



Houses in Multiple Occupation Strategy

2005 - 2008



November 2006
1st Annual update

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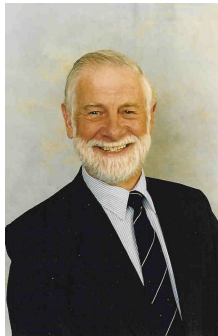
Foreword

Welcome to the Mid Beds Houses in Multiple Occupation Strategy for 2005 – 2008. Its aim is through regulation, support and co-operation to improve the quality of shared accommodation in the private rented sector.

Access to good quality private rented housing is a vital ingredient in improving the quality of life for those people of Mid Beds who cannot afford to buy on the open market or need a source of good quality rented accommodation to satisfy a temporary need.

Well managed and maintained HMOs can help absorb some of the high demand for affordable housing, be a source of good quality temporary accommodation, thus helping us remove the need to place homeless households in bed & breakfast accommodation, and can contribute towards the creation of inclusive and sustainable communities.

The Council is committed to improving private rented sector housing in Mid Beds and demonstrates this in the Strategy.



Councillor Max McMurdo

Environmental Services Portfolio Holder

Executive summary

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Strategy 2005-08 forms part of the wider Private Sector Housing Strategy and aims to raise the standard and quality of shared accommodation in the private rented sector in Mid Beds.

Good partnership working with other Divisions of the Council and with our external partners as well as co-operation with private landlords and tenants are vital to ensure the success of the Strategy.

The Government supports local authority action to improve the quality of private rented housing and has provided us with a new legislative tool – Housing Act 2004 which introduces the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, the licensing of high risk HMOs, the power to take over the management of properties, and other provisions.

A house in multiple occupation is a home where two or more unrelated individuals share certain amenities. The risks associated with such properties are higher due to a larger number of occupants, the presence of more floors, (in some cases), and the need to share facilities.

In 2006/07 the number of high risk HMOs in Mid Beds is 15, the number of low risk shared accommodation units is thought to be higher.

To achieve the overall aim of the Strategy we have identified six strategic objectives, to:

- ***meet the legislative obligations for HMO licensing under the Housing Act 2004;***
- ***develop our knowledge on the scale of the private HMO market in Mid Beds;***
- ***eliminate poor property and poor management standards in all HMOs;***
- ***promote excellent standards in HMOs and provide information and advice to landlords and tenants to maintain the supply of good quality shared accommodation;***
- ***encourage co-operation between landlord and tenant;***
- ***support the retention of a well-managed, good quality private HMO market and where appropriate encourage its expansion.***

These objectives will be achieved by engaging in a positive dialogue with private landlords and tenants, and using a set of policy tools:

- ***inspections***
- ***licensing scheme***
- ***Landlords' Accreditation Scheme***
- ***information and advice***
- ***promotion***
- ***Private Landlords' Forum***
- ***grants***
- ***enforcement.***

Further policy tools, such as the provision of loans, Rent Deposit Scheme, and other more innovative ways of working are being explored in the overarching Private Sector Housing Strategy 2005-2008.

The Strategy contains an action plan that sets out specific and measurable targets for the achievement of each of the Strategy objectives, states what the risks of not meeting the targets are and who is responsible for taking appropriate action.

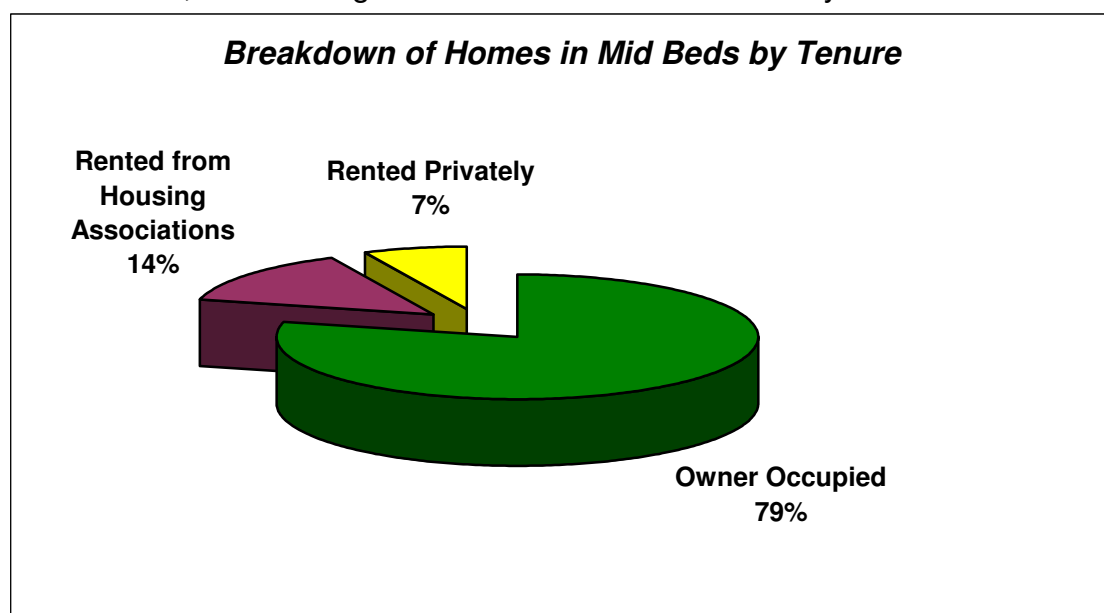
The lead officer for the delivery of the Strategy is Gillian Goddard, our housing Environmental Health Officer. You can contact Gill on 08452 304040, or by e-mail Gillian.Goddard@midbeds.gov.uk

Introduction

Geography of Mid Beds

Mid Bedfordshire is an attractive district in the East of England that stretches across over 500 square kilometres and is home to 129,400¹ people living in a number of small towns and villages set within attractive countryside. It is a successful and prosperous area where people want to live and work. It includes the towns of Biggleswade, Flitwick, Sandy, and Ampthill, four smaller towns, and 47 rural parishes. The population is spread, with roughly 54% living in the nine towns and the remaining 46% in rural areas. The District encompasses the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other Areas of Great Landscape Value.

There are 53,595 dwellings in the area². The breakdown by tenure is as follows:



According to the Housing Stock Condition Survey 2003, although the levels of unfitness in the District are low, vulnerable households are most likely to live in poor housing conditions.

The Housing Market

The District is near and affected by the London-Stansted-Cambridge and Milton Keynes-South Midlands growth areas. The average house price in Mid Beds is £224,465 compared with the national average of £211,453 and the regional average of £251,008.³

The Private Rented Sector In Mid Beds

¹ ONS, Mid 2005 estimate

² Property valuation list, 29.03.06

³ Land Registry data, Jul-Sept 2006

The private rented market in Mid Bedfordshire is buoyant with average monthly rents of one bedroom properties reaching £400 - £425, two bedroom homes - £550 and three bedroom homes between £650 - £700. The demand for single rooms in units of shared accommodation is high, with the average weekly rent of £80 per room.

As a consequence of these factors, considerable pressure is placed on the availability of affordable and accessible housing for local people. The Housing Requirements Study 2003 shows that 260 affordable homes are needed per year to meet the housing needs that cannot be met by the open market. This figure is reinforced by the data from the housing waiting list (as at October 2006) that currently contains just 2,850 applicants, 1,687 of whom have expressed a need for one bedroom accommodation.

HMOs play an important role in the private rented market as they absorb some of this growing demand and are frequently the only viable short-term option to those who cannot afford to buy on the open market or need to move home for changing employment or relationship circumstances.

The Condition Of Private Rented Accommodation In Mid Beds

The Housing Stock Condition Survey carried out in 2003 revealed that 7% of all private rented properties in the District are unfit with the most common causes of unfitness being disrepair and dampness.

	No. of Dwellings	No. of Unfit Dwellings	Rate of Unfitness
Private rental	2964	206	7%
Owner occupied	40632	1235	3%

It has been estimated that the cost for bringing the unfit dwellings and those in substantial disrepair in the private rented sector up to a reasonable standard is £5.5 million.

What Is An HMO?

