



# **CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **STRATEGIC HOUSING FRAMEWORK**

**2013-14**

**August 2013**

# CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL STRATEGIC HOUSING FRAMEWORK 2013-14

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In 1988, Chiltern District Council became the first local authority in England to transfer its housing stock to a housing association (Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association). However, although the Council ceased to be a landlord from that point, it has continued to have a strategic housing role in addressing the housing needs of all Chiltern residents across all tenures. This role includes:
- Assessing and planning for current and future housing needs
  - Making the best use of existing housing stock
  - Planning and facilitating new housing supply
  - Planning and commissioning housing support services (linking homes and support)
  - Working in partnership with the community and other agencies to secure effective housing and neighbourhood management.
- 1.2 In the past, the Council periodically published a formal Housing Strategy document. However, in 2011, the Council decided replace this Strategy with an annual Strategic Housing Framework Document. This was because:
- (i) Local authorities are no longer required by Government to draft and submit housing strategies for assessment.
  - (ii) Many elements of the Council's previous Housing Strategies are now being taken forward in other strategies and action plans, including the Core Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Community Cohesion Plan. This reflects the diversity of the Council's strategic housing role.
  - (iii) The Council's strategic housing aims and objectives are now incorporated within the Sustainable Community Strategy for Chiltern District.
- 1.3 The Strategic Housing Framework 2011-12 was subsequently adopted by the Council in July 2011 and has been reviewed annually. The Strategic Housing Framework 2013-14 revises and updates this document. In particular, it:
- (i) reports on the key issues and activities that have occurred since the last Framework was published, and
  - (ii) sets down the Council's new Affordable Housing Action Plan.

The Council will continue to review and publish its Strategic Housing Framework annually pending any changes to strategic housing policy at a national and local level.

## **2. STRATEGIC HOUSING OVERVIEW DOCUMENT**

2.1 The purpose of this Strategic Housing Overview document is to:

- (i) highlight the strategic housing aims set down in the “Sustainable Community Strategy for the Chiltern District 2009 – 2026”,
- (ii) summarise the existing housing-related strategies and plans that are relevant to Chiltern district,
- (iii) illustrate how these strategies and plans contribute to the strategic housing aims in the Sustainable Community Strategy,
- (iv) illustrate how these strategies and plans contribute to the aims of national housing policy,
- (v) summarise how the Council is currently undertaking its strategic housing role, and
- (vi) set down the Council’s Affordable Housing Action Plan.

## **3. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR THE CHILTERN DISTRICT 2009-2026**

3.1 The current Sustainable Community Strategy for Chiltern was adopted in 2009. The Strategy was developed by the Chiltern Community Partnership (including the Council) in consultation with local residents and organisations. Its purpose is to provide a framework for all of the Community Partnership members to work towards meeting the strategy’s vision for Chiltern in 2026.

3.2 The Strategy forms part of a wider family of Sustainable Community Strategies in Buckinghamshire. Each of the districts (Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe) has a strategy based around five broad themes that have been agreed countywide following consultation:

- **Thriving Economy**
- **Sustainable Community**
- **Safe Communities**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Cohesive and Strong Communities**

- 3.3 The strategies recognise that the five themes (and the work relating to them) will often link and overlap.
- 3.4 In 2013 the Chiltern and South Bucks Community Partnerships were merged to create a single joint Strategic Partnership. This new joint Chiltern and South Bucks Strategic Partnership is developing a single Sustainable Community Strategy covering the two districts. The existing Chiltern Sustainable Community Strategy will remain in place until the new strategy is agreed and adopted.

In view of the above, this Strategic Housing Framework document will continue to refer to themes and aims set down in the Chiltern Sustainable Community Strategy. The next version of the Framework will be updated to reflect the contents of the forthcoming Chiltern and South Bucks Sustainable Community Strategy.

#### **4. STRATEGIC HOUSING OBJECTIVES FOR CHILTERN DISTRICT**

- 4.1 Chiltern's Sustainable Community Strategy sets down a range of aims relating to the each of the themes set down in Section 3 above. The following aims are taken from the Sustainable Community Strategy and represent the Strategic Housing Objectives for Chiltern District:

- **Thriving Economy**
  - Provide more affordable homes for local people and essential workers
- **Sustainable Environment**
  - Reduce the carbon footprint and use of natural resources
  - Positively manage development pressures in the District and mitigate the impact of development outside the District
- **Safe Communities**
  - Reduce anti-social behaviour in our communities
  - Reduce the harm that drug and alcohol misuse causes within our communities
  - Improve actions to safeguard vulnerable adults and young people
- **Health and Wellbeing**
  - Ensure homes are of an acceptable and decent standard
  - Reduce fuel poverty, particularly for the elderly
  - Help people stay in their homes for longer
  - Support families with budgeting advice
  - Provide “extra care” housing (self contained homes with access to care and services) to enable older and vulnerable people to live independently for longer

- **Close the gap between the most advantaged and disadvantaged children and young people**
- **Ensure there are fewer homeless people in our District**
- **Cohesive and Strong Communities**
  - **Reduce deprivation and health inequality between different geographical areas and groups of people**

**5. CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL – HOUSING STRATEGIES AND PLANS**

The Council has adopted a range of strategies and plans in recent years which are now focussed on delivering the Strategic Housing Objectives set down in Section 4 above.

These are:

- Core Strategy for Chiltern District
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
- Chiltern District Council Homelessness Strategy
- Chiltern District Council Private Sector Housing Strategy
- Chiltern District Council Empty Homes Strategy
- Chiltern District Council Community Cohesion Plan
- Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy
- Buckinghamshire County Fuel Poverty Strategy
- Buckinghamshire Child and Family Poverty Strategy

Some of these documents have been developed solely by the Council while others have been developed in partnership with other agencies on a countywide basis.

The following pages give a summary of each document in turn looking at:

- the purpose of the document,
- how it links with Chiltern’s strategic housing objectives, and
- how it links with national policy set down by Government.

The following strategies have been removed from the Summary:

**(i) Buckinghamshire Local Investment Framework**

This was an over-arching document produced by the Bucks Strategic Partnership in conjunction with the HCA (Homes and Communities Agency) to set down the vision, objectives and priorities for housing in Buckinghamshire. It was originally drafted prior to the election of the coalition Government in 2010. Although there were subsequent discussions with the HCA about the continuing relevance of the document to the Agency’s future funding plans, there has been no subsequent revision and update. Therefore, it has been removed from this summary for the time being.

