

**LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM  
PUBLIC PROTECTION & SAFETY DIVISION**

<b>Title: Private Housing and Health Strategy 2010 to 2012</b>	
<b>Document Reference:</b>	
<b>Version: 1.3</b>	<b>Author: Richard Buckley</b>
<b>Date Created: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010</b>	<b>Date Amended: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2010</b>

## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This document formalises the Private Housing and Health strategy for the period 2010 to 2012 as governed by the Council's Housing Strategy 2007–2014 and the West London Strategic Action Plan 2008– 2011.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council's Housing strategy sets out the overall vision for residents in the borough whether in the public or private sector. The strategy is both ambitious and wide reaching with the overriding objective of 'A Housing Ladder of Opportunity for All'. A 'Housing Ladder of Opportunity for All' should look like:

- ☞ Increased housing supply
- ☞ Securing quality housing and services
- ☞ Tackling economic and social polarisation

- 2.2 The West London Private Sector Housing Group strategic action plan sets out sub regional common objectives for the West London Partnership. The Partnership includes Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Brent, Hounslow, Hillingdon, Harrow and Ealing Councils. The core aims of the partnership are to:

- ☞ Increase housing provision
- ☞ Deliver more affordable housing
- ☞ Improve housing standards, and
- ☞ Build Sustainable Communities

The strategic objectives for the West London Private Housing Sector, for the next three years are.

**Objective 1:** Helping boroughs to improve conditions in the private housing sector to deliver decent homes and tackle climate change.

**Objective 2:** Developing a common approach to enable efficient working and consistency across West London.

**Objective 3:** Undertake research or action to support and inform WL activities in the private housing sector.

**Objective 4:** Maximise the private rented sector to meet other key housing

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priorities and build credible partnerships with large portfolio landlords in West London.

2.3 In 2008 there were some 80,326\* dwellings in the borough. Owner-occupiers account for 43.5% of households: over a 1/3 rent from social landlords and around 23% are private rented accommodation. Appendix 1 outlines the nature of the housing stock as categorised in 2004. In summary:

- ☞ Hammersmith & Fulham has significantly higher proportions of RSL and private rented accommodation
- ☞ Hammersmith & Fulham has a higher proportion of converted flats and a much lower proportion of detached and semi-detached houses
- ☞ The dwelling stock in Hammersmith & Fulham also appears to be significantly more concentrated in the pre-1919 age group: approximately 74%; basically old and cold.

\* Note: Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA) – Data returns for 2007/08

2.4 Private Housing and Health feeds into the Housing Strategy in a number of key areas that can be summarized as:

- Quality Housing and Service
- Housing Supply.

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### **3 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

3.1 There are many demands upon the service and the approach, especially in the current economic climate, needs to allow room for change, however there remains a number of core statutory responsibilities that will headline in terms of priority:

#### **3.1.1 Quality Housing and Service**

- ☞ Inspecting and regulating unsafe and poor housing conditions with respect to Category 1 hazards only (**Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)**)
- ☞ Licensing and regulating **Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO)**
- ☞ Regulating 'Fire Safety' with the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority in private housing
- ☞ Improving **energy efficiency**, tackling excess winter deaths, reducing fuel poverty and keeping homes warm
- ☞ Safeguarding the public's health through tackling **rubbish on private land**, defective drainage and filthy and verminous premises
- ☞ Signpost you to private housing **grants** (Disabled Facility Grants, Warm Zones, Empty Homes etc) where applicable
- ☞ Promoting our private sector residents needs through the **West London** Sub Regional Housing Partnership

#### **3.1.2 Housing Supply and area amenity**

- ☞ Bring **Empty Dwellings** back into use with regard to Housing Need and targeting eyesore properties

### **4 FIRE SAFETY**

4.1 The tragic fire at Lakanal House in Camberwell on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2009 reminded us that there is no room for complacency or assumption. Private Housing and Health in conjunction with the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) are responsible for regulation; a protocol identifying lead responsibility and agreeing how we will work together has been signed.

4.2 To safeguard residents in their home through the reduction of the likelihood of an occurrence of fire and to reduce the negative impact of any such event should one occur we will:

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- 4.2.1 Act in accordance with the protocol between the Council and the LFEPA and exercise powers under the Housing Act and associated regulations to achieve these aims.
- 4.2.2 Strategic partnership meetings will be held bi-annually with tactical meetings held fortnightly
- 4.2.3 Prioritise inspection of known private housing stock in terms of risk according to whether it is a licensable HMO, the number of storeys and, where known, the number of persons in occupation.
- 4.2.4 The highest risk premises will be contacted in writing to advise owners of their responsibilities as landlords and to provide basic advice on fire safety.
- 4.2.5 Review and update housing stock data to inform risk based decisions.
- 4.2.6 Proactively inspect high risk premises as part of the annual work programme.