According to the new Housing Act 2004 a building is an HMO if it meets one of the following tests:

- ⇒ The Standard Test – any building in which two or more households share basic amenities.
- ⇒ The Self-contained Flat Test – any flat in which two or more households share basic amenities.
- ⇒ The Converted Building Test – any converted building with one or more units that are not self-contained.
- ⇒ Certain Converted Blocks of Flats – any converted building comprising self-

contained flats that does not meet the 1991 Building Regulations Standards and more than one third of the flats are occupied on short tenancies.

We acknowledge that while private HMOs in Mid Beds form a small part of the housing market, they are important to those who, either through necessity or choice live in this sector.

Risks Associated With HMOs

Houses in multiple occupation have certain increased risks associated with them:

1. **Fire Risk** – these properties, because of the nature of their occupation, pose a significantly higher fire risk than properties occupied by single households. This is due to the greater number of occupants, and in particular, where individual occupants do not know the whereabouts or actions of the other occupants.
The fire risk also increases when there are more floors in a building, as the distance any occupant must travel to escape is greater.
2. **Overcrowding** – all HMOs have to be fit for use by the number of occupants without compromising the health and safety of the tenants. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System considers the availability of and need for personal space, and the psychological effects, lack of space may have on the residents.
3. **Shared Facilities** – there is a need for the provision of adequate and sufficient amenities for the number of inhabitants without causing general inconvenience or compromising the health and safety of the residents.

Key Aim And Objectives Of The HMO Strategy

The Strategy is designed to meet our legislative obligations under the Housing Act 2004, whilst ensuring that HMOs in the private rented sector continue to play a valuable role in providing good quality temporary accommodation in Mid Beds, particularly for those with a more transient lifestyle.

The key drivers of the Strategy are:

⇒ **Regulation** (i.e. licensing and other legislative tools and powers to improve the quality of shared accommodation). We will aim to work with landlords all the way through. We realise that regulation is only a means to an end and not an end in itself.

And

⇒ **Promotion and Support** of good quality shared accommodation in the private rented sector in the District.

The key aim of the Strategy is:

To raise the standard and quality of shared accommodation in the private rented sector in Mid Beds.

To achieve this we have identified six strategic objectives, to:

1. Meet the legislative obligations for HMO licensing under the Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act 2004 introduced mandatory national licensing of all houses in multiple occupation of three storeys or more occupied by five or more persons. To achieve this the licensing system will need to be set up, and fees determined with our Herts and Beds partners.

2. Develop our knowledge on the scale of the private HMO market in Mid Beds

It is essential to develop further and maintain a good knowledge of the HMO market and track and review our progress and efficiency of action taken. The housing market does not stand still and we need to be proactive in identifying HMOs in the District so that decent standards can be maintained in all of these properties whether low or high risk.

3. Eliminate poor property and poor management standards in all HMOs

Some of the worst living conditions occur in poorly managed properties and can put the health and safety of tenants at risk, especially where there is a lack of effective fire safety measures or the property is in disrepair. Running an HMO safely and effectively relies on good management.

4. Promote excellent standards in HMOs and provide information and advice to landlords and tenants to maintain the supply of good quality shared accommodation

With the introduction of the Housing Act 2004 there is a need to provide accurate and timely information to HMO landlords and tenants to ensure compliance with the law, offer advice and assistance when necessary to help maintain the homes at a decent standard.

5. Encourage co-operation between landlord and tenant

It is an effective working relationship between landlords and tenants that helps maintain the property in a reasonable state of repair; helps prevent anti-social behaviour and leads to effective management of the property.

6. Support the retention of a well managed, good quality private HMO

market and where appropriate encourage its expansion

In the current housing market with a shortfall of affordable homes and the rising number of applicants on the housing waiting list it is important to maintain the existing HMO stock and encourage its expansion where appropriate to meet some of the increasing demand.

Strategic Framework

National Context

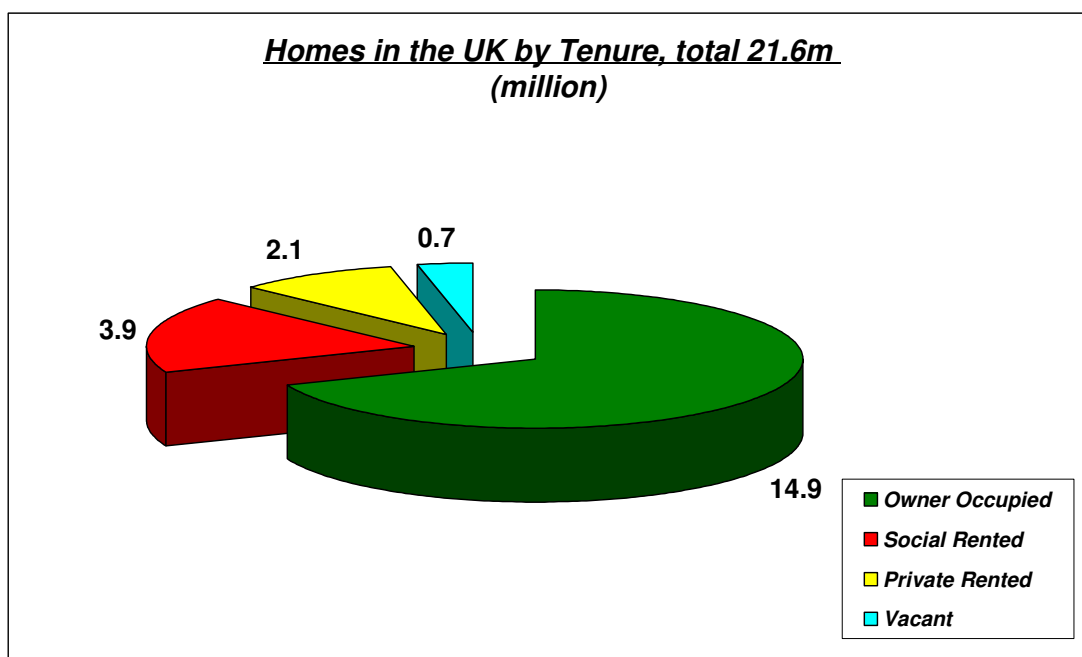
The private rented sector in England comprises 10% of housing nationally (2.1 million dwellings) and, despite the popularity of “buy to let” mortgages in recent years has been growing slowly.

The Government views the private rented sector as a useful resource and envisages that it will have a bigger role in meeting housing demand in the future. It wants to see a strong, well-managed private rented sector offering flexibility and choice to meet the diverse needs of people across the country.

The Housing Act 2004 introduces the licensing of high risk HMOs providing a home to some of the most vulnerable people, whilst maintaining an adequate supply of rented accommodation. The Government encourages local authorities to passport through the licensing scheme all registered HMOs and are looking for ways in which reputable landlords can be recognised through the fee structure.

In Mid Beds all registered high risk HMOs will be passported through to the Licensing Scheme without any disruption and cost to the landlord.

The National Picture



The English House Condition Survey, 2004, DCLG

The Decent Homes Standard

The Government as part of its Public Spending Review in 2002 extended the Decent Homes Standard that originally applied to social housing to cover private sector homes occupied by vulnerable people with the aim that 70% of vulnerable households should live in decent homes by 2010. A decent home is a home that is free of category 1 hazards, is structurally sound, has reasonably modern facilities and is warm.

Based on the estimates provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government around 37% of vulnerable households in Mid Beds live in non-decent homes.

The Mid Beds Private Sector Housing Strategy 2005-2008 explores the cost and resource implications of achieving this Government target.

Regional Context

The Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England 2005-2010 stresses the importance of everyone in the region living in a decent home that meets their needs, at a price they can afford and in sustainable locations. It encourages local authorities to carry out surveys to provide them with adequate intelligence on which decisions with regard to private sector renewal can be based, and use all the tools and powers available for home improvement.

The Government's regional office recognises the importance of the private rented sector in meeting a wide range of needs, such as temporary accommodation and accommodation for people in the intermediate tenure. It encourages local authorities to work closely with private sector landlords and in their housing strategies to address benefit administration, rent deposit schemes, and promotion of accreditation schemes.

In Mid Beds the Landlord Accreditation Scheme was formulated with our partners across Herts & Beds and has been operating successfully since December 2004 with seven properties being accredited.

