

People, homes and communities
delivering the future
together



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If you would like to comment on the draft strategy we would really welcome any comments you may have.

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Foreword

by Councillor M Hugh Evans, Executive Board Member
for Housing and Public Protection



This strategy builds on the excellent work that has been done since our current housing strategy was adopted in 2004.

The Council and its partners have used this as a chance to

review what we have done so far; to check that we are focusing on the right things, and to make changes where needed.

We remain committed to working with partners and with the community, without which the strategy cannot be delivered.

Housing has a key role in improving and maintaining people's health and well-being. Improving health is a theme that runs through the strategy.

Another strand is the link between housing and sustainable development. This means not only making the way we live kinder to the environment, it is also about making sure housing plays a vital role in economic prosperity and community development.

Our approach picks up the themes raised by the Welsh Assembly Government in Making the Connections. We want to see real improvements in services to our residents, made possible by efficiency savings and co-operation between us and other organisations, both locally and on a regional basis.

This strategy renews and refreshes our commitment to:

- **Improving access to and choice between services**

Because our communities have told us that they want real choice in where to live and whether to rent or buy their home.

- **Improving the quality of our homes**

Which not only improves people's health, but is a springboard to economic and community prosperity.

- **Providing care and support**

To ensure our residents have the opportunity live safely and independently.

- **Creating better communities**

Because good housing is about building and supporting lively, strong and vibrant communities, helping to make sure people like where they live.

We are delivering on these aims, but there is so much more we can still do. I am confident that by working together our housing, health and communities will be improved hugely.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cllr M Hugh Evans".

Councillor M Hugh Evans
Executive Board Member



1 Purpose, Vision, Mission and Values

The strategy is intended to renew and refresh our commitments over the next 3 years. Reality checks have been carried out against each of our main themes to ensure actions are still relevant. We will amend existing actions if necessary and develop new actions where appropriate.

Under each theme we will set out key information that will show where we are, using our annual Local Housing Market Assessment to inform our thinking. This will be followed by specific key actions that we intend to deliver over the next three years to meet our objectives.

Our vision

Working together to ensure people are fine about their homes, health and communities.

Our mission

To be the provider of the best housing service in Wales, where (e)quality and partnership support everything we do by:

- putting most effort and resources into housing improvements which improve health and well-being
- linking our actions to those of other services (such as health, education, social services, police) to make these health improvements have the maximum impact
- responding quickly to people's changing needs
- building a reputation for developing new ideas to improve housing services.

Our values

- putting our customers first, keeping them informed and listening to their views
- making sure that people have access to our services reflecting their needs
- delivering high quality services which our customers want
- supporting and promoting the Welsh language
- working in partnership with all stakeholders and
- respecting and supporting our staff.