## **5 LICENSING, REGULATING AND INSPECTING**

- 5.1 Private Housing and Health is required by the Housing Act 2004 to keep the housing conditions in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken to address any category 1 hazards. Furthermore, the service is also required to both license and regulate HMOs meeting the definition as set out in the Act.
- 5.2 At the time of writing (July 2010) there are around 145 licensed HMOs in the borough. A physical survey of the borough has identified over 7000 properties that have 3 storeys or more; of which a proportion are HMOs and require licensing and regulating. The statistical proportion of properties that potentially have Category 1 Hazards is estimated at just under 3000 (based on 5.4% of housing stock)
- 5.3 To safeguard residents we will:
  - 5.3.1 Prioritise inspection and enforcement in terms of risk (Category 1 only) of HMOs and other high risk dwellings based on the number of storeys, habitable rooms and numbers of occupants.
  - 5.3.2 Identify unlicensed HMOs through physical survey of the borough and inspection. Enforcement action to be considered on a case by case basis for unlicensed premises.
  - 5.3.3 Proactively inspect high risk premises as part of the annual work programme. Inspect all licensed premises as part of the application process. Inspect premises

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to ensure compliance against condition, where applicable, and to remedy Category 1 Hazards through engagement and enforcement.

- 5.3.4 Share best practice, enforcement intelligence and lobby Hammersmith & Fulham priorities at the West London Sub Regional Strategic Housing Group and HMO group.
- 5.3.5 Encourage applicants to apply for Landlords Accreditation.
- 5.3.6 License HMO with suitable conditions requiring a minimum standard of amenity and safety.
- 5.3.7 Signpost landlords to external funding sources if applicable.
- 5.3.8 Provide information and advice for occupants and landlords.

## **6 ENERGY EFFICIENCY, FUEL POVERTY AND WARM ZONES**

- 6.1 In 2009 approximately 37,000 people died nationally owing to conditions exacerbated by excess cold. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment carried out by H&F PCT has identified that there are 20% excess winter deaths in this Borough compared with London average of 13%. The fundamental reason for this is the nature of the housing stock with around 74% built before 1914 (no cavity walls) that at a practical level are far harder to heat and insulate. Improving the energy efficiency of properties and alleviating fuel poverty is central to the strategic aims of the Government and the Council. Domestic properties account for 27% of overall CO<sub>2</sub> production.
- 6.2 A household is considered to be in fuel poverty when it needs to spend more than 1 tenth of disposable income to provide satisfactory heating; about 1 in 6 households in the UK are affected. All local authorities are required under NI187, to provide an annual report to determine the percentage of all households on income related benefit living in a dwelling with a SAP Rating under 35 and more than 65. SAP Rating (Standard Assessment Procedure) is a means of rating the energy efficiency of a dwelling by calculating the fuel cost divided by floor area and adjusting to a number between 0-100.
- 6.3 To proactively tackle defective properties, to reduce levels of fuel poverty of households in private sector, and to reduce the incidence of excess winter deaths in the private sector we will:
  - 6.3.1 Enforcement action will be taken for private rented properties to ensure there is adequate heating and insulation, using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System under the Housing Act 2004 as appropriate.

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- 6.3.2 To improve the energy efficiency of private sector dwellings by facilitating measures to optimise the SAP Rating including the signposting of vulnerable owner-occupiers to external funding (see appendix 2).
- 6.3.3 We aim to install heating improvements to bring a minimum of 50 properties up to this standard primarily through London Warmzones.
- 6.3.4 We will facilitate the energy efficiency improvements mentioned above by promoting the Private Sector Renewal Scheme through London Warmzones. This will enable all funding sources to be utilised as appropriate. All officers in Private Housing and Health who carry out inspections will provide a checklist giving basic information on the energy efficiency of each dwelling visited. This will enable appropriate referrals to be made.
- 6.3.5 We will work closely with Warmzones to facilitate their area surveys to identify relevant properties. We have provided them with a database of private households on Council Tax Benefits which has helped them to target their activities.
- 6.3.6 The scheme will be publicised through articles in the press, the H&F journal and other publications; also through posters and leaflets displayed in GP surgeries, libraries, relevant council offices, voluntary organisations and through awareness events such as the annual Time of Your Life event, flu clinics.
- 6.3.7 We will work closely with the PCT to promote the scheme to relevant health professionals.
- 6.3.8 We will use the services of an outside organisation to produce the annual report required under NI187. We will work with other London local authorities through the London Carbon Action Network
- 6.3.9 Funding of about £1.2m will be made to the West London Sub Region by the LDA, around August of this year, for the pan London RE:NEW Scheme ) which is a joint partnership between the LDA and all London Boroughs, to be run between 2010-2012. The funding will be divided between the 7 local authorities of the Sub Region. The scheme will take the form of providing a range of free easy to fit energy efficiency measures and energy advice, identified by surveys of all tenures, in a selected area of the Borough. An appropriate organisation will be procured to undertake the project on our behalf. Strong links will be made to existing funding streams such as Warmzones so that referrals can be made to them as appropriate.