Legislative Context

The legislation that applies specifically to Houses in Multiple Occupation is vast and complicated. We will, therefore, only list the most frequently used and relevant legislative tools:

Housing Act 1985(as amended).

The majority of the powers under the Housing Act 1985 in relation to HMOs have been repealed by the provisions of the Housing Act 2004 with the exception of Part 10, Sections 362 & 364 to do with overcrowding.

Housing Act 2004

This major new piece of legislation received royal assent in November 2004. It contains a substantial body of new housing law covering a range of different areas. The Act was introduced in stages through 2005/06. The following provisions have come into force:

1. **The Housing Health & Safety Rating System** has replaced the fitness standard and new enforcement powers including a duty to address certain hazards.
2. New provisions to deal with **mandatory HMO licensing**. This applies to high risk HMOs – those of three storeys with five or more occupants. Landlords of a high risk HMO need to obtain a licence from the local authority and failure to have one is a criminal offence subject to a maximum fine of £20,000. The authority issuing a licence has to be satisfied that the landlord is a fit and proper person with conditions attached to the licence. Each local authority has a duty to inspect all licensed properties to ensure any serious hazards are identified and dealt with within five years of the property being licensed.
3. **Selective licensing** of privately rented accommodation in order to help address either low-demand housing or anti-social behaviour.
4. Provisions for local authorities to make **Management Orders** (Interim and Final) in respect of certain premises in order to enforce the above, but also to deal with empty dwellings.
5. Various other provisions including **tenancy deposit schemes** to ensure good practice in deposit handling and to assist with dispute resolution.

The Communities Plan – a Decent Home for All

“Sustainable Communities: Homes for All” - is the Government’s Communities Plan published in January 2005. Revitalising the private rented sector is on the government’s agenda and local authorities are encouraged to tackle rogue landlords so that tenants can live in good quality and safe accommodation. In order to promote a strong and well-managed private rented sector the Government:

“ Will implement provisions in the Housing Act 2004 for licensing of ‘Houses in Multiple Occupation’ – such as bedsits and student accommodation, and will give local authorities the power to license homes in some other circumstances – for example in areas of low housing demand. Under licensing arrangements, landlords will need to meet minimum standards of management and demonstrate that they pass a “fit and proper person test”.

“We will examine the options for making greater use of the private rented sector, including changes to the homelessness legislation.”

Corporate Context

Council’s Vision, Aims And Objectives

The Council’s vision is to improve the quality of life in Mid Beds and the key

objectives are:

- To support our community
- To care for the environment
- To deliver quality services

The HMO Strategy is directly linked to the first two of the Council's objectives.

The Community Plan

The Mid Beds Community Plan 2003 – 2011 is based on the Council's aims and objectives and sets out how, by partnership working, the quality of life can be improved for those who live and work in Mid Beds. The action plan that accompanies the Community Plan lists nine priorities for the Council:

1. Promoting community safety
2. Providing housing and building communities
3. Improving the environment
4. Improving health
5. Strengthening the economy
6. Developing learning opportunities and skills
7. Creating better transport
8. Including Everyone

The HMO Strategy directly contributes towards the achievement of priorities 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Mid Beds Housing Strategy 2004 – 2007

The Mid Beds Housing Strategy is strongly committed to increasing the provision of affordable homes, reducing incidence of homelessness and tackling substandard housing across all private sector tenures.

The Private Sector Housing Strategy 2005 – 2008

The Strategy adopted in November 2005 contains two objectives to do with improving the private rented sector:

To promote a healthy private rented sector by addressing housing health and safety hazards, and encouraging home maintenance (objective 2),

and

To ensure improved conditions in all HMOs (whether high or low risk) in the District and promote excellent management and tenancy standards (objective 4)

The Mid Beds HMO Strategy 2005-08 is designed to promote a healthy

Background to the HMO Strategy

HMOs in Mid Beds

The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey commissioned by Mid Beds in 2003 identified a possible number of 3,828 HMOs in the private rented sector in the District.

In August 2006 a district street survey of the bigger town centres and new housing estates was carried out to identify potential HMOs. In addition, all Housing Associations operating in Mid Beds have been written to with the purpose of updating our HMO database. All the data obtained is being analysed and compared to the Council's Electoral Register to establish a more exact number of HMOs in Mid Beds and monitor the level of activity in this part of the private rented housing market.

The current register of HMOs contains 15 units of shared accommodation considered high risk - nine properties of high tenancy with three storeys, and further six that are of high tenancy but with two storeys. These provide accommodation for 112 people.

The remaining HMOs known to the Council are either medium or low risk with either one or two storeys split into two or more self-contained flats with few inhabitants.

High Risk Three Storey HMOs In Mid Beds:

Location	No. of Rooms	Property Type	Licence Status
Amphill	10	Converted house – Self-contained flats	Exempt - less than 5 occupants
Amphill	7	Converted warehouse – bedsits	29 July 2005
Biggleswade	6	Converted house – bedsits	24 June 2005
Biggleswade	7	Converted house – Self-contained flats	Exempt – less than 5 occupants
Biggleswade	7	Converted house – Self-contained flats	21 June 2005
Silsoe	9	Converted house – Self-contained flats	20 June 2005
Arlesey	7	Shared house	11 July 2005
Marston Moretaine	7	Shared house	27 June 2005
Woburn	7	Converted house - bedsits	23 June 2005

Woburn	7	Converted house - bedsits	23 June 2005
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Two Storey High Tenancy HMOs In Mid Beds:

<i>Location</i>	<i>No. of Rooms</i>	<i>Property Type</i>
Cranfield	8	Converted Flat - bedsits
Flitwick	8	Converted house - bedsits
Meppershall	7	Shared House
Meppershall	7	Shared House
Meppershall	8	Shared House
Shefford	8	Shared House

At present these two storey high tenancy units are not required to be licensed. However, during the HMO Strategy consultation event in August 2005 private landlords requested that these properties are included in the Licensing Scheme. Mid Beds intends to put in a request to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to seek clarification whether or not we are eligible to apply for additional licensing following the publication of government guidance in November 2006.

In addition, local educational institutions run approved student homes that the Council intends to investigate to establish their exact location, the standards set by the institution, the numbers of occupants and the frequency of inspections. The lead EHO has been liaising with Cranfield University and has encouraged local landlords to participate in the Accreditation Scheme.

Standards To Be Met

By The Landlord:

Due to the specific nature of shared accommodation and the risks associated with it there are certain minimal standards that all HMOs have to meet. HMO managers have to ensure that the HMO meets the requirements stated below:

1. Absence of category 1 hazards on the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
2. Suitability for the number of occupants.
3. Adequate means of escape from fire and other fire precautions.
4. Adequate artificial and natural lighting (including emergency lighting).
5. Adequate ventilation, heating and water supply.
6. Adequate and sufficient refuse storage and disposal as well as drainage system.
7. Electrical circuits compliant with the current regulations of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) with regard to safety and workmanship.
8. Adequate arrangements for the preparation, cooking and storage of food.
9. Adequate thermal comfort.
10. Adequate security arrangements.

11. The property must be managed by a person who is “fit and proper” to undertake such duties.

The Council has a duty to undertake action with regard to category 1 hazards and a power to take action for category 2 hazards.

By The Tenant:

To ensure that the manager can effectively carry out the duties under Housing Act 2004 every resident shall –

1. Take reasonable care not to hinder or frustrate the performance of those duties.
2. Allow the manager, at all reasonable times, having received reasonable notice, to enter any room or other place occupied by that person to carry out the duties.
3. Provide the manager, on request, with all the information required for the purpose of the duties.
4. Comply with any reasonable arrangements made by the manager in respect of means of escape from fire, fire precautions or for the storage and disposal of refuse and litter, and
5. take reasonable care to avoid causing damage to anything that the manager is obliged to keep in repair.

Both landlords and tenants have legal rights and obligations. If the landlord or tenant is unsure of any of their rights they should seek legal advice. Please note that although this Council can provide general advice and assistance it cannot provide legal advice to landlords and tenants, but can direct such enquiries towards any other relevant organisation that will.

