

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Councillor Clements  
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**Summary: One of the actions arising from the Audit Commission Report was to 'Develop a new Private Sector Housing Strategy'.**

This brief report describes the Action Plan attached to the strategy which will be monitored by Members of the Strategic Housing Panel.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Audit Commission recommended that a private sector housing strategy was developed.

## **2 Process**

- 2.1 The Private Sector Housing Strategy was written during 2009 and sent out for consultation in September 2009. Consultation closed in November 2009.
- 2.2 As Members have already seen and commented on the draft I do not propose to go through the strategy again at this stage. However, if Members agree the targets in this report I will append them to the strategy and present the amended document to the next meeting of the Panel.
- 2.3 During the recent visit from the Audit Commission a comment was made that the targets within the action plan were inadequate.

## **3 Target Setting**

- 3.1 In view of the Audit Commission comment the targets have been discussed by officers and have been made '**SMARTER**'
- 3.2 The table below shows the **ORIGINAL** targets.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?</b>
Develop a sound understanding of local housing markets and conditions and use this market intelligence to develop effective responses and target service planning.	Information from the Strategic Housing Market Assessments, Housing Needs Surveys and Stock Condition Surveys will be collated and used to inform the service plan. This information will inform the Private Sector Strategy from 2011 onwards.
Improve overall property and management standards in particular in the private rented sector.	Inform landlords of legislation at the landlord's forum October 2009 and action against those with unfit properties.  We will publish an enforcement 'toolkit' by end March 2010
We need to reduce the number of empty homes, and maximise the potential use of this resource to meet our strategic housing priorities.	Empty Property Strategy to be produced by end March 2010
We need to improve the overall energy efficiency of private sector homes by providing affordable warmth.	Adopt a Copeland specific fuel poverty strategy by end March 2010
We need to support vulnerable households to maintain their independence through advice and support services.	Work with Supporting People to ensure the new Home Improvement Agency is in place by April 2010
Continue to assist residents in bringing their properties up to a decent standard	We will approve 75 financial assistance applications in 2009/10 and 90 during 2010/11
Continue to reduce the average number of weeks between referral and approval of Disabled Facilities Grants.	We will reduce the average number of weeks taken to approve a DFG to 17 by end March 2010 and to 14 by end March 2011

## 4.0 Conclusion

The revised targets can be seen below

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?</b>
<p>Develop a sound understanding of local housing markets and conditions and use this market intelligence to develop effective responses. Our service planning will then be based on up to date information.</p>	<p>A Housing Needs Survey will be completed by August 2010. A Private Sector Stock Condition Survey will be undertaken during 2011. The interim draft Strategic Housing Market Assessments are complete and will be revised once the needs survey is complete. By the end of 2010 we will have a monitoring system in place for house prices within the borough which will be compared to the County and North West averages, this will be reported to the Strategic Housing Panel quarterly. We will deliver a report to the Strategic Housing Panel on 'Understanding Housing Markets' after researching best practice by August 2010. All the above will be used to inform the Private Sector Strategy from 2011 onwards.</p>
<p>Improve overall property and management standards in particular in the private rented sector.</p>	<p>Inform landlords of new legislation via newsletters and the landlord's forum.</p> <p>We will take action against those with unfit properties and publish an enforcement 'toolkit' by the end March 2010</p>
<p>We need to reduce the number of empty homes, and maximise the potential use of this resource to meet our strategic housing priorities.</p>	<p>Empty Property Strategy to be produced by end September 2010</p>
<p>We need to improve the overall energy efficiency of private sector homes by providing affordable warmth.</p>	<p>Adopt a Copeland specific fuel poverty strategy by end July 2010</p>

We need to support vulnerable households to maintain their independence through advice and support services.	Work with the Cumbria County Supporting People Team to ensure the new Home Improvement Agency Contract is fulfilled.
Continue to assist residents in bringing their properties up to a decent standard	Subject to funding we will approve 75 financial assistance applications in 2009/10 and 90 during 2010/11
Continue to reduce the average number of weeks between referral and approval of Disabled Facilities Grants.	We will reduce the average number of weeks taken to approve a DFG to 17 by end March 2010 and to 15 by end March 2011

4.2 The revised action plan gives us targets to produce a fuel poverty strategy; empty homes strategy and enforcement toolkit within the next few months. All of these will be presented to the Strategic Housing Panel prior to Executive.