(ii) **Extra Care in Buckinghamshire  
Buckinghamshire 12 Year Housing Plan for People With Support  
Needs**

Both of the above were joint strategies between Bucks County Council and four District Councils. They summarised housing needs across a range of client groups with support needs (including older persons). These are no longer “live” documents. Instead, Bucks County Council is now utilising new prediction tools and methodology to develop a regular Market Position Statement covering the housing needs of older people and other clients with support needs. It is anticipated that the first statement will be issued towards the end of 2013.

**Appendix C** provides a chart giving an overview of the key strategies and plans that guide the Council’s strategic housing work.

(Please note that the following pages provide a high level summary only and do not provide detail on the individual action plans and service delivery issues relating to each strategy. For more information, you should check the document concerned. **Appendix D** summarises where these documents can be viewed).

## 5.1 CORE STRATEGY FOR CHILTERN DISTRICT

(Adopted 15/11/11)

### **Purpose:**

The Core Strategy document is the overarching key plan in the Chiltern Local Development Framework. It sets out a vision for the District and its main settlements, states the ambitions and principles to guide the future of the area, shows which parts of the District are regarded as the best locations for new homes and other development up to 2026 and sets out policies to protect and enhance the environment of the area. The Core Strategy sets out mechanisms needed to make sure it is delivered and provides a context for future decisions on planning applications.

The Council is currently working on a Delivery Development Plan Documents (DDPD) which will build upon the strategic policies contained within the adopted Core Strategy (including detailed development management policies, site allocations and land use designations). A Pre-Submission Consultation DDPD is due to be produced in early 2014.

### **Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:**

The wide range of the Core Strategy means that it has links to all of the strategic housing objectives in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Examples include:

#### **Thriving Economy - Provide more affordable homes for local people and essential workers**

Policies CS 8 through to CS 11 in the Core Strategy set down planning policy on the provision of new affordable housing, including issues such as the amount of affordable housing required on new developments and the provision in rural areas.

#### **Sustainable Environment - Reduce the carbon footprint and use of natural resources**

There are a range of policies in the Core Strategy that promote sustainability (e.g. encouraging renewable energy schemes)

#### **Sustainable Environment - Positively manage development pressures in the District and mitigate the impact of development outside the District**

The Core Strategy document is the overarching plan that will guide development in Chiltern up to 2026 and includes policies relating to the protection and enhancement of the local environment.

#### **Health and Wellbeing - Provide “extra care” housing (self contained homes with access to care and services) to enable older and vulnerable people to live independently for longer**

Any new “extra care” development will be subject to planning permission in line with the policies set down in the Core Strategy and other parts of the development plan.

**Links to National Policy:**

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the preparation of the Chiltern Local Development Framework (LDF) to set out the policies and guidance for the spatial planning of Chiltern over the next 20 years. The National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012 re-emphasises the importance of local plans in making planning decisions.

**5.2 AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

(Adopted 21/02/12)

**Purpose:**

The Affordable Housing SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) helps to implement the Council's policies on affordable housing in the Core Strategy (see 5.1). It contains additional detail and guidance on how the Council will interpret and apply these policies. It is not part of the Council's Development Plan, but it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

**Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:****Thriving Economy - Provide more affordable homes for local people and essential workers**

The SPD supports the delivery of affordable homes in Chiltern by giving detail and guidance on interpreting Policies CS 8 through to CS 11 in the Core Strategy. These policies set down planning policy on the provision of new affordable housing, including issues such as the amount of affordable housing required on new developments and the provision in rural areas. The SPD sets down guidance on a range of issues including:

- Commuted payments
- Tenure and size mix
- Financial viability
- Legal requirements

**Links to National Policy:**

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the preparation of the Chiltern Local Development Framework (LDF) to set out the policies and guidance for the spatial planning of Chiltern over the next 20 years. The National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012 re-emphasises the importance of local plans in making planning decisions.

**5.3 CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2009-11**  
(Adopted in 2009 and being reviewed in 2013/14 )

**Purpose:**

The strategy sets down the Council's approach to:

- preventing homelessness in Chiltern district and
- securing accommodation and/or support for households who are homeless.

The key activities are set down in an Action Plan in an Appendix to the main document.

**Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:**

**Health and Wellbeing – Ensure there are fewer homeless people in our District**

The Strategy sets down activities to prevent homelessness by helping clients to:

- remain in their homes (e.g. securing access to good quality housing and debt advice) or
- find alternative accommodation (e.g. via the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme)

**Health and Wellbeing - Close the gap between the most advantaged and disadvantaged children and young people**

**Safe Communities - Improve actions to safeguard vulnerable adults and young people**

The Strategy contains measures intended to:

- prevent homelessness among young people and to support those who do become homeless, and
- support vulnerable households who are (or who may become) homeless.

**Safe Communities - Reduce the harm that drug and alcohol misuse causes within our communities**

A study published by Crisis in December 2010 found that nearly 30% of homeless people surveyed had committed a crime to secure money or food or even to secure a place in a police cell for the night. The homelessness prevention measures in the strategy reduce the possibility of this locally. These measures sit alongside specific work being undertaken with the Bucks DAAT (Drug and Alcohol Action Team) to target homelessness prevention and support to substance mis-users.

**Links to National Policy:**

**The Housing Act 1996 (Part 7)** places a range of statutory duties on the Council to deliver homelessness advice and assistance in Chiltern, including the provision of temporary accommodation where necessary

**The Homelessness Act 2002** requires the Council to have a Homelessness Strategy in place.

## **5.4 CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY**

(The main Strategy document was adopted in 2006. The Strategy and accompanying policies have been reviewed regularly since then and the latest review was reported to Cabinet in May 2013.)