Progress since Strategy Adoption (November 2005)

- ✓ A **district street survey** to identify potential HMOs carried out in August 2006 to enable a more accurate picture to be formed of the scale of the HMO activity in Mid Beds. The findings are being cross-referenced with the Council’s Electoral Register to establish whether or not the identified properties are HMOs.
- ✓ Implementation of **mandatory HMO licensing** provisions under the Housing Act 2004 and passporting through all registered HMOs to the new scheme at nil cost and minimum disruption to the Landlord.
- ✓ Production and publication of a comprehensive **Licensing Pack** and achievement of **consistency of approach** to high risk HMO licensing across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.
- ✓ **Raising awareness** of the new legislative requirements by placing informative articles in the local press and the Council’s website, sending mail-shots to local landlords and tenants, and organising an annual

Private Landlords' Forum in December 2006.

- ✓ Production of the **Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, 2006** that incorporates the requirements of the Housing Act 2004. The Policy was adopted by the Executive in March 2006.
- ✓ Leading on the consultation on and production of **informative booklets** for private landlords across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire on HMO Fire Safety and Amenity Standards.
- ✓ An **HMO Action Team** comprised of colleagues from the Environmental and Planning Services, Customer Services, Corporate and Democratic Services, and Community Services Directorates has been formed with inter service protocols agreed at the 1st meeting held in November 2006. This helps to ensure a corporate approach to improving the standards in private rented accommodation in the District.
- ✓ A **Private Tenants' Survey** has been designed and sent out to local HMO tenants to capture their views on and establish the standard of private rented accommodation from a tenant's perspective.
- ✓ Work underway to set up a **Private Tenants' Forum** to allow the tenants a chance to have a say, inform them of their rights and responsibilities, and give them an opportunity to shape the Council's policies.
- ✓ An **HMO Information Pack** has been produced and distributed to all Town and Parish Councils, thus providing them with information on what an HMO is, defining the District Council's role in regulating the HMO market and setting the scene in Mid Beds. This information enables Town and Parish Councillors to identify any potential HMOs in their local area and encourages them to inform the Council of their location.
- ✓ **Accreditation** of seven private properties as part of the Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme designed to raise standards of overall private sector accommodation and to recognise good practice and responsible letting by landlords.

Delivering The Strategy

Consultation

This Strategy was developed following extensive consultation with our main stakeholders – internal partner divisions of the Council, and our external partners – private landlords, tenants, neighbouring local authorities, housing associations, local estate agents, town and parish councils, and others. For the full list of consultees please see Appendix E.

The consultation process was well publicised and enjoyed a high rate of participation. It consisted of a written consultation exercise and a workshop to

discuss the draft strategy consultation document.

All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the Strategy objectives and supported the Council's approach and the use of relevant policy tools to achieve the Strategy objectives.

The comments received were many and varied, but can be grouped under the following 3 categories:

- **Licensing of HMOs** – private landlords wished to see the licensing of HMOs extended to two-storey buildings, that is, those of lower risk that can be subjected to additional licensing depending on the standard of management and living conditions.
- **Provision of information** – the consultation highlighted the need to publicise the standards the landlords have to achieve and the need to inform both landlords and tenants of legislation in a more accessible manner.
- **Pro-active approach** - the need to seek out “rogue” landlords was highlighted as well as identification of all HMOs in the District so that good accommodation and management standards are maintained in all.

The Action Plan that follows at Appendix A contains our response to the stakeholders' recommendations and splits each of the Strategy objectives into clear milestones and states who is responsible for the achievement of each of the objectives.

Strategy Delivery

The purpose of this document is to set out the Council's approach to HMOs in Mid Beds.

The Council takes a six stage approach in the implementation of the strategy:



1) HMO Identification – in order to promote and maintain good standards of management and professional tenancy we need to be aware of the extent of the local HMO market and identify all HMOs in the District. Potential HMO premises are identified through Council records, housing surveys, complaints, using sources of local information, such as advertisements in the local newspapers and carrying out street surveys.

2) Compliance with licensing conditions is at the centre of HMO licensing. We endeavour to ensure that all HMOs subject to licensing attain the property and tenancy management standards set by the Council for obtaining the licence. Where HMO owners evade licensing we will resort to enforcement action.

All HMOs are inspected based on their risk score to ensure the appropriate standards of management and tenancy are met and maintained.

3) Co-ordination and co-operation – co-ordinated action to improve and regulate the private HMO market are vital for the delivery of the Strategy. We have started to strengthen both our internal and external partnerships and are starting to see an improvement in joint inter-service working through the recently formed corporate HMO Action Team, and are maintaining regular communication channels with external agencies as well as landlords and tenants.

4) Advice & support – in relation to the new legislation this is provided in a well planned, resourced and continuous way. We appreciate that both landlords

and tenants need to be informed of the effects of the Housing Act 2004 as well as of their rights and responsibilities. To this end, we hold the annual Private Landlord's Forum and are offering a Tenant's Forum.

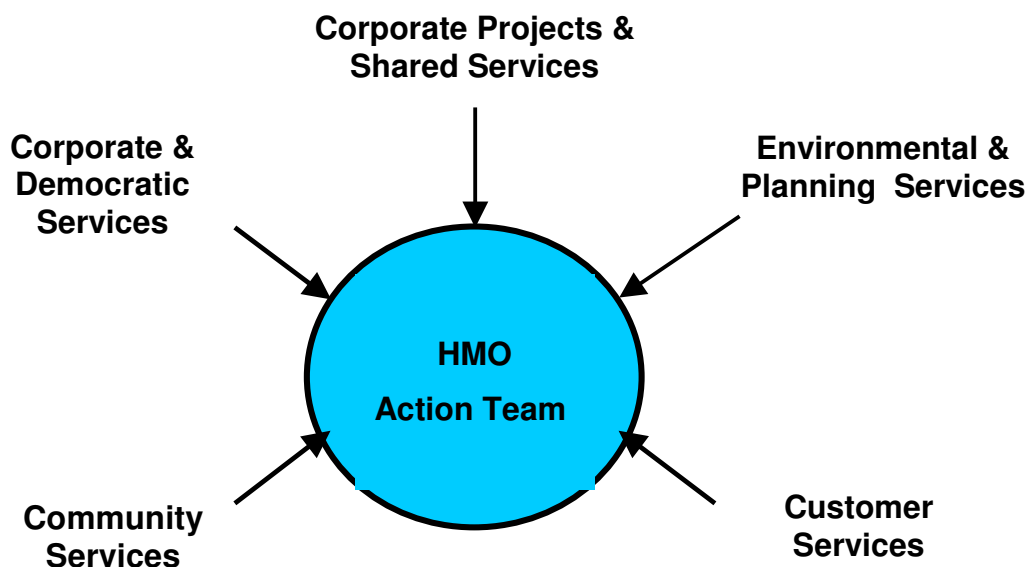
The training of landlords and tenants in relation to new legislative requirements occurs through informative articles on the Council's website and booklets setting out what specific requirements are.

5) Information & publicity – there is a need to raise awareness in the private rented sector about the Strategy, new legislation and the Council's role in improving private rented housing. We aim to ensure that all information provided is accurate and reaches all HMO landlords and tenants known to us in the area. We recognise the need for more publicity on our approach to HMOs and to encourage tenants and landlords to contact us.

6) Monitoring – we monitor and review the quality of the service provided in relation to HMOs and aim to ensure a timely delivery of the targets identified in the Strategy Action Plan (at appendix A). The Action Plan is reviewed quarterly to ensure a successful delivery of the strategy. The Strategy itself is reviewed annually.

Partnership Working

A Corporate Approach - Our Internal Partners



Effective liaison and information exchange between the Council's Directorates are essential for the Strategy delivery. To this end a joint HMO Action Group has been convened to meet as and when required to deal with matters of overall policy and co-ordinate any necessary action.

Environmental & Planning Services

Planning permission is required for any change of use or conversion of a dwelling. Permission is also required to alter, extend or demolish listed buildings as well as for any new developments that may be proposed to produce multiple occupancy houses.

- Planning Officers provide us with this information regarding adequate evidence of such permission as well as any further advice on the properties that require planning permission. The Planners may also be required to undertake joint inspections with Environmental Health Officers (EHOs).
- Any building works including works of alteration or improvement require compliance with building regulations. Further advice can be obtained from our Building Control colleagues.
- Central responsibility for monitoring HMOs and producing this Strategy lies in the Home Environment Team. EHOs and Technical Officers (TOs) carry out inspections to assess the condition of homes, the effect of poorly maintained and managed properties to the immediate environment and other work related to residential properties. They also process Home Improvement Grants that private landlords and tenants may be entitled to.

