housing decisions
- Working towards Achieving Equality standards for the Council

Current Situation

The National Planning Policy Framework details the social role required when delivering new housing. Building an inclusive sustainable community is an important part of this joint Housing Strategy and Local Plan.

“Supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing” National Planning Policy Framework

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 came into effect on 1 October 2010 and brings together, harmonises and extends current equality law. The existing anti-discrimination laws have been consolidated into a single Act, which has been introduced to strengthen the laws preventing discrimination and the inequalities that still exist in society today.

The Equality Act has also created changes to earlier legislation and includes discrimination previously unrecognised in legislation. In essence, it creates a new '[Single Equality Duty](#)' on public bodies to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good community relations.

The term protected characteristics has replaced equality strands for describing the protected traits held by groups or individuals under anti-discrimination and equality legislation. The earlier separate duties for disability, gender and race have been replaced with a single, more effective framework and the new '[Single Equality Duty 2012-2015](#)' covers:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

For the purposes of Equality Impact assessments undertaken by the Council, we also consider 'Rurality' due to the nature of the district. To ensure that we understand who makes up our communities, we try to work with groups and information available to us, to ensure that we maintain inclusion as a strong theme for cohesion. In developing this understanding, we work principally with the following groups;

The Uttlesford Area Access Group, Support4Sight, Deaf Blind UK, Council for Voluntary Services Uttlesford, the Volunteer Centre, Uttlesford Community Travel, Uttlesford Taxi Forum and the Uttlesford Transport Forum, the Tenants Forum, individuals and groups from our larger ethnic populations of Eastern European and Nepalese residents.

We also work with parishes and Carver Barracks, where rural isolation can reduce access to services to meet a community need. We want to make Uttlesford a safe place to live and projects around Hate Crime and Anti-Social behaviour are put in place to do this. The Council has supported the Essex Pride event each year and has flown the Rainbow Flag to support staff and residents and had also undertaken an exhibition to support Disability History month and included many local organisations in putting this together.

As more information becomes available to us, we will identify the best way to listen and support emerging groups that we can identify from the Census and any monitoring information that we are carrying out.

Anti Social Behaviour and Hate Crime

The Council doesn't tolerate anti social behaviour and has a dedicated officer focusing on this issue. Her role is to work with the local community and partner organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour and improve community relations.

Uttlesford District Council is a member of the district-wide Community Safety Partnership (CSP). This group pledged their commitment to a set of anti-social behaviour standards set by the Home Office in 2010.

Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership also works alongside Uttlesford District Council to reduce occurrence of all hate crimes and provide an appropriate response to any reports received. Alongside all the relevant agencies the council actively encourages the reporting of hate crimes and incidents.

Floating Support

Funded by Essex Supporting People and provided by Family Mosaic, Floating Support is a short-term service that **provides support to vulnerable people, regardless of their tenure**, who may be experiencing problems with maintaining their accommodation or have health or other issues which affect their ability to cope with day-to-day living.

Their aim is to enable people to live independently in the community and assist with looking at housing options for those in need of a home. They also provide assistance for those with tenancies or owner-occupiers. With the intention of gradually reducing the support as the situation improves, they can work with residents for up to two years or until they no longer need the support.

Economic Development

Economic Development is a priority in Uttlesford, with thriving town centres and successful businesses providing key services.

Our new Economic Development Strategy has recently been published and it seeks to enable people, communities and business to be what they want to be by providing:

- Help to start and stay in business
- Help to start exporting or export more
- Access to superfast broadband
- Help for town centres with their viability and vitality
- Help for business to expand in or locate in Uttlesford
- Help to persuade more people to visit Uttlesford

This document is available on our website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Community Forums

Community forums play an important role in ensuring that services provided in Uttlesford match the needs of the local community. Uttlesford District Council works to improve life and services in Uttlesford for all its residents, and does so by seeking the views of people living in the district.

Where relevant, representatives from Essex Police, Essex Highways, NHS West Essex as well as District Councillors and representatives from the council attend the scheduled meetings.

Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement

The Council is fully committed to involving the residents of its housing in service development and improvement, as well as consultation in terms of current service delivery and future service planning.

Following extensive consultation with Tenant Representatives a Tenant Compact was introduced on 1 April 2000 and was reviewed in 2003, 2009 and again in 2011.

The Council employs a full time Tenant Participation Officer who is seen as a vital link between the Council and its tenants and leaseholders. Tenant Participation has been in operation since 1995 and has greatly assisted the

Council in improving its practices and procedures. Tenants and leaseholders play a major role in the consultation process, for example:

- stock option proposals
- production of the annual Housing Strategy
- Statement
- production of the annual Housing Business Plan
- production of the Decent Home Action Plan
- production of the new Tenants Handbook in 2011
- allocations policy
- development of the repair and improvement programme
- improvement of the Housing Service
- selection of contractors

Tenant and leaseholder involvement is seen as vital when considering the aims and objectives of all housing related issues across the district.

Tenant Panel representatives are invited to sit on the Housing Board where they have full voting rights. In addition they may be invited to sit on any other appropriate Working Parties in order that they may have involvement in proposals, ideas and initiatives.

The work between the Council and the Tenant Forum has greatly assisted the Council in improving its practices and procedures.

Future Actions

- Continue to work towards Equality standards
- Continue to build and enhance capacity in the community through working with key partners.
- Implement the Economic Development Strategy
- Continue to build skills and knowledge in the Tenant Forum

Chapter 10 – Resources

This part of the strategy sets out annual resources available for capital and revenue investment in housing services. This includes new homes, private sector renovation, disabled facilities, homelessness and homeless prevention and grants to other organisations that assist the Council in carrying out its housing functions and enhancing the services it provides.

There are two main areas in relation to funding:

- A. Capital** spending is used finance large scale projects and items that are expected to have a long life for example roof replacements to tenants homes or providing grants to Registered Providers to assist in funding new development.
- B. Revenue** funding covers all of the day to day running costs incurred in running a housing service for example emergency repairs, staffing costs etc.

If we are to deliver the priorities set out within this strategy and the Business Plan, we must consider all funding opportunities and due regard has been given to the following:

Funding opportunities requiring Council support

- Consider financial regulations which allow Councils to borrow money
- Consider, in partnership with our tenants, the various options available to manage our homes

Working with partners

- Continue to support bids to the Homes and Communities Agency for new affordable housing schemes.
- Continue to make bids to the Government, local, sub regional, regional, and European bodies on various housing initiatives.
- Continue to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities, partners and stakeholders.

Maximise existing funding opportunities

- Ensure the major repairs allowance is used to full effect
- Ensure that private sector housing renewal grants are made available to those most in need
- Consider levying a charge on new services where appropriate
- Continue to negotiate planning agreements to secure 40% affordable housing on new developments
- Fund the HRA self financing payment
- Continue to monitor and bid for any additional funding to support our homelessness services.

Funding the Housing Service

1. The Housing Revenue Account – Is funded from tenants rents and service charges, Government grants and other income and is spent on work to Council houses/estates and the provision of support to our tenants.
2. The General Fund – is funded from Government grants and Council Tax payments and is spent on all other housing related spending for example homelessness, improvements to qualifying private sector housing etc.

Details of the Council's housing revenue and capital spending can be found in the HRA Business Plan which is available on our website.

Chapter 11 - Monitoring the Strategy and Performance Review

This chapter describes how the strategy will be monitored, reviewed and further developed through a range of corporate and partner agency forums.

The Strategy is a three year document with a Housing Strategy conference and review planned after a year. Each chapter within this strategy has its own timetabled action plan that sets outcomes, target dates, the lead organisations, partners and resources spanning the three years of the Strategy. Performance information is collected across a range of indicators to help monitor performance, identify trends and assess implementation of the strategy. This information is also used to benchmark our services against other local authorities.

Progress against the action plan and performance information will be reported as follows:

- Quarterly to the Housing Board
- Annually to the Council's Cabinet