### **Purpose:**

The strategy sets down the framework for the Council's private sector renewal role, including policies for:

- Standards in HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation)
- Enforcement action to address health and safety hazards in housing
- Provision of financial assistance (including DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grants) and FHILs (Flexible Home Improvement Loans))

### **Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:**

#### **Health and Wellbeing - Ensure homes are of an acceptable and decent standard**

The strategy contributes to this by giving the Council scope to:

- support people in poor quality housing to access (i) funding for repairs etc. and (ii) support with insulation and heating improvements (to reduce the risk of fuel poverty and excessive deaths in cold weather)
- take enforcement action against landlords and property owners requiring them to improve poor quality housing

#### **Health and Wellbeing - Help people stay in their homes for longer**

DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grants) fund adaptation works (e.g. stairlifts) that will allow an elderly or disabled person to remain in their home rather than have to move elsewhere. Similarly, other grants and loans can help a resident to remain in their home for longer rather than move on because they have fallen into disrepair.

#### **Health and Wellbeing - Close the gap between the most advantaged and disadvantaged children and young people**

#### **Cohesive and Strong Communities - Reduce deprivation and health inequality between different geographical areas and groups of people**

Overall, the strategy contributes to reducing inequalities by giving low income households help and support to improve their properties and protecting the rights of households in rented and shared accommodation by ensuring that landlords fulfill their responsibilities (including repairs).

### **Links to National Policy:**

**The Housing Act 2004** sets down the framework for the Council assessing and tackling local housing conditions and the process for licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation. **The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002** gives the Council wide ranging powers to provide assistance for repairs and adaptations and requires the Council to publish a policy for giving housing assistance.

## **5.5 CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY**

(Adopted in 2004 and updated annually since then)

### **Purpose:**

The strategy provides details on empty property issues at a national and local level and sets down the Council's activities for tackling empty homes in Chiltern and returning properties to use where possible.

### **Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:**

#### **Thriving Economy - Provide more affordable homes for local people and essential workers**

The Council's work on returning empty homes to use includes linking the owners to schemes such as the Council's own Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme. This means that some empty homes will be returned to use and let to people who cannot afford to buy or rent privately.

#### **Sustainable Environment - Positively manage development pressures in the District and mitigate the impact of development outside the District**

Returning an empty property to use provides an alternative to relying on new development and re-sales/re-lets to generate local housing availability.

#### **Safe Communities - Reduce anti-social behaviour in our communities**

Empty homes can become dilapidated over a period of time over of time and can attract anti-social behaviour as well as the possibility of squatters. The Empty Homes Strategy limits this possibility by aiming to return such properties to occupation before they reach this stage.

### **Links to National Policy:**

**The Housing Act 2004** introduced EDMOs (Empty Dwelling Management Orders) to support returning long term empty homes to occupation.

The Government's **New Homes Bonus** (introduced in 2011) is intended to reward local authorities who reduce the number of long term empties in their district.

## **5.6 CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMUNITY COHESION PLAN 2010-2012**

(Adopted in 2010)

### **Purpose:**

The Plan sets down the Council's key actions and objectives for taking forward community development and revitalization for the towns and villages across Chiltern District. It outlines how the Council will work in partnership with communities to improve local services and facilities and build a strong community spirit.

(Note- The new and updated Community Cohesion Plan will be developed jointly by Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils. Until this completed and adopted, the existing Community Cohesion Plan 2010-2012 will remain in place.)

### **Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:**

The Plan supports the development of the community led planning process in Chiltern District enabling the creation of local plans which may influence the Development Delivery Plan in relation to community infrastructure and housing.

The Plan encompasses all of the themes in the Chiltern Sustainable Community Strategy and it references a number of housing-related activities, including actions intended to prevent homelessness within communities such as the Rent Deposit Guarantee scheme.

The Plan seeks to support integration and participation within communities and enable individuals or voluntary organizations to deliver support services that assist in enabling people to remain in the community. The voluntary and community organizations support access to learning, debt and benefit advice, and provide a network of support enabling older and younger people to be a part of the community in which they live.

### **Links to National Policy:**

The Plan is Chiltern's plan for a "Big Society" and supports the delivery of the Government's agenda to empower and support local communities

## **5.7 BUCKS HOME CHOICE ALLOCATION POLICY**

(Adopted in May 2009 - Revised in January 2011 – Further revision in 2013/14)

### **Purpose:**

This policy sets down the criteria for allocating affordable rented housing in Chiltern (i.e. accommodation let at below market rent levels and normally owned by a housing association).

Vacant tenancies are advertised via the Bucks Home Choice scheme and scheme applicants are invited to express an interest. Those applicants who express an interest are then prioritized for the vacancy concerned. This policy sets down the criteria for prioritizing applicants and for determining other issues relating to the scheme (e.g. who is eligible to apply for the scheme, what size property can someone apply for etc.)

Bucks Home Choice is operated on a countywide basis. The Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy is a common policy adopted by Chiltern District Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council.

### **Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:**

#### **Thriving Economy - Provide more affordable homes for local people and essential workers**

While Bucks Home Choice does not provide any more affordable homes, the Allocations Policy does seek to make the existing homes as accessible as possible (via advertising) and prioritises local people (i.e. those people who have a local connection with Chiltern) over other households who may have the same level of housing need.

#### **Cohesive and Strong Communities - Reduce deprivation and health inequality between different geographical areas and groups of people**

The Allocations Policy gives priority to households living in poor conditions and gives them the opportunity to move to better quality accommodation which they would not be able to afford on the open market. The Bucks Home Choice scheme is accessible to everyone via the internet and other methods, which reduces the possibility of deprived households losing out to others.

More generally, Bucks Home Choice operates on the principle of households choosing where they want to live. This means that vacancies will normally go to people who have expressed an interest in the property and want to live in the area concerned, thereby strengthening the local community.

### **Links to National Policy:**

**The Housing Act 1996** requires the Council to publish an Allocations Scheme and to include a statement on giving applicants a choice of housing accommodation or the opportunity to express a preference.

**The Localism Act 2011** gives flexibilities to local authorities in setting their Allocation Schemes.

**5.8 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY 2009-2014**  
(Adopted September 2009)

**Purpose:**

This is a joint strategy between the Buckinghamshire local authorities (including Chiltern District Council), the Primary Care Trust, Fire and Rescue Services, Paradigm Housing, Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, L & Q Beacon Housing Group and the USEA (United Sustainable Energy Agency)

The aim of the strategy is to enable residents in Buckinghamshire to achieve affordable warmth in their home. The strategy seeks to achieve this via an Action Plan delivering good home insulation, access to grants, energy efficiency and benefit checks.

**Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:**

**Sustainable Environment - Reduce the carbon footprint and use of natural resources**

The Strategy aims to increase energy efficiency among householders in Chiltern and across Bucks. This will reduce the household carbon emissions and use of natural resources.

**Health and Wellbeing - Reduce fuel poverty, particularly for the elderly**

The Strategy supports households to access a range of support and cost effective measures to ensure that they can achieve affordable warmth in their homes.

**Cohesive and Strong Communities - Reduce deprivation and health inequality between different geographical areas and groups of people**

By helping households to heat their homes more efficiently and reduce their fuel costs, the strategy will support deprived households to increase their disposable income. For a health point of view, the Strategy illustrates the health impacts of poor heating and fuel poverty and aims to reduce these impacts by helping households to access advice and support.

**Links to National Policy:**

**The Home Energy and Conservation Act 1995** requires the Council to promote energy efficient homes

**5.9 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY STRATEGY**  
(Reviewed April 2013)

**Purpose:**

This Strategy focuses on preventing, reducing and mitigating the impact of poverty on children and families. This includes focusing on employment (including maximizing career opportunities), reducing health and housing inequalities and mitigating the effect of the welfare reforms.

**Links to Strategic Housing Objectives in Chiltern:**

**Thriving Economy - Provide more affordable homes for local people and essential workers**

The Strategy promotes good information sharing and collaboration between agencies to help meet the housing needs of clients. More broadly, it promotes the development of housing to meet local needs..

**Health and Wellbeing - Close the gap between the most advantaged and disadvantaged children and young people**

**Safe Communities - Improve actions to safeguard vulnerable adults and young people**

The Strategy promotes a range of activities to improve education and employment opportunities for deprived households and to improve life skills.

**Cohesive and Strong Communities - Reduce deprivation and health inequality between different geographical areas and groups of people**

The Strategy promotes improving energy efficiency and providing information and assistance to families in poverty to become more energy efficient.

**Links to National Policy:**

The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires Bucks County Council to make arrangements for partners to work cooperatively to reduce and mitigate child poverty.

## 6. REVIEW OF STRATEGIC HOUSING ISSUES

6.1 The updated Affordable Housing Action Plan (see Section 7 and Appendix A) provides an update and overview on the key housing issues affecting Chiltern District Council. However, this section provides a more detailed review of three key issues:

- Affordable Housing Contributions (via Planning Process)
- Affordable Rents in Chiltern
- Welfare Reform

### Affordable Housing Contributions (via Planning Process) - Update

6.2 Policy CS8 in the Core Strategy for Chiltern District (adopted in November 2011) includes a requirement that new developments of 1 to 4 dwellings (net) should make a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing elsewhere in the district. The Affordable Housing SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) sets down the process for calculating this contribution and includes an overview of how these contributions will potentially be utilised by the Council.

6.3 As at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013, the overview of the financial contributions was as follows:

Source	Sum	Number of Developments
<b>1. Housing Sites granted planning permissions since Policy CS8 was adopted</b>	<b>£780,296</b>	<b>34 developments</b>
Of which:		
(i) Payment received	£261,694	14 developments
(ii) Payment pending	£518,575	20 developments
<b>2. Schemes allowed on appeal</b>	<b>£470,000</b>	<b>1 development (This pre-dates Policy CS 8)</b>
<b>3. Schemes agreed in principle</b>	<b>£384,187</b>	<b>18 developments</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,634,456</b>	

- 6.4 In March 2013, the Cabinet approved the following proposals for expenditure to be financed from the above contributions:

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Cost</b>
<b>Paradigm Housing Group</b> - Acquisition of 15 properties in Chiltern District to be let as Affordable Housing	<b>£375,000 (total)</b>
<b>Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Group</b> - Proposal to convert empty office accommodation into flats for letting as affordable housing (subject to planning permission)	<b>£500,000 (subject to sufficient financial contributions being received )</b>
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>£875,000</b>

- 6.5 The Council will continue to bring forward schemes to utilise the financial contributions as and when opportunities arise and sufficient funds are available.

### **Affordable Rents in Chiltern**

- 6.6 In 2011, the Government introduced Affordable Rents. These allowed Registered Providers to charge up to 80% of local market rent levels (including service charges) on new build properties and a proportion of the re-lets of existing dwellings. This compared to the previous social rent levels that were typically 50% to 60% of local market rent levels. Affordable Rents were introduced at the same time as Government launched its Affordable Homes Programme for 2011-2015 to support new building of affordable homes. The Government's capital funding to support new building was reduced from previous years. Registered Providers who entered into contract with Government under the programme were required to charge Affordable Rent levels in order to increase their rental income and raise funds (via loans etc.) to support the cost of new build.
- 6.7 Registered Providers are not permitted to increase the rent levels of existing tenancies from social rents to Affordable Rents. It can only apply to new build properties or re-lets (i.e. when a property becomes vacant it can be re-let at an Affordable Rent level)
- 6.8 The main local Registered Provider, Paradigm Housing, is one of the HCA's partners in the Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015. Since December 2011, Paradigm has been converting a proportion of its re-lets from Social Rent to Affordable Rent levels. Under the terms of Paradigm's contract with the HCA, it was required to convert up to 252 existing re-let properties in Chiltern to Affordable Rents.