Corporate & Democratic Services

Colleagues in this Directorate play an important role in the provision of legal information and advice to our EHOs relating to licensing, harassment, illegal evictions and the legal implications of enforcement action.

Customer Services

- The involvement of Customer Accounts officers from this Directorate is mainly in relation to processing housing benefit claims. Our colleagues aim to process Housing Benefits from tenants promptly and efficiently.
- This Directorate also includes the Council's Contact Centre and Points of Presence. These channels of communication are the initial point of contact for customers concerned with HMO matters.

Community Services

The Community Safety Officer participates in HMO Strategy promotion events to inform both landlords and tenants of the relevant legislation and the effects of anti-social behaviour to the wider community and has an input into the work of the HMO Action Team.

Our External Partners

Herts & Beds Housing Specialists' Group

This group involves 13 Local Authorities across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire and has been set up to ensure a joint approach to all aspects of housing in the private rented sector and in particular licensing of HMOs, and to achieve consistency of approach across the region. The Group meets twice quarterly to seek joint solutions to various housing related issues and to share best practice.

Beds & Luton Fire Service

We work in partnership with officers from the local Fire Authority to ensure compliance with and provide landlords with the information on the fire safety standards and regulations in HMOs. Government guidance regarding the enforcement of fire safety measures in HMOs has recently been issued (the Regulatory Reform Order 2005) and the Council maintains close working links with the relevant officer at the Fire Authority to make sure the necessary fire precautions are in place in all HMOs in the District.

Town & Parish Councils

Close communication with town and parish councils is invaluable in the identification of HMOs in their locality, dissemination of information on the need to comply with legislative requirements and advice to landlords and tenants on the various aspects of tenancy and management.

We have provided each town and parish council with an HMO information pack that can be communicated to their local residents.

Local Estate Agents

Local Estate Agents provide us with up-to-date information on the trends in the private rented market, help us identify new HMOs, and liaise closely with the local authority regarding the standards of tenancy and management in the properties that they look after.

Private Businesses

The Herts & Beds Housing Specialists Group have established a close working relationship with private businesses that help to promote the joint local authority Landlords' Accreditation Scheme across the region, promotes excellent standards of management and tenancy in all HMOs, and offers incentives to both tenants and landlords to become accredited. This is a win-win situation to all.

Current Policy Tools

The Council's approach to dealing with HMOs has been one of positive intervention and encouragement, involving an extensive dialogue with the private landlords and tenants exploring all opportunities of support - offering them information on legislative requirements, advice on the standards to achieve and maintain, and only resorting to enforcement action where absolutely necessary.

All the current policy tools that are key to achieving the Strategy aim and objectives are listed below:

- **Inspections**

Each licensed HMO is inspected at least once every five years. Regular inspections will be carried out if complaints are received and relevant actions will be considered based on the outcome of the inspection. When the EHO visits a property to give advice, the property is also risk assessed. The Council maintains a database of properties in multiple occupancy within the area, and this information forms the basis of the Council's inspection programme. For the risk assessment matrix please see Appendix D.

- **HMO Licensing Scheme**

The Council maintains a register of existing HMOs and those that have been newly identified. The information held on the register contains details on the type of the property, the name of the owner, information on the management standards and any complaint history. The properties currently on the register have been transferred over to the new licensing scheme without further cost to the landlord.

The landlords of all properties subject to licensing are required to provide the Council with evidence that they are "fit and proper" to manage the HMO.

- **Landlords' and Tenants' Accreditation Scheme**

This scheme was set up and is run jointly with the Herts & Beds Housing Specialists Group. Its main aim is to accredit those landlords who by meeting certain specified standards provide good quality homes for private sector tenants. Private tenants are accredited for meeting their obligations and excellent tenancy standards.

- **Information and advice**

We believe that adequate information and advice on property and management standards communicated to HMO landlords and tenants in a clear and timely manner contribute towards ensuring adequate conditions in HMOs and a safe and comfortable tenancy without resorting to formal action.

If the property needs improving the first step is to get advice from the Home Environment Team on the works that may be required. This advice is free, and may save the landlord time and money on unnecessary works.

- **Promotional activities**

Any new government initiatives and legislative changes are publicised in the local press and on our website. Please visit www.midbeds.gov.uk for a Landlord's Guide to the Housing Act 2004 that contains the summary of key points. Other informative booklets have also been posted on the website (e.g. Home Maintenance Guide).

- **Private Landlords' Forum**

The Forum has been set up to facilitate a dialogue between the Council and local private sector landlords with the aim of informing them of the latest legislation and the way it impacts on their business, as well as seeking their views and ideas on our plans and strategies in the private housing sector.

- **Grants**

In some cases grant aid of up to £15,000 may be available for private landlords to bring their property up to a decent standard and to provide a means of escape in case of fire. Landlords may also be eligible for grant assistance via the government's Energy Efficiency Commitment programme for insulation measures. Please note that certain conditions apply. The eligibility criteria and conditions for financial assistance are set out at Appendix B.

- **Enforcement**

The landlord has to comply with the recommendations of the EHO in relation to carrying out all necessary repairs identified following an inspection to eliminate category 1 hazards on the Housing Health and Safety Hazard Rating System (HHSRS). If the landlord refuses to follow the recommendations, enforcement action will be taken. Our enforcement procedure dealing specifically with HMOs is set out at Appendix C.

The Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy to reflect the provisions of the Housing Act 2004 was adopted by the Executive in January 2006 and can be downloaded from the Council's website.

Policy Tools We Are Considering

As part of the delivery of the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2005-08 we are exploring more innovative ways to improve private sector housing:

- **Loans**

Under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 local authorities can offer loans assistance – either on their own or in a combination with grants. Loan options may include interest bearing repayment loans, interest only loans or zero interest/ equity release loans. We are looking into setting up a loans assistance package with other local authorities in the Sub-region.

- **Rent Deposit Scheme**

This scheme helps people in housing need access good quality rented accommodation. Many prospective tenants do not have the necessary funds to provide a landlord with a deposit. The local authority would provide a deposit guaranteeing this sum to the landlord.

Mid Beds District Council is in the process of setting up a Rent Deposit Scheme with Aragon Housing Association with a provisional launch date of March 2007.

Resources

Staff

The Council employs a full-time Environmental Health Officer who spends a significant part of their time on HMO work in the District and is actively involved in the Herts & Beds Housing Specialists Group to promote a joint approach to improving the private rented sector in the area. The overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Strategy lies with the Home Environment Manager.

The main activities that the EHO undertakes in relation to HMOs are:

1. Implementing the legislative requirements of the Housing Act 2004.
2. Delivering all the necessary training needs to the Council officers in relation to the HHSRS.
3. Identification and inspections of HMOs in the District.
4. Enforcement of appropriate standards in HMOs when necessary.
5. Production and publication of informative material on the Council's website.
6. Organising the annual Private Landlords' Forum.
7. Promotion of the Landlord's and Tenant's accreditation Scheme.

Two additional Technical Officers are involved in the delivery of specific actions in the Action Plan.

Budget

The Landlord's grant is contained within the Home Improvement Grant budget and is available to top up any works required to enable the property to meet the HMO standards:

HIGs Budget	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
	£254,000*	£382,000*	£255,000

* The Grant consists of the Government's Decent Homes allocation

The full conditions and eligibility criteria for financial assistance are set out at Appendix B.