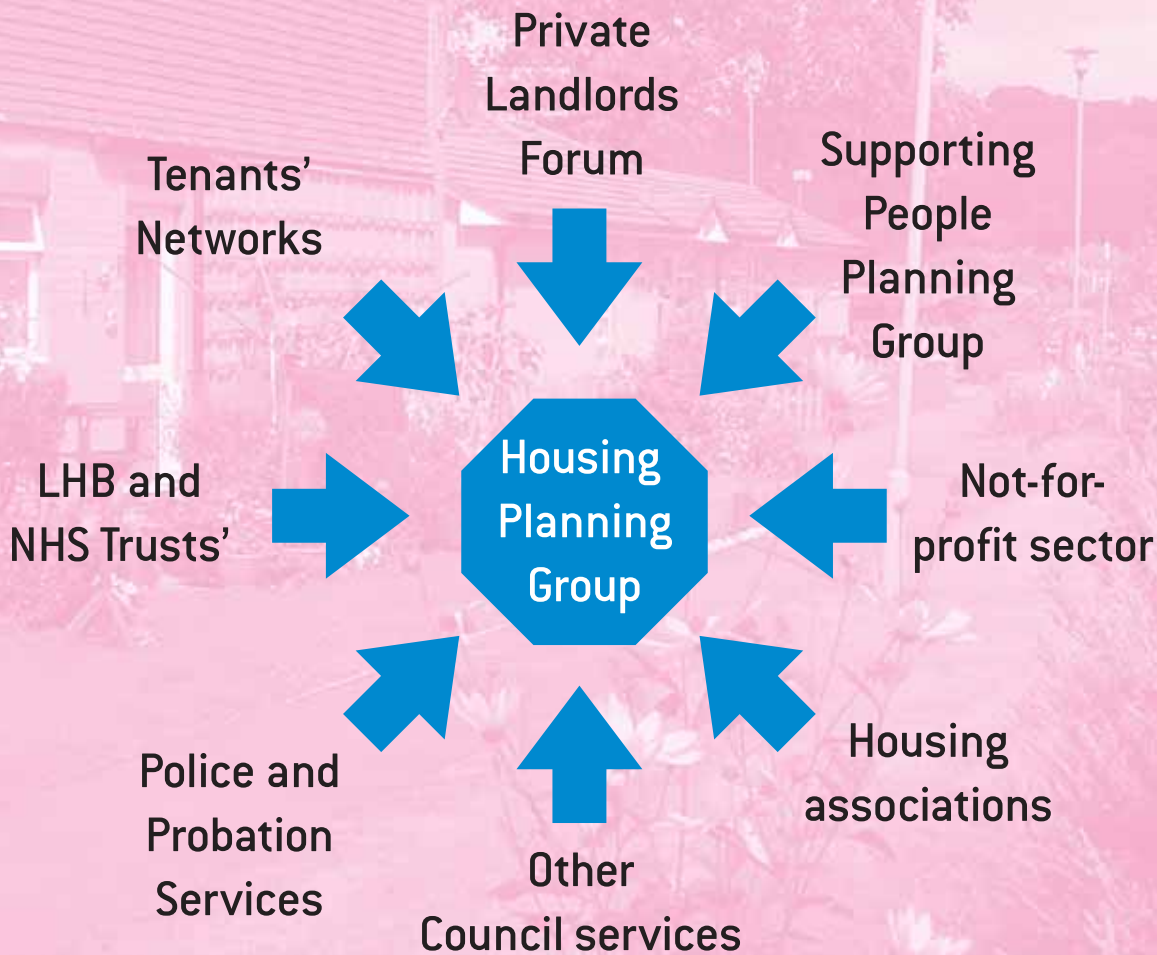


2 Who is involved

We recognise that the strategy can only be successful with the full involvement of our partners and staff. This will range from other Council Divisions such as Community Planning, Regeneration, Planning, Financial Services, Customer Services, Community Safety, Community Development, Social Services and Technical Services.

We also need to ensure we work even closer with other key partners including the Resident and Tenant Groups, Landlords Forum, Local Health Board, Housing Associations, Shelter and the Police.

We will also look for further opportunities to work regionally.



4 Improving access to and choice between services

Carmarthenshire has a population of about 174,000, made up of 73,000 households. Affordability continues to be a significant issue and it is important that, in conjunction with our partners, we develop affordable housing options. Housing need remains greatest in the more rural Tywi, Taf and Teifi Community Network areas. Whilst the level of 'the Right to Buy' of council properties has slowed down in the last 12 months, additional initiatives to increase the number of affordable homes will be central to our approach.

We also acknowledge that we will continue to make better use of our council stock. Demand for social housing as highlighted by the recently launched Housing Choice Register continues to be high. As demand continues to exceed supply, we need access to good quality housing advice to promote informed decision making and real choice. This will be particularly important for residents with specific support needs and minority groups such as migrant workers and the Traveller community.

Key information

2006/07

Affordability Gap- difference between what an average family can afford and average prices-	£41,000
Highest affordability gap- Tywi Community Network	£78,000
Net outward migration of people aged 16-24	300
Shortfall in affordable homes	952
Number of households on Housing Choice Register (November 2006)	5,327
Number of 'Right to Buy' completions	50
Estimated number of empty properties- 1st September 2006	3,500
Number of workers who arrived in Carmarthenshire from new EU Countries, May 2004- March 2006	1,473



We will

Increase the level of affordable housing by:

- increasing the supply of affordable housing to rent and buy by more than 1,500 homes over the next five years by delivering our affordable housing policy: A step on the ladder: our commitment to affordable housing **by March 2012**
- developing identified affordable housing sites at Davies Square, Brynmefys, Gwynfryn and Nantydderwen with Gwalia Housing Group **by March 2010**
- developing initiatives that will enable older people and people with disabilities access to affordable housing for sale **by March 2010**
- securing joint funding a rural housing enabler post, to deliver affordable housing on rural exceptions sites in Tywi, Taf and Teifi Community Networks **by March 2008**.

Make best use of our existing housing stock by:

- implementing actions from our Empty Homes Strategy 2005-2009 to bring at least 150 empty properties back into use **by March 2010**
- introducing in enforced sales of problem empty homes **by December 2007**
- introducing incentive schemes to enable single people and couples living in larger social homes to move to smaller homes **from April 2007**
- offering better housing advice and alternative options for people applying for adaptations **from April 2007**.