- 6.9 In addition to the Paradigm re-lets, there have also been two new build affordable housing schemes that have been let at Affordable Rent levels. These have been at Maples Lawn in Amersham (Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association – 26 rented homes) and at Turners Field in Little Chalfont (Catalyst Housing – 53 rented homes).
- 6.10 The Council has been monitoring the impact of Affordable Rents in the district. This has included a monthly review of the properties that have been advertised and let via the Bucks Home Choice scheme. The key points to note from this monitoring are:
- Since December 2011, approximately 300 properties have been let at Affordable Rent levels in Chiltern.
  - Affordable Rent levels have varied based on the property type and location. Broadly, rent levels have been up to £140.00 per week for a one bedroom property, up to £180.00 per week for a 2 bedroom property and up to £210.00 per week for a 3 bedroom property. However, these are only the top rent levels and many tenancies were below this.
  - The monitoring of expressions of interest made via Bucks Home Choice indicates that there has been no obvious reduction in demand for properties at Affordable Rent levels compared to similar properties at social rent levels. However, some clients have advised officers that they have been deterred from applying for a property because of the rent levels.
  - Discussions with Paradigm Housing give no indications that Affordable Rent levels have led to increased levels of rent arrears. In common with many Registered Providers, Paradigm has set its Affordable Rent levels within the Local Housing Allowance limits for Housing Benefit. This means that any claimants on full Housing Benefit will have their full rent covered.
- 6.11 Overall in Chiltern, there is no clear evidence yet that the introduction of Affordable Rents has had any significant impact on lettings or rent arrears. However, anecdotally, there are indications that some clients feel that the rents are too high for them and they cannot afford to express interest in available tenancies.
- 6.12 To date, there has been little wider national research into the impact of Affordable Rents. In June 2013, the independent network “Future of London” published a study of the Affordable Rent Model in London. While the study focussed on London and how the model is supporting the funding of new homes, it also gave some interesting feedback on the wider impacts of Affordable Rents. These included:
- There was little difference between the profile of tenants (e.g. employment, income etc.) who took up social rent tenancies and those who took up Affordable Rent tenancies.
  - Affordable Rent levels can vary from location to location based on the local rental market etc.

- Households with an income in the range of £20,000 to £40,000 could in many cases be successfully housed in Affordable Rent properties with little or no assistance from housing benefit (based on a benchmark that a household should spend no more than 35% of its income on housing costs)
  - For households on benefits, the introduction of the Benefit Cap in 2013 and the forthcoming introduction of Universal Credit may increase the risk of arrears in Affordable Rented property. In particular, the Benefits Cap will affect households in larger family homes.
- 6.13 As at July 2013, Paradigm had met its target with the HCA for converting re-lets to Affordable Rent levels. This means that Paradigm re-lets have reverted back to Social Rent levels in the short term. However, new build schemes delivered within the HCAs Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015 will continue to be let at Affordable Rent levels. The Government Spending Review announcements in June 2013 also indicated that future funding for new affordable housing will again be linked to charging Affordable Rent levels. Therefore, it is likely that we will see more social housing re-lets in Chiltern converted to Affordable Rents in the future.
- 6.14 The Council will continue to monitor the impact of Affordable Rent levels in the district.
- 6.15 In the Strategic Housing Framework 2012/13, the Council adopted a statement setting down its position regarding Core Strategy Policy CS 10 (Affordable Housing) and Affordable Rents. As the situation around new build and Affordable Rents remains unchanged from last year, this statement remains in place and can be found in **Appendix B**.

### **Welfare Reform Update**

- 6.16 Two key welfare reforms have been implemented since the last update of the Strategic Housing Framework. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, Housing Benefit claimants who were tenants of Registered Providers have had their benefit reduced if they have a spare room. Approximately 300 Paradigm Housing tenants were affected by this and the Council has been working with Paradigm to manage the impact of these changes. Following on from this, the Benefit Cap was introduced in Chiltern from 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013. Claimants whose total benefits exceeded the cap limit of £500.00 per week (or £350.00 per week for single persons) had their housing benefit reduced. Approximately 20 households in Chiltern were affected by this. Again, the Council has been working with these affected tenants to manage the impact of the changes.
- 6.17 The next major Welfare Reform will be the introduction of Universal Credit.

## **7. AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN**

- 7.1 The Council's Housing and Planning Overview Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2011 agreed to establish a Member Working Group to consider the Council's Affordable Housing Action Plan and assess how the Council should address national policy developments in relation to housing. An Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group was subsequently established and undertook a series of meetings from September 2011 onwards.
- 7.2 The Task and Finish Group focused on:
- the local impact of national housing policy developments (including welfare reform) and
  - the corporate risk arising from the shortage of affordable housing provision in the district (including the lack of new affordable housing)
- 7.3 The Group produced a new Affordable Housing Action Plan for the Council based on its findings. The Plan will be the Council's key tool in managing and monitoring its corporate approach to addressing the risks associated with the lack of affordable housing locally.
- 7.4 The Council's Affordable Housing Action Plan has been included in the Strategic Housing Framework Document since 2012. It was agreed that the annual review of the Framework would update the Action Plan (including a progress report) and assess if any actions needed to be added, removed or amended. The revised and updated Plan is in **Appendix A**.

**APPENDIX A CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL - AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN**

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	UPDATE (AS AT July 2013)
<b>1. Maximise Delivery of Affordable Housing through Core Strategy</b>	Draft and adopt Supplementary Planning Document for Affordable Housing	None	Feb 2012	Planning Policy Manager	<b>COMPLETED</b> - Adopted February 2012
<b>2. Maximise Delivery of New Affordable Housing Development on site.</b>	(i) Monitor progress on existing and potential future developments to identify obstacles to delivery and work with partners as necessary to remove these.	None	On-going	Principal Housing Officer	In 2012/13, a total of 102 new affordable homes were constructed and occupied in Chiltern. Delivery is monitored quarterly via Local Performance Indicators.
	(ii) Give necessary advice and support to Land Owners, Developers and Registered Providers to progress through the Planning process and deliver developments where possible	Tbc	On-going	Director of Services  Head of Sustainable Development	- Affordable Housing SPD (see 1) provides advice on delivery.  - Housing and Planning to provide ongoing advice and support.