Glossary of terms

<i>“Buy to Let” initiative</i>	Buying a property solely for renting out on the private rented market.
<i>CPA</i>	Comprehensive Performance Assessment – assesses the performance of the Council in certain core activity areas and its ability to improve.
<i>Decent home</i>	A home that is free of category 1 hazards, is in a reasonable state of repair, has reasonably modern facilities and provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.
<i>EHO</i>	Environmental Health Officer.
<i>Energy Efficiency Commitment</i>	The Government programme set up to provide funding for loft and wall insulation to vulnerable households as well as encourage consumers to take up energy efficiency measures.
<i>Fit and proper person</i>	The requirement under the Housing Act 2004 for the manager of a property to not have any criminal convictions or minor housing convictions and violations in the last 5 years.
<i>HMO</i>	Home in Multiple Occupation – a home in which two or more inhabitants share certain amenities.
<i>HHSRS</i>	Housing Health and Safety Rating System – the new inspection regime that will replace the fitness standard under the Housing Act 2004.
<i>Housing Association</i>	A provider of publicly subsidised housing registered with the Housing Corporation (also known as Registered Social Landlords).
<i>Housing need</i>	Number of dwellings required in the district over a given period based on factors such as population changes, household size and net migration.
<i>Management Order</i>	An order (either interim or final) that allows the local authority under the new Housing Act 2004 to take temporary management of a property.
<i>Rent Deposit Scheme</i>	A scheme whereby a local authority offers private landlords a deposit, in order to help people who are in receipt of benefits or on low incomes secure accommodation in the private rented sector.

RTP	Residential Property Tribunal.
Social housing	Homes provided and managed by local authorities as well as housing associations for those who would not be able to acquire a home on the private market for a variety of reasons.
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely – refers to performance targets.
Stock Condition Survey	A survey of private sector homes in the District carried out usually once every 5 years to assess their condition.
TO	Technical Officer
Vulnerable household	A household in receipt of at least one of the means tested or disability related benefits (e.g. income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit, disability living allowance, pension credit, and others).

Appendix A

The Way Forward – Action Plan

Objective	Action	Target & Date	Owner	Links to Corporate Priorities ⁴
<i>The aim – to raise the standard and quality of shared accommodation in the private rented sector in Mid Beds</i>				
<i>1. To meet the legislative obligations for HMO licensing under the Housing Act 2004</i>	⇒ To deliver training on relevant legislation and government guidance to private landlords and tenants as required.	Annual Forum to be held in Dec 2007. Specific events to be organised as the needs are identified.	EHO	Corporate Aims 1 & 2.
	⇒ To work in partnership with Herts & Beds authorities to ensure a joint approach to the implementation of new legislation.	Mtgs held twice quarterly.	EHO	
	⇒ To review the operation of the HMO Licensing Scheme annually with appropriate changes to the Licensing Pack.	May 2007	EHO	
	⇒ Carry out quarterly reviews of the Strategy Action Plan and of the full Strategy annually. Progress reports to be posted on the web-site.	Action plan – once quarterly Strategy - annually Next Strategy review due in November 2007.	EHO & Housing Research and Policy Officer	
<i>2. Develop our knowledge of the scale of the private HMO market in Mid Beds</i>	⇒ Ensure effective operation of the internal Council “HMO Action Team”.	Meetings once quarterly	EHO & TO	Corporate Aim 1, Corporate Objective 1.

⁴ For the Council's Vision, Aim and Objectives please follow the link

Objective	Action	Target & Date	Owner	Links to Corporate Priorities ⁴
<i>The aim – to raise the standard and quality of shared accommodation in the private rented sector in Mid Beds</i>				
	⇒ Review inter-service protocols for sharing information, co-ordination of action and progress monitoring annually.	November 2007	TO	
	⇒ Establish contact with newly identified HMO landlords and inform them of the management standards and requirements.	Ongoing	EHO	
	⇒ Improve the information, publicity and communication channels between the Council, HMO landlords and tenants by inviting them to participate in the annual Landlords' and Tenants' Forum and providing them with key information.	Ongoing	EHO	
	⇒ Develop better communication links and working relationship with town and parish councils by inviting Councillors to participate in consultation and promotional events.	Ongoing The Landlords' Forum – December 2007	EHO	
	⇒ Attend 2 Town and Parish Council meetings in the areas with the highest number of HMOs per year.	1 mtg per 6 mths.	EHO & Housing Research and Policy Officer	
	⇒ Continue active involvement in the Herts & Beds Housing Group.	2 mtgs per Qtr.	EHO	

Objective	Action	Target & Date	Owner	Links to Corporate Priorities ⁴
<i>The aim – to raise the standard and quality of shared accommodation in the private rented sector in Mid Beds</i>				
	⇒ Promote the HMO Strategy and the Council's role in improving the private rented sector during various community events, such as Care Scheme meetings, annual Town & Parish Councils meeting, etc.	4 events per year.	EHO, TOs	
<i>3. To eliminate poor property and management standards in all HMOs</i>	⇒ Ensure adequate management and tenancy standards are maintained in student accommodation units by close liaison with the Accommodation Departments of educational institutions (e.g. Cranfield University)	Ongoing	EHO & TO	Corporate Aim 1, Corporate Objective 1.
	⇒ To update the HMO Information Pack to include the HMO Strategy Summary, Grants Leaflets and provide Town and Parish Councils with any other relevant material.	Apr 2007	EHO	
	⇒ To carry out an annual review of the Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme including the Information Pack with subsequent changes to the web-page.	Nov 2007, then annually	EHO	
	⇒ Carry out programmed risk based inspections of HMOs using the HHSRS and resort to enforcement action where necessary.	3 inspections of low risk high occupancy HMOs in 2007/08	EHO	
	⇒ Carry out updates the HMO web page to include any new initiatives (e.g. the Rent Deposit Scheme once established).	Once quarterly	EHO & TO	

Objective	Action	Target & Date	Owner	Links to Corporate Priorities ⁴
<i>The aim – to raise the standard and quality of shared accommodation in the private rented sector in Mid Beds</i>				
	⇒ Carry out benchmarking with best practice and similar local authorities to identify and implement, where necessary, innovative ways of working.	Ongoing	EHO and Housing Research & Policy Officer	
	⇒ Have an input into the Sub-regional Private Sector Renewal Group either by attendance or provision of updates/ progress reports.	1 Mtg per quarter	EHO	
<i>4. To promote excellent standards in HMOs and provide information and advice to landlords and tenants to maintain the supply of good quality shared accommodation</i>	⇒ Raise awareness of the Council's Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme by placing articles on the Council's website, <i>Horizon</i> , and during community events.	Ongoing	EHO	Corporate Aims 1 & 2, Corporate Objectives 1 & 2
	⇒ To offer a private Tenant's Forum or encourage tenants to participate in the annual Landlords' Forum.	Annual	EHO & TO	
	⇒ To provide Tenants and Landlords with information on their rights and responsibilities, illegal eviction, harassment and anti-social behaviour (leaflets produced by DCLG).	Ongoing	EHO	
	⇒ To provide Landlords with advice on property maintenance, information on grants and guidance on Amenity and Fire Safety Standards .	January 2007	EHO	
<i>5. To encourage co-operation between landlord and tenant</i>	⇒ To encourage tenant participation in the Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme.	Ongoing	EHO	Corporate Aim 1, Corporate objective 1
	⇒ To carry annual tenant surveys to gauge the level of satisfaction with private rented accommodation.	Next survey due in November 2007	TO	
<i>6. To support the retention of a well managed, good quality private HMO market</i>	⇒ Offer Landlords advice and assistance on various aspects of property maintenance and management.	Ongoing	EHO	Corporate Aims 1 & 3, Corporate Objectives 1 & 2.