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## **7 PUBLIC HEALTH AND RUBBISH**

- 7.1 Safeguarding public health through tackling rubbish on private land, defective drainage and filthy and verminous premises by:
- 7.1.1 Measure resolution time and reduce with 85% of cases resolved within 21 days. Improve response for customer and minimise detrimental impact and likelihood of further deterioration on local environment e.g. dumped rubbish tends to attract further dumping
  - 7.1.2 All officers continuing to be trained in basic public health issues of: rubbish on private land, pest control, drainage and filthy & verminous premises
  - 7.1.3 Coordinate partnership arrangement with Cleaner, Greener division and H&F Homes to provide effective resolutions and solutions to fly-tipped waste
  - 7.1.4 Establish a database of "hotspots" where fly-tipping is a continual occurrence, to monitor more effectively and ensure appropriate and timely action is taken to resolve the underlying issues.

## **8 QUALITY SERVICES**

- 8.1.1 Attain ISO9001 accreditation through harmonisation of procedures, standard documentation and working practices.
- 8.1.2 Performance measurement of service through effective reporting, clear goals and management.
- 8.1.3 Training to continue where necessary in fire safety, HMO inspections, HHSRS enforcement and public health to all officers. Officers appraised annually with a 6 month review and monthly one to ones. Self management reporting systems available on-line.
- 8.1.4 Partnerships with Registered Social Landlords, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, H&F Homes, West London, Thames Water, and council departments to share intelligence, expertise and cross working for effective resolutions.

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## **9 INCREASING HOUSING SUPPLY**

- 9.1 The long-term national trend in the number of vacant homes, according to the Empty Homes Agency, had been steadily downwards since the vacancy peak in the early 1990's. But the credit crunch and the wider recession in the economy are now potential drivers of an increase in vacant homes. Council tax data is a good initial source of information on the likely location of vacant homes. But is subject to cumulative error, and is not necessarily an accurate guide to either true numbers or location of the most problematic vacant homes.
- 9.2 Up to the end of 2009 we had estimated there to be around 700-800 long-term vacant homes in the borough. However the recent GLA (Greater London Authority) requirement to audit vacant homes across the capital was an opportunity to review the numbers in more detail. Vacant homes in LBHF fall broadly into 4 general categories:
- Those vacant for a relatively short time due to market transactions
  - Those vacant for 12 months or more
  - Those vacant for periods of years, often because of the age, infirmity, eccentricity, inaccessibility or vulnerability of owners.
  - Those units of mixed business and residential use.
- 9.3 In February 2010 a borough-wide audit of information from Council Tax concerning assumed long-term vacant homes and information from other in-house sources, coupled with street surveys in the vicinity of the suspected vacant properties, found there to be:
- 27 long-term vacant eyesores
  - 19 properties vacant and improved
  - 15 works on site
  - 198 purpose-built or converted flats requiring further investigation
- 9.4 These figures are a snap-shot, and are not derived from a fully comprehensive street survey. But they do suggest that the numbers of vacant homes may be significantly less than previously assumed. Members have also been helpful in notifying us of problematic vacant property in their wards.
- 9.5 Empty homes are undesirable because they are a wasted resource and a cost to the local economy. They provide a target for petty crime and anti-social behaviour like

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vandalism and graffiti. They blight and devalue neighbouring properties and reduce amenity by encouraging litter and vermin .They may be unsafe, unsecured and represent an attraction to children, rough sleepers and squatters. They may contribute to fire-setting and drug abuse.