	(iii) Identify and assess opportunities for private sector investment and involvement to secure additional affordable housing	Tbc (May involve CDC providing financial incentives and/or land to attract private investment)	On-going	Director of Services	- CDC was proposing to hold Housing Summits to discuss potential opportunities with stakeholders. These summits have been postponed in 2013 due to the Housing Service review. Officers will be looking at the best method of identifying opportunities and engaging stakeholders.
<b>3. Make the best use of the Council's resources to support the delivery of Affordable Housing</b>	(i) Agree policy and criteria for utilising commuted sums	None	Feb 2012	Head of Sustainable Development  Principal Housing Officer	<b>COMPLETED</b> - Affordable Housing SPD (see 1) includes: - Commuted sum criteria for small sites (1 - 4 dwellings) - Overview on policy for spending commuted sums (Policy and criteria to be monitored annually within CDC Strategic Housing Framework) - In December 2012, Cabinet agreed the approach for handling financial contributions in-lieu of affordable housing on larger sites of 5 or more dwellings (when on-site provision is not possible or viable)

	(ii) Review CDC land assets and identify opportunities for making land available for affordable housing schemes	Disposal of sites for affordable housing may involve disposal at reduced or nil market value	Ongoing	Director of Services	- Review of potential sites in CDC ownership to be considered by Corporate Asset Management
	(iii) Review CDC Capital Programme and assess opportunities to make Capital funding available to support Affordable Housing schemes and initiatives, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- site assembly,</li> <li>- build costs and</li> <li>- pump priming schemes to draw in funding from partners and other sources</li> </ul>	This would require expenditure for CDC Capital Programme (potentially offset by income generated from commuted sums)	Ongoing	Director of Services Head of Finance Principal Housing Officer	- Adoption of Core Strategy (Nov 2011) is generating capital income from commuted sums on small sites (1 – 4 dwellings). -Further details on the income to date and how it has been allocated can be found elsewhere in this document in Section 6.
<b>4. Make the best use of Affordable Housing dwellings</b>	(i) Review the Bucks Home Choice Allocations policy (taking account of changes in Localism Act) and adopt revised policy	Tbc	Apr 2014	Principal Housing Officer	Consultation on the proposed revisions to the policy took place from April to June 2013. The countywide BHC Management Board (chaired by PHO) is finalising the revised policy with view to implementation by April 2014.

	(ii) Assess potential impact in Chiltern of the introduction of Affordable Rents	Tbc	July 2013	Principal Housing Officer Paradigm	See the report in Section 6 of this document.
	(iii) Agree a Bucks-wide Strategic Tenancy Policy for the operation of Flexible Tenancies by Registered Providers across the county	None	Jan 2013	Principal Housing Officer	<b>COMPLETED</b> The Bucks Strategic Tenancy Policy was adopted in January 2013 across all four District Councils.
	(iv) Work with Registered Provider landlords to develop initiatives to - reduce under-occupation, - support tenants to move-on, and - tackle tenancy fraud and illegal sub-letting .	Tbc	Ongoing	Principal Housing Officer	- CDC continues to liaise with Paradigm on initiatives to support under-occupiers to move-on (including those affected by the changes to Housing Benefit) - CDC was unsuccessful in a bid to the Government's Social Housing Fraud funding initiative in February 2013.

<p><b>5. Make the best use of Private Sector Housing dwellings</b></p>	<p>(i) Review the options available to CDC to support local people into home ownership (including the potential introduction of Council mortgages to support first time buyers) and recommend options for adoption</p>	<p>Possible implications if CDC wishes to fund low cost home ownership initiatives (including mortgages)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Principal Housing Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The affordable housing development completed at Turners Field in Little Chalfont included 35 properties sold on a shared ownership (part buy-part rent basis).</li> <li>- The Government’s former Homebuy scheme has now been re-branded and re-launched as Help to Buy with a range of new products including equity loans to help homebuyers. CDC will be monitoring demand and take up and will explore using commuted sums to support these products in Chiltern (using the SBDC model)</li> <li>- CDC continues to operate the “Preventing Repossessions Fund” to support home owners with mortgage difficulties</li> </ul>
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	<p>(ii) Identify long term empty properties (i.e. empty for 6 months and more) and take a pro-active approach to returning them to use including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- working with owners to provide advice and support on renovations works, letting etc.,</li> <li>- reviewing (in liaison with precept authorities) the current 50% discount on Council Tax for empty homes, and</li> <li>- taking enforcement action where appropriate to return a vacant property back into use.</li> </ul>	<p>Possible implications if CDC chooses to increase resources to support work on empty properties</p>	<p>April 2014 (Review CDC Empty Homes Action Plan)</p>	<p>Principal Housing Officer</p>	<p><b>REVIEW COMPLETED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- From 1st April 2013, Council Tax discounts were revised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) 100% discount for unoccupied/unfurnished dwelling reduced from 6 months to 3 months and</li> <li>(ii) no discount for unoccupied/unfurnished dwelling requiring or undergoing major works (previously 100% discount for 12 months)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Cabinet in May 2013 approved the Council's Empty Homes Action Plan</li> <li>- In July 2013, the Council launched a partnership with CapacityGrid to review the empty homes on Council Tax database, identify properties that had been returned to use and to make initial contact with owners of long term empties.</li> </ul>
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	<p>(iii) Support local people to secure accommodation in private rented sector including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the existing CDC Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme,</li> <li>- Private Sector Leasing model, and</li> <li>- other options to deliver sub-market rents.</li> </ul>	Some initiatives may require CDC financial support to deliver	Ongoing	Principal Housing Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme delivered 45 tenancy placements in 2012/13. CDC is working with landlords to manage impact of welfare reforms on their tenants.</li> <li>- The CDC has worked with Paradigm to look at the Private Sector Leasing model. Welfare benefit changes may make model problematic to deliver. Discussions are continuing.</li> </ul>
	(iv) Review the provision of HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) in Chiltern and establish and enforce suitable standards for persons looking to provide and manage HMO accommodation	Potential cost to undertake research to identify existing HMO provision	-Mar 2014	Principal Housing Officer	<p>The revised Private Sector Housing Strategy (see below) amended the financial assistance policy to provide grants as an incentive to HMO landlords to install fire precautions.</p> <p>Full review not yet undertaken</p> <p>Total of 19 HMO inspections carried out in 2012/13 and 14 enforcement actions carried out (including informal action) to improve conditions.</p>

					CDC is leading work across Bucks to engage with support and care agencies to manage the risk around clients moving into HMOs (sharing information, securing good standards etc.)
	(v) Support landlords, homeowners and householders to maintain their accommodation and undertake repairs and improvements as required	Costs associated with the delivery of grants and loans	Ongoing	Principal Housing Officer  Senior Private Sector Housing Officer	Full review not yet undertaken  Total of 19 HMO inspections carried out in 2012/13 and 14 enforcement actions carried out (including informal action) to improve conditions. CDC Private Sector Housing Strategy was reviewed and reported to Cabinet in May 2013. This included several amendments to the Housing Assistance Policy to provide targeted support to address health and safety hazards in the home, improve energy efficiency and encourage improvements in the private rented sector.