Objective	Action	Target & Date	Owner	Links to Corporate Priorities ⁴
<i>The aim – to raise the standard and quality of shared accommodation in the private rented sector in Mid Beds</i>				
<i>and where appropriate encourage its expansion</i>	⇒ To engage landlords in the dialogue with local estate agents and other relevant bodies.	Ongoing	EHO	

Risk statement

Strategy objectives	Risks	Likelihood (high/medium/low)	Impact (high/medium/low)	Preventative action
To meet the legislative obligations for HMO licensing under the Housing Act 2004	Council would fall foul of its legislative responsibility; Unlicensed properties may put the health & safety of tenants at risk.	L	H	⇒ Consistency of approach to HMO licensing with Herts & Beds partners; ⇒ Formal procedure for HMO licensing developed and regularly reviewed. ⇒ Effective internal and external partnerships.
Develop our knowledge on the scale of the private HMO market in Mid Beds	Lack of knowledge of the HMO market in Mid Beds may lead to improper property and management standards in HMO, and the decline of this sector.	M	H	⇒ Strengthened internal and external partnerships with clearly defined roles and protocols for action co-

Strategy objectives	Risks	Likelihood (high/ medium/ low)	Impact (high/ medium/ low)	Preventative action
				<p>ordination and information exchange agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ HMO Action Team operating effectively. ⇒ Targeted surveys to identify HMOs. ⇒ Improved relationship with Town & Parish Councils facilitates information exchange.
<p>To eliminate poor property and management standards in all HMOs</p>	<p>Poor property and management standards can put the health and safety of tenants at risk, and may result in the decline of the private HMO market.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>H</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Housing officers trained in the new HHSRS inspection regime. ⇒ Regular updates to all HMO publications and the website content. ⇒ Annual Landlords' and Tenants' Fora.
<p>To promote excellent standards in HMOs and provide information and advice to landlords and tenants to maintain the supply of good quality shared accommodation</p>	<p>Lack of timely information on new legislation and requirements for property maintenance may lead to landlords' & tenants' failure to comply with their legal obligations.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Promotion of the Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme. ⇒ Regular mailing of informative leaflets to landlords and tenants. ⇒ Articles on the website, in the Council's magazine <i>Horizon</i> and the local press.

Strategy objectives	Risks	Likelihood (high/medium/low)	Impact (high/medium/low)	Preventative action
To encourage co-operation between landlord and tenant	Absence of effective communication and co-operation between landlord and tenant may lead to increase in anti-social behaviour.	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Promotion of the Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme. ⇒ Regular mailing of relevant leaflets to landlords and tenants. ⇒ Information published on the website.
To support the retention of a well-managed, good quality private HMO market and where appropriate encourage its expansion.	Good quality shared accommodation may absorb some of the increasing demand for affordable housing. Failure to achieve this objective may put pressure on the Council in identifying further ways to fill the gap in the market.	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Effective communication channels between the Council, HMO landlords and local estate agents (annual Landlords' Forum). ⇒ Advice and assistance (including grants) available for landlords to improve and maintain their property.

Appendix B

Financial Assistance – Home Improvement Grants

No.	Criteria	Conditions
1.	Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Applicants must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Owner-occupiers (including mobile homes and caravans). ▪ Private Tenants with a valid tenancy agreement. ▪ Private Landlords. ❖ The applicant has a duty or power to carry out the works. ❖ The property must be within Mid Beds boundaries. ❖ All applicants are required to have lived in or owned the property for at least 3 years prior to the date of the application. ❖ Owner-occupiers and tenant applicants on income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit, minimum pension credit, and income based job seekers allowance will not be subject to a means test. ❖ Owner-occupiers and tenant applicants not in receipt of the above benefits or on working tax credit will be assessed by the Government's test of financial resources (means-test) to determine the level of income and any contribution the applicant may be required to make. These applicants will be subject to the same means test as for the mandatory DFGs. ❖ Owner-occupiers' and tenants' applications will be prioritised using a matrix with the highest priority given to the vulnerable customers (elderly, seriously ill, disabled, on low income). ❖ Where a contribution is required then the Council will normally require payment of the amount before the commencement of the works. ❖ Applications for grant aid will not be considered where works have already been completed. Applications for grants where works have commenced but have not been completed will only be considered where the applicant can demonstrate exceptional circumstances as to why they did not apply and seek approval prior to the commencement of the works. In this case, any works already completed will be excluded from the application. ❖ Proof of ownership must be supplied in accordance with the Council's procedures at the time of application. ❖ Owner-occupiers and tenant applicants must show proof of benefits and levels of income. ❖ Applicants will be required to obtain two or three competitive estimates depending on the cost of the works. ❖ Applicants are required to have all the works completed satisfactorily within 6 months of grant approval. ❖ Tenant or owner-occupier applicants will be required to live in the property for 5 years from the date of completion of the works. ❖ Private landlords may be required to let the property out for a 5-year period and the rents charged will be set at affordable level determined by the Council. ❖ Any exceptional cases that fall outside these criteria will be considered by the Director of Environmental & Planning Services in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
2.	Eligible works	<p style="text-align: center;">Owner – occupiers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The works necessary to urgently repair the property as set out in the grant prioritisation matrix. ❖ The works necessary to remediate category 1 hazards on the housing health and safety rating system. ❖ The works necessary to repair a property in serious disrepair. ❖ To provide sufficient heating. ❖ To provide a reasonably modern bathroom or kitchen facility to achieve the decent homes standard if neither are modern (for the kitchen this is 20 years old or less, bathroom – 30 years old or less).

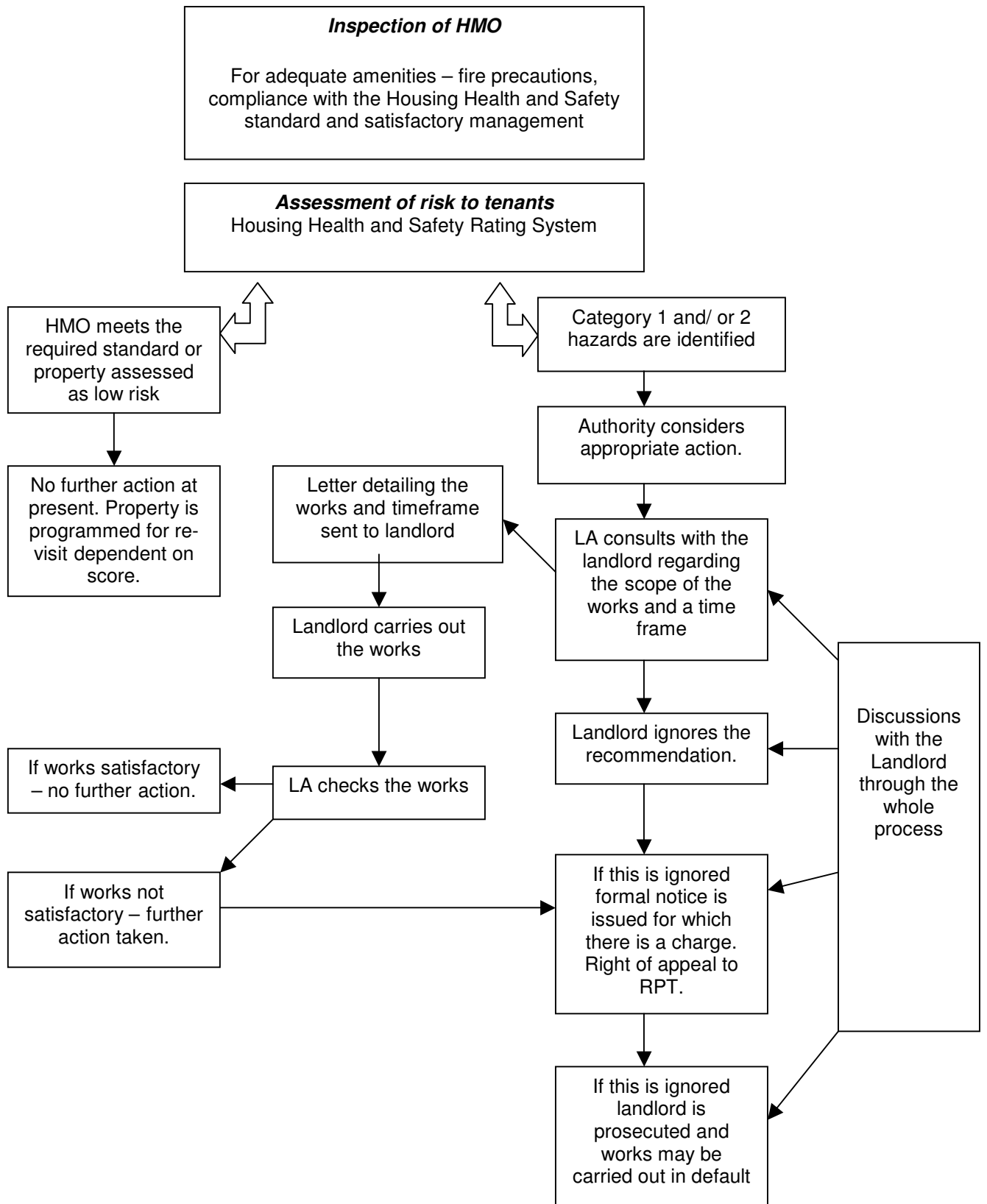
No.	Criteria	Conditions	
		<p style="text-align: center;">Private Landlords</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The works necessary to remediate category 1 hazards on the housing health and safety rating system. ❖ The works necessary to repair a property in serious disrepair. ❖ To provide sufficient heating. ❖ To provide a reasonably modern bathroom or kitchen facility to achieve the decent homes standard if neither are modern (for the kitchen this is 20 years old or less, bathroom – 30 years old or less). ❖ For landlords of Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to make the property adequate for the number of occupants and the provision of the means of fire escape. 	
3.	Home Improvement Agency (HIA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The HIA services will be offered to assist in the process of application, identification of necessary works, selection and instruction of contractors, overseeing the works and payment. ❖ Where the applicant has a preference for works that are over and above those that receive grant aid, the Council will only fund the cost of the original recommended works, the rest being funded by the applicant. In such cases it will be at the Council's discretion whether or not the services of the HIA are employed. 	
4.	Grant	Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ For properties that require works which have a significant impact on the health, safety and well-being of the occupant.
		Level of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ For private landlords the grant will be available to meet 75% or 90% (where it is a charitable body that operates Alms Houses and other accommodation let at peppercorn rents) of the cost (after the first £1,000) of the eligible works up to a maximum of £10,000 in a single application. In exceptional cases the grant level may be increased to £15,000. These cases will be considered by the Director of the Environmental & Planning Services with the relevant Portfolio Holder. ❖ Any grants paid will be registered as a Local Land Charge.