Promote and provide real choice between owner-occupation, privately rented homes, council housing and housing association homes by:

- implementing actions from Housing Advice Strategy ensuring that all people in Carmarthenshire will be able to access timely, high quality advice to help them resolve their housing related needs **from April 2007**. This will include
 - advice to landlords and agents
 - promoting housing options
 - protecting tenants' rights
- meeting the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) new code of practice in the services that we deliver **from April 2007**
- reviewing Black, Minority and Ethnic Housing Strategy (BME Strategy), in conjunction with our partners, **by April 2008**
- implementing Moving On, Carmarthenshire's housing strategy for gypsies and travellers. This will include
 - developing a joint procedure on unauthorised encampments, with other services such as Education, Health and the Police, to ensure that there is an effective response **by July 2007**
 - carrying out full options appraisal on the future management of the Penybryn Travellers' Site **by June 2008**.



5 Improving the quality of homes

Over the next three years we will ensure that the quality of homes continues to improve in both the private and public sectors. Our exit strategies on the Inner Ammanford and South Llanelli renewal areas carried out last year clearly outline the impact improving the quality of homes has on people's health and well-being. The renewal work will continue to be targeted at our worst housing as identified by our stock condition survey. This is particularly important in the private rented sector where conditions and risks are most acute. The revised private sector renewal policy moves focus away from direct assistance to providing options that will enable residents to take more responsibility for their homes, for example, the provision of a loans scheme.

Together with our tenants, we have decided to retain our housing stock. All council owned homes will be brought up to the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard. We will continue work with tenants to deliver this programme.

It is also important to ensure that where we do carry out work we do not do so in isolation. Aligning private and council housing improvements, where appropriate, will be important as well as the impact on the environment itself. Close working with Community Planning and Community Development, particularly in Communities First areas, will ensure a joined up approach.

Key information

2006/07

% of private homes that are unfit	11.2%
% of private rented homes that are unfit	22.0%
Estimated number of houses in multiple occupation (HMO's)	700
Average SAP rating of homes in private sector	43
(Average SAP rating for private sector homes in Wales)	{51}
Average SAP rating for Council Housing	60
% of Council Housing meeting Carmarthenshire Homes Standard	2.78%



We will

Improve the quality of homes in both the private and public sectors by:

- implementing home improvements to recently declared Renewal Areas in Upper Brynamman and Lower Gwendraeth Valley **from April 2007**
- bringing 40% of Council homes up to the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard **by March 2010**
- highlighting the importance of the quality of housing in improving the health and well-being of residents in conjunction with the Local Health Board **from April 2007**
- assessing strategic action to tackle poor housing conditions in Glanamman, as identified by the stock condition survey, **by March 2009**
- implementing a more comprehensive home improvement and welfare advice service **from April 2007**
- developing a formal partnership with external agencies to assist in the delivery of the private sector Renewal Policy **by March 2008**
- co-locating Carmarthenshire's Care and Repair Agency with the Home Improvement Team **by March 2008**
- providing loans as an option for assistance in improving residents' homes **from April 2008**
- licensing a minimum of 150 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) to the appropriate standard **by March 2010**
- implementing actions from the Achieving Affordable Warmth strategy to ensure residents are comfortable within their own homes **from April 2007**
- carrying out new stock condition survey to assess impact of initiatives and inform future planning **by March 2010.**



6 Providing care and support

The Council, in conjunction with its key partners at the Local Health Board and the NHS Trusts, is committed to ensuring that people remain safe and secure in their own home for as long as possible. The strategy will provide focus on this by preventing homelessness, supporting people to live independently in their own homes, and avoiding, as much as is possible, unnecessary admission to hospital or a care home environment.

Much work has been done in the last two or three years to provide a foundation to meeting the above. Households applying as homeless has dropped significantly as well as the numbers accepted as homeless and the number of households moving through temporary accommodation. This good work will need to be sustained, with the further strengthening of the approach in relation to housing advice and options and the prevention of homelessness. More work is required, however, on ensuring effective

move on from temporary accommodation as well as eradicating the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation in an emergency. Further work is also required on creating better housing options for people fleeing domestic violence and ex-offenders.

Our Supporting People programme has been very successful in helping a range of client groups to ensure that their housing related support is provided at the right time and in the right way. The challenge in the next three years is to ensure the programme continues to align with progress being made in Social Care and Health.

Our provision of accommodation and support for older people is starting to align with other accommodation services for older people and the role of the Sheltered Scheme Officer in our schemes will be further developed as a result.