9.6 Our strategic objectives:

- Locate, risk-rate and prioritise the worst cases
- Use sub-regional funding to employ an Empty Properties officer and finance a capital program of grant aid
- Assist in meeting affordable housing delivery targets by providing temporary leased units funded by sub-regional vacant homes grants
- Lead on developing corporate enforcement policies and co-ordinate enforcement activity.

9.7 Actions, outcomes and measures for 2010-11 :

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with West London Housing Partnership (WLHP) to complete the GLA London wide Empty Homes Audit</li> </ul>	<p>More accurate and precise data</p> <p>Target properties identified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C/Tax list provided and reviewed</li> <li>• Amended data set created</li> <li>• GLA vacant property audit progress on the WLHP project plan</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empty property officer contract reviewed and extended</li> </ul>	Project progress maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interested parties located and identified</li> <li>• Standard letters sent</li> <li>• Notices served</li> <li>• Numbers of Long-term vacant houses brought back to use</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target the limited grant funding stream from WLHP</li> </ul>	More affordable homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2bed,3bed and 4 bed grant applications (see Appendix on meeting housing need)</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and update the spreadsheet of problem properties</li> </ul>	Corporate enforcement action maximised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular meetings of Enforcement forum</li> <li>• Notices served and enforced</li> <li>• Compulsory Purchase Order program progress</li> </ul>

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## 9.8 Sub-regional working

9.8.1 Boroughs in the West London sub-region have collectively been active in bringing empty properties back into use, since April 2006. A sub-regional capital programme funded through the regional housing allocation, has been in place with inward investment of £5.7million in the last three years; to bring empty properties back into use. Considerable success has been achieved with sub-regional housing allocation to tackle properties empty 6 months or more with 541 empty properties brought back into use since 2006 in the sub-region.

9.8.2 In LBHF we use West London Housing Partnership funding streams to:

- Pay house renovation grants
- Employ Tracing Agents
- Pay survey, valuation and other professional fees involved in the CPO process
- Employ an Empty property officer in-house

9.8.3 Despite a three-year programme and adequate funding being in place, the number of properties that have been empty for more than 12 months since the start of the sub-regional programme in 2006, remains a concern for boroughs in the West London sub-region. The final year of the project will concentrate remaining resources on these long-term, more difficult cases

9.8.4 Prior to the GLA empty property audit ( begun in January 2010) there were estimated to be about 7,000 properties thought to have been empty for at least six months across the seven boroughs in the West London Housing Partnership (WLHP), namely LB Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and RB Kensington & Chelsea. The 2009-11 West London Empty Homes Project seeks to direct sub-regional resources to tackle and reduce the number of long-term empty problematic properties in the private sector; and at the same time contribute to making neighbourhoods, safer and cleaner; while meeting housing needs. The 2009-11 Empty Homes project seeks to build on the acknowledged success of the 2006-09 programme to deliver a robust programme and bring empty homes back into use.

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## **Glossary**

Hazard - Where a hazard means any risk of harm to the health or safety of an actual or potential occupier of a dwelling or House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) which arises from a deficiency in the dwelling or HMO or in any building or land in the vicinity (whether the deficiency arises as a result of the construction of any building, an absence of maintenance or repair, or otherwise).

Category 1 Hazard - "category 1 hazard" means a hazard of a prescribed description which falls within a prescribed band as a result of achieving, under a prescribed method for calculating the seriousness of hazards of that description, a numerical score of or above a prescribed amount

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## 10 APPENDIX 1 – HOUSING STOCK CONDITION (2004 SURVEY DETAILS)

10.1 Data from the survey suggests that Hammersmith & Fulham has a somewhat different tenure profile to both London and England as a whole. When compared with both national and regional data some of the main differences found were:

- Hammersmith & Fulham has significantly higher proportions of RSL and private rented accommodation
- Hammersmith & Fulham has a higher proportion of converted flats and a much lower proportion of detached and semi-detached houses
- The dwelling stock in Hammersmith & Fulham also appears to be significantly more concentrated in the pre-1919 age group

10.2 The comparisons (other than for tenure) should be treated with caution as both regional and national figures include all tenure groups.