	<p>(vi) Secure that a range of options are available for older people to meet their housing needs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- access to grants and loans for improvements and adaptations,</li> <li>- support to households looking to downsize,</li> <li>- provision of alternative housing options, including supported accommodation, and</li> <li>- “transition” accommodation to support older people moving in/out of hospital etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Costs associated with delivery of grants/loans, incentives and support and new development</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Principal Housing Officer</p> <p>Senior Private Sector Housing Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvements to DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) process have increased the number of grants p/a that CDC can deliver. In 2012/13 CDC completed 80 DFGs.</li> <li>- The Home Improvement Agency ceased operating in Bucks in Dec 2012. The Council has maintained delivery of the DFG programme and is working with the Bucks CC and the other District Councils to look at the future for HIA-type services.</li> <li>- CDC is a member of the BCC-led Prevention and Well-being Board that is looking at supported housing issues including accommodation for older people</li> </ul>
	<p>(vii) Identify and introduce a model for the Council to encourage and support households to let rooms to lodgers</p>	<p>Potential costs of setting up and delivering model</p>	<p>Mar 2013</p>	<p>Principal Housing Officer</p>	<p>No further action has yet been taken on this.</p>

<b>6. Maximise the Prevention of Homelessness</b>	(i) Review the delivery of CDC Housing Options and Advice Service and implement revised structure and processes	Tbc	Dec 2013	Principal Housing Officer	<p>-The new Homelessness and Housing Advice IT module was introduced in Oct 2012 and has improved and streamlined the options and advice process.</p> <p>The Housing Shared Service review across Chiltern and South Bucks DCs commenced in April 2013. This includes the Housing Options and Advice Service</p> <p>A total of 144 cases of homelessness prevention were recorded in 2012/13</p>
	(ii) Review the CDC Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	Tbc	Dec 2013	Principal Housing Officer	<p>The Government published “Making Every Contact Count – A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness) in August 2012.</p> <p>A report went to the CDC Cabinet in February 2013 on the key issues in the Homelessness Strategy review. The review is ongoing.</p>

	<p>(iii) Review the potential impact of Welfare Benefit Reforms on increasing homelessness in Chiltern and agree actions to help mitigate this impact</p>	Tbc	Ongoing	<p>Head of Customer Services</p> <p>Principal Housing Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approximately 300 Paradigm tenants with a “spare bedroom” affected by the Housing Benefit changes introduced in April 2013. CDC has worked with Paradigm to identify the affected tenants and work with them to manage the shortfall (including the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to support these tenants in the short term)...</li> <li>- Approximately 20 Residents were affected by the Benefits Cap introduced in July 2013. CDC is working with them to find long term solution to shortfall.</li> <li>- CDC has contacted landlords who let properties via Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme. We will be working with landlords to address their concerns and to help them and their tenants manage the impact of the changes.</li> </ul>
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	(iv) Ensure that households have access to timely and comprehensive debt and budget advice	Cost of supporting delivery of debt/budget advice by CDC and partners	Ongoing	Principal Housing Officer  Head of Customer Services	<p><b>COMPLETED</b></p> <p>CDC Cabinet in February 2013 agreed funding of £25,000 per annum up to the end of 2015/16 to support the delivery of the CAB Specialist Debt and Money Advice Service.</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Fund and Preventing Repossessions Fund both available via CDC to support households in tackling rent and mortgage debt.</p>
	(v) Build capacity in the voluntary sector to deliver homelessness prevention services	Tbc (Potential costs to pump prime new initiatives)	Ongoing	Principal Housing Officer  Principal Leisure and Community Officer	No further action has yet been taken on this.

<b>7. Implement the new “Affordable Housing in Rural Areas” policy (Core Strategy Policy CS 9) clearly and effectively</b>	Provide appropriate advice, information and training to Members, Officer, partner agencies and Parish Councils on the implementation of Policy CS9	None	Ongoing	Head of Sustainable Development	No further action has yet been taken on this. Plans are being put in place to hold a meeting with local Parish and Town Councils to discuss housing issues, including new development opportunities.
<b>8. Communicate effectively with local people on affordable housing issues</b>	Draft and agree Communications Strategy for keeping local people fully informed on affordable housing issues, housing options etc. in Chiltern	Tbc	Ongoing	Principal Housing Officer  Communications and PR Officer	No further action yet taken on this.

## APPENDIX B -

### Affordable Housing for Rent in New Developments – Statement of Chiltern District Council Requirements

Policy CS 10 (Affordable Housing Type) in the Core Strategy for Chiltern District states

“The Council’s Strategy in relation to affordable housing is to seek a mix of a minimum of 70% social rented and a maximum of 30% shared ownership (or other intermediate housing option). This strategy will be reviewed from time to time within the Council’s Strategic Housing Framework which will take into account national guidance and legislation and local circumstances. The appropriate mix in any particular development will be considered in the context of viability and local circumstances.

Note:

*i. The review of the amount of social rented and intermediate affordable housing to be provided in new development will take into account changes in the definition of affordable housing set out in national planning policy. “*

**As stated in Policy CS 10, the Council’s preference is for affordable housing for rent to be let at Social Rent levels.** However, following the introduction of the Government’s Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015, the Council recognises that:

- (i) The definition of Affordable Housing in the Government’s Planning Policy Statement 3 was revised in June 2011 to include Affordable Rent, and this has been carried forward into the National Planning Policy Framework which came into force on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and supersedes PPS3.
- (ii) The Government expects that rented affordable housing delivered in accordance with Section 106 Agreements should:
  - be delivered with no grant subsidy and.
  - should be let at Affordable Rent levels.
- (iii) The Government will only support grant subsidy proposals for Social Rented housing in very limited circumstances. However, the Government recognises that a local authority may wish to support the provision of Social Rented housing by applying its own resources (i.e. free land and/or financial subsidy).

The Council also recognises that many providers of affordable homes are subject to contractual arrangements with the Government which control their delivery of new delivery in accordance with the requirements highlighted in (i) and (ii) above.