No.	Criteria	Conditions
	Repayment	<p>❖ Repayable upon the sale of the property within 10 years from the completion of the works. Certain exceptions apply. Where the premises or part of the premises is sold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to the owner or one of the joint owners of the dwelling or to a wife or husband or former wife or husband of one of the joint owners, or a member of that person's family, or, in the case of a company, to an associated company; ○ under a will or inheritance on a death; ○ by Court order in the course of a domestic breakdown; ○ compulsorily, or by agreement, to a public body with compulsory purchase powers; ○ of land which is "included land" under section 184 of the Housing Act 1985; ○ of a defective house under part XVI of the Housing Act 1985 and the owner is exercising his entitlement to assistance by way of repurchase; ○ by way of enfranchisement or lease extension under Part 1 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967; ○ in pursuance of an obligation arising under Chapter I or II of Part 1 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993; ○ on the exercise of a right of first refusal under Part I of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 or in accordance with an acquisition order under Part III of that Act; ○ in exercise of the right to buy under Part V of the Housing Act 1985 or the right under section 16 of that Act of the tenant of a registered social landlord to acquire the dwelling; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ where the person making the disposal is aged at least 70, the disposal is to provide annuity income and the person concerned is entitled to continue to occupy the premises as his or her only or main residence; ○ where the disposal is of any other description specified by order of the Secretary of State. ○ the Council may decide not to make any demand for repayment in a case where they are satisfied that (a) the owner is elderly or infirm and is disposing of the property with the intention of going to live in a hospital, hospice, sheltered housing, a residential care home or similar accommodation, or a place where care will be provided; or (b) the owner is making the disposal with the intention of going to live with and care for an elderly or infirm member of his family or his partner's family. ○ the Council may decide not to demand whole or partial repayment of a grant where they are satisfied that - a relevant disposal of the property which is not an exempt disposal is made with the intention of enabling the applicant to move to other accommodation for the purpose of – (i) the applicant or the applicant's partner accepting employment where either of them is or would otherwise become unemployed, or (ii) enabling the applicant or his or her partner to continue in employment where either is required by an employer to move to another workplace. <p>Repayable with interest set at the Bank of England base rate + 1% if the property is sold within 2 years from the completion of the works.</p>

No.	Criteria	Conditions
	Number Of grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ A maximum of £10,000 in a 3-year period with up to 3 applications or, in exceptional cases, £15,000 over a 3-year period. ❖ All exceptional cases will be considered by the Director of Environmental & Planning Services in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder. ❖ The same works will not receive grant aid for at least 10 years.
5.	Standard to be achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The works should enable the applicant to live in the environment free of housing health and safety hazards and improve their quality of life.
6.	Standards of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ We will aim to process HIG applications within 2 weeks from receipt to approval stage. ❖ We will aim to complete all the home improvement works within 12 weeks (subject to agreement of timescales). ❖ We will aim to ensure that the necessary works are carried out within 6 months of application approval. ❖ We will aim to process the application efficiently, courteously and promptly.

Appendix C

HMO Enforcement Procedure



Appendix D

HMO Risk Assessment Matrix

Address				
1) No of storeys (not including basement)	3 storeys	50		
	4 storeys	70		
	5 storeys	90		
2) Basement	Yes	10		
3) Usage	Bedsits	15		
	S/c flats	5		
	Shared house	10		
	Mixed with commercial-	high risk		20
		low risk		5
4) HHSRS	Category 1 hazards	40		
	Category 2 hazards	20		
	Lower score category 2 hazards	5		
5) Fire Precautions	Smoke/Heat Detectors (exc. batt. operated models)			
	Adequate cover -			
	- in escape route only	5		
	- in individual units only	5		
	- linked AFD	0		
	- None (or batt. only)	20		
	Fire Extinguishers	0		
	Fire doors			
	- No fire doors	10		
	- Single door protection to escape route	5		
	- Double door/lobby protection	0		
	- No self-closing devices to escape route			
	No intumescent strips	3		
	No smoke seals	3		
	No emergency Lighting	5		
Passive (structural) protection:				
Escape route at risk	20			
Minimum standard escape route	5			
Full protected route (Fire Officer)	0			
No break points	3			
6) Amenities (bedsits/shared houses only)				

w.c. provision	>1:5 ratio	3	
no w.h.b. with w.c.	each incidence	3	
Bath/shower	>1:5 ratio	3	
Kitchens	within bedsit	10	
Food storage unfit?		3	
Food prep. unfit?		3	
7) Management			
Manager living on premises &/or good management		0	
Minimum acceptable level		5	
Poor management		20	
Very poor management (early action)		40	
8) Occupancy (take highest risk category)			
At home all day (single parents, unemployed)		5	
Special Needs		10	
Elderly		10	
TOTAL			

Poor Condition	Score	Frequency of visit	Type of Action	Type of Defect
↓	200 + points	Immediate	Formal notice	Serious and life threatening.
	150 – 199 points	Action within 1 year	Formal Notice	Serious but not life threatening.
	100 – 149 points	Action within 3 years	Informal Notice	Defects due to insufficient maintenance and do not immediately affect the material comfort and safety of the occupants.
	< 100 points	Action within 5 years	Informal Notice	There is evidence that the property is well maintained.
Good Condition				

Appendix E

List of Consultees

Internal Partners:

Environmental & Planning Services
Customer Services
Corporate & Democratic Services
Community Services
Corporate projects & Shared Services

External Partners:

Private landlords
Private tenants
Housing Associations
Town and Parish Councils
Local Estate Agents
Herts & Beds Local Authorities
Government for the East of England
South East Beds Community Liaison Forum
Local educational establishments

Other Key Stakeholders:

Bedford Race Equality Council
Black and Minority Ethnic Group Forum
Citizens Advice Bureaux
Beds Heartlands Primary Care Trust
Beds Rural Communities Charity
Bedfordshire Police
Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service
Mid Beds Community Health Council...
... and others.

This Strategy can be provided in an alternative language or format

- ◆ যদি অনুরোধ করেন তাহলে অন্য কোনও আকারে বা ভাষায় এই তথ্য আপনি পেতে পারেন।
(Bengali)
- ◆ 你可以要求以另一種格式或語言提供這些訊息
(Chinese)

- ◆ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਸ਼ਕਲ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।
(Punjabi)
- ◆ یہ معلومات آپ کے درخواست کرنے پر متبادل ڈیزائن یا زبان میں مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔
(Urdu)
- ◆ Questa informazione puo' essere fornita su richiesta in un altro formato o un'altra lingua telefonando al numero (Italian)
- ◆ Informację tą można uzyskać również w innym formacie lub innym języku dzwoniąc pod numer (Polish)

Please ring this number

08452 304040