**Table 1 Number of dwellings in each age group**

<i>Age group</i>	<i>Dwellings</i>		<i>Responses</i>		<i>Occupied dwellings</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Pre-1919</i>	47,060	74.3%	658	65.9%	45,588	73.9%
<i>1919-1944</i>	6,397	10.1%	164	16.4%	6,374	10.3%
<i>1945-1964</i>	2,394	3.8%	43	4.3%	2,369	3.8%
<i>1964-1980</i>	2,590	4.1%	39	3.9%	2,590	4.2%
<i>Post-1980</i>	4,927	7.8%	94	9.4%	4,806	7.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63,367</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>61,728</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2004

**Table 2 Approximate number of dwellings in each building type group**

<i>Building type</i>	<i>Dwellings</i>		<i>Responses</i>		<i>Occupied dwellings</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>End terrace</i>	2,651	4.2%	56	5.6%	2,651	4.3%
<i>Mid terrace</i>	16,345	25.8%	241	24.1%	15,847	25.7%
<i>Detached/Semi</i>	2,216	3.5%	32	3.2%	2,148	3.5%
<i>Purpose-built flat</i>	18,481	29.2%	294	29.5%	18,292	29.6%
<i>Converted flat</i>	23,673	37.4%	375	37.6%	22,789	36.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63,367</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>61,728</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2004

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**Table 3 Type of private sector dwellings in Hammersmith & Fulham, London and England**

<i>Building type</i>	<i>Hammersmith &amp; Fulham</i>	<i>London</i>	<i>England</i>
<i>Terraced</i>	30.0%	31.2%	29.7%
<i>Semi-detached/detached</i>	3.5%	22.8%	30.8%
<i>Purpose-built flat</i>	29.2%	37.1%	15.4%
<i>Converted flat</i>	37.4%	9.0%	3.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2004 & EHCS 2001

**Table 4 Age of private sector dwellings in Hammersmith & Fulham, London and England**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Hammersmith &amp; Fulham</i>	<i>London</i>	<i>England</i>
<i>Pre-1919</i>	74.3%	25.6%	20.8%
<i>1919-1944</i>	10.1%	30.0%	17.7%
<i>1945-1964</i>	3.8%	15.7%	21.2%
<i>Post-1964</i>	11.9%	28.7%	40.3%
<b>ALL AGES</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2004 & EHCS 2001

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## **11 APPENDIX 2 – EXTERNAL FUNDING SOURCES**

### **11.1 Warmfront.**

- Funding from central Government, nationwide scheme, managed by Eaga Partnership.
- Eligible works, installation of central heating, replacement boilers if appropriate, loft and cavity wall insulation.
- Owner occupiers or private tenants (excluding Social Housing) eligible if on a disability related benefit, or over 60 and on means tested benefit, or under 60 with child under 16 on means tested benefit.

### **11.2 Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT).**

- This is funding that the utility companies are obliged to spend on energy efficiency improvements on domestic properties. Mainly loft and cavity wall insulation usually for vulnerable households.

### **11.3 West London Private Sector Renewal Scheme**

#### **11.3.1 Improving energy efficiency - Warmzones**

- This is run on behalf of the West London Sub Region by London Warmzones and runs from 2009-2011.
- Funding of £4.5m has been provided by the GLA for the duration of the scheme for heating improvements and loft and cavity wall insulation for vulnerable households for the 7 Boroughs to bring the property up to the Decent Standard. The criteria has been extended to over 70s for 08/09.
- Warmzones will identify eligible households from surveying in selected areas. They can also take on relevant households from any part of the Borough.
- Warmzones will refer households eligible for Warmfront or CERT funding as appropriate thus leveraging additional funding.
- Households not on benefit can be referred to free benefits advisory service.
- Insulation works can be organised on discounted basis for households not eligible for funding.

#### **11.3.2 Bringing empty properties back into use**

- The rationale appears earlier in the text

**LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM  
PUBLIC PROTECTION & SAFETY DIVISION**

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- Funding for 2010-11 has again been agreed by West London for an Empty Property Officer for LBHF, to assist in administering grant aid, but more importantly, to pursue the longer-term empties to Compulsory Purchase if necessary. These properties tend to be the eyesores, causing the most damage to the amenity of the area.
- Grant funding for 2010-11 has been agreed at £     with a maximum of £     per dwelling.
- Specific funding has also been agreed to assist with certain longer term empties up to £50,000. A sum of .....has been agreed for 2010-11 so far.

#### 11.3.3 Better Homes funding

- Better Homes grants are used to encourage landlords into the Direct Lettings scheme, so that the council can refer homeless families into the private sector rather than remain in hostels or other temporary accommodation (while waiting for council housing). It is also used to encourage landlords of HMOs to improve their properties. The grants are up to 50% of the costs to a maximum of £     . They usually make up only a small proportion of the total costs of works. It emphasises the partnership nature of our working with private landlords to provide Decent Homes.