**As stated earlier, the Council's preference is for affordable housing for rent to be let at social rent levels.** However, in view of the issues highlighted above, the Council will accept the delivery of affordable housing let at Affordable Rent levels in the following circumstances:

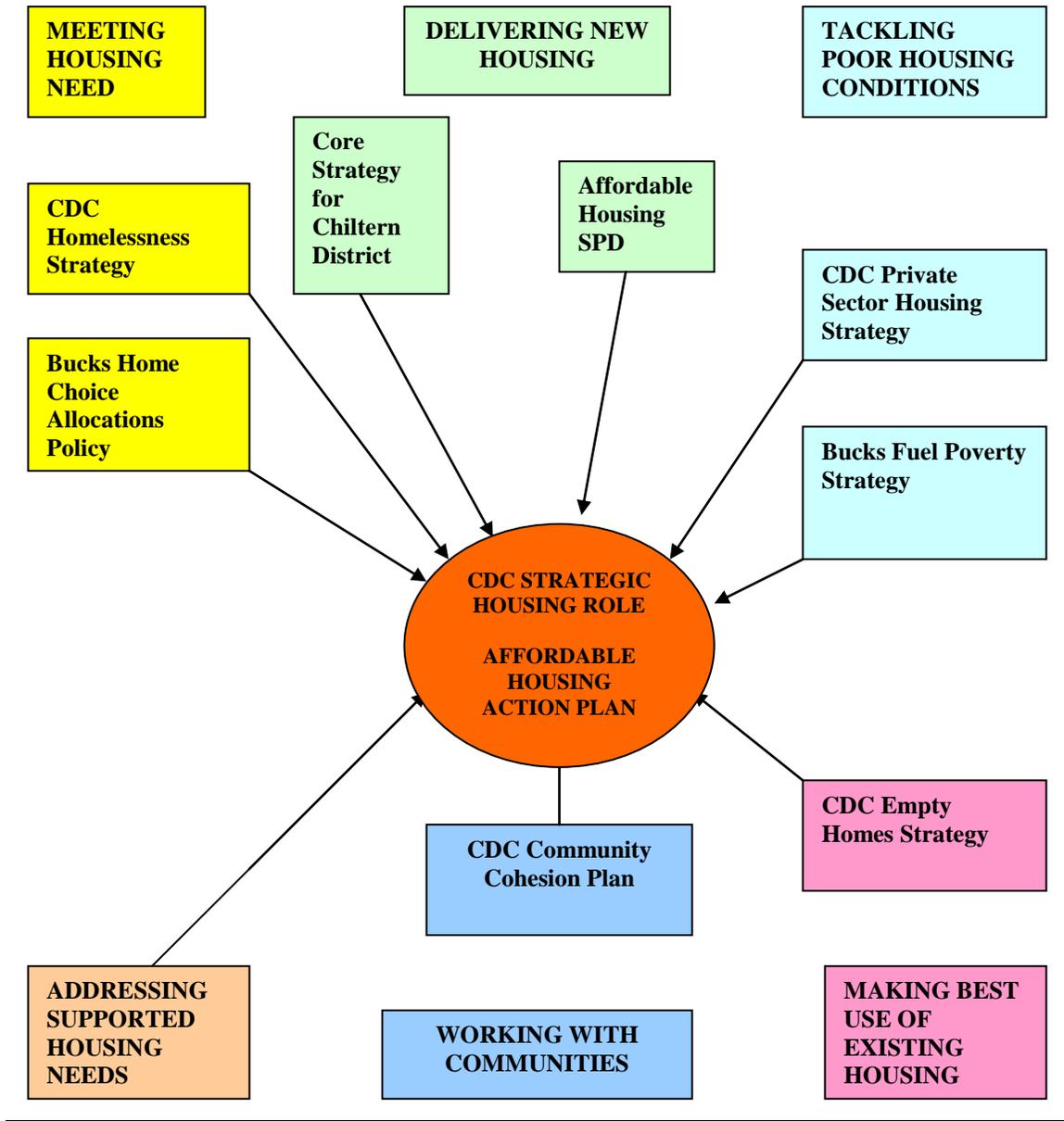
1. Where the affordable housing is to be delivered on site in accordance with a Section 106 agreement then the Council will accept rented accommodation to be delivered at Affordable Rent levels unless the accommodation is being delivered with the support of the Council through the provision of land and/or subsidy, in which case the Council will expect that rented accommodation will be delivered at Social Rent levels.
2. On other affordable housing schemes, the Council will accept rented accommodation to be delivered at Affordable Rent levels unless the accommodation is being delivered with the support of the Council through the provision of land and/or subsidy, in which case the Council will expect that rented accommodation will be delivered at Social Rent levels.

The Council will review these requirements on an annual basis and may choose to amend its requirements on review to take account of local circumstances and nation policy. These annual reviews will be undertaken as part of the annual review of the Council's Strategic Housing Framework Document.

**March 2012**

**APPENDIX C**

**KEY STRATEGIES AND PLANS**



## **APPENDIX D**

### **SUMMARY OF KEY DOCUMENTS**

#### **5.1 Sustainable Community Strategy for Chiltern**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/chilternpartnership>

#### **5.2 Core Strategy for Chiltern**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/corestrategy>

#### **5.3 Chiltern Development Delivery Plan Document**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/article/2803/Delivery-Development-Plan-Document-DDPD>

#### **5.4 Chiltern District Council Homelessness Strategy**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/Housingstrategies>

#### **5.5 Chiltern District Council Private Sector Housing Strategy**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/Housingstrategies>

#### **5.6 Chiltern District Council Empty Homes Strategy**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/Housingstrategies>

#### **5.7 Chiltern District Community Cohesion Plan**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/communitycohesionplan>

#### **5.8 Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy**

[www.buckshomechoice.gov.uk](http://www.buckshomechoice.gov.uk)

#### **5.9 Buckinghamshire County Fuel Poverty Strategy 2009-2014**

[www.usea.org.uk](http://www.usea.org.uk)

#### **5.10 Chiltern HECA (Home Energy Conservation Act) Report**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/HECA>

#### **5.11 Buckinghamshire Tenancy Strategy**

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/housingstrategies>

#### **5.12 Buckinghamshire Child and Family Poverty Strategy**

<http://www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/children-and-young-peoples-partnership/>