Key information

2006/07

Projected number of households applying as homeless	850
Projected Number of households accepted as homeless	350
Number of households using temporary accommodation	200
Number of households supported through Supporting People programme	4024
Number of homeless people being helped through Supporting People	164
% of Supporting People budget spent on older people services	23%
Projected spend on Disabled Facilities Grants and Adaptations (including Showers and Central Heating)	£3.1m

We will

Reduce homelessness by:

- reviewing the effectiveness of existing homelessness projects, with the involvement of service users and partner agencies, to ensure they are fully focused on the preventative agenda, **from April 2007**
- carrying out a review of youth homelessness **by March 2008**
- reviewing the options for temporary and permanent housing for people fleeing domestic violence and ex-offenders **by March 2008**
- developing a programme of education on housing options for students about to leave school/colleges schools **from April 2007**
- developing options for specialist services, such as accommodation for 16/17 year olds, to be delivered on a regional basis in South West Wales **by March 2010.**

Provide the best possible housing with support for vulnerable people by:

- setting up a disabled housing register to match people with disabilities with housing suitable for their needs, **by July 2007**
- developing a Supporting People Strategy, complimenting Social Care and Health needs, **by March 2008**
- providing suitable housing options to enable people suffering from mental health problems to access appropriate housing and support, in line with the Locality Mental Health Plan **from October 2007.**

Modernise provision of housing with support for older people by:

- developing new flexible care housing for older people in Llanybydder, Carmarthen and Ammanford, in partnership with the Local Health Board and housing associations **by March 2010**
- expanding telecare services to ensure that all people over 75 can access assistive technology services **by March 2010**
- setting up older persons housing advice service **by March 2008**
- developing further low level on-going floating support for older people **from April 2007.**



7 Creating better communities

Housing has a key role to play in creating and developing better communities. This strategy recognises, however, that a multi agency approach is required to make further improvements.

The first strategy required the development of Local Anti-Social Behaviour Groups, led by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and has also helped in getting more tenants involved in combating, for example, anti-social behaviour.

This strategy focuses on strengthening this work, with particular emphasis on stronger links with Community Planning, Community Safety and Community Development. It also recognises the need to expand the role of housing services in Communities' First areas.



Key information	2006/07
Communities First areas	7
Number of Residents Groups' managed by housing services	30
Tenant satisfaction with neighbourhood	67%
Number of ASBO's on conviction in place	6
Number of 1st stage warning ASB letters issued since January 2006 (as at 31/10/06)	226
Number of 2nd stage warning ASB letters issued since January 2006 (as at 31/10/06)	23
Number of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) drawn up since January 2006	3

We will

Strengthen our local communities by:

- delivering a 'memorandum of understanding' to ensure a unified approach to community development and tenant participation activities **by March 2008**
- ensuring that housing investment initiatives are co-ordinated with regeneration and community development activity within communities, particularly in Communities First areas **from April 2007**
- developing formal partnership with Communities First in the delivery of the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard in the Glanymor/Tyisha wards **by March 2008**
- securing positive local training and employment opportunities as part of the delivery of the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard **by March 2009**
- pro-actively supporting local credit unions **from April 2007**
- raising awareness of the needs of black and minority ethnic communities and making these communities aware of housing opportunities locally **from April 2007**.

Further develop tenant participation by:

- working with tenant groups to review our tenant participation compact **by March 2008**
- setting up young tenant action groups for tenants under 35 **by March 2008**
- bringing in other methods of consultation for tenants who do not like to attend formal meetings **by March 2009**

- setting up 2 further tenant resource centres in the 3 TTT's and Amman and Gwendraeth areas **by March 2008**
- expanding the County wide mediation scheme to focus on tenant issues **from April 2007**.

Strike the right balance between prevention, rehabilitation and enforcement measures on Anti-Social Behaviour by:

- developing services to promote community cohesion, in partnership with other services and the community itself **from April 2007**
- introducing, in conjunction with the Community Safety Partnership, specific measures to tackle environmental anti-social behaviour (dog-fouling, litter and graffiti) **by March 2008**
- assessing the impact of local police stations on large Council housing estates, in partnership with Dyfed Powys Police **by March 2009**.

To Note

Financial Implications

The resources that will be required to deliver our objectives and actions will be confirmed during the consultation period. The Housing Planning Group feels, however, that the draft actions can be delivered by making the most effective use of the likely resources available over the next 3 years. A fully costed plan will be presented in the final strategy.

As part of the consultation we will be asking for views on the financial implications through a structured questionnaire.



8 Measuring the effects of our housing strategy

We will use the following key indicators to measure the effect of our housing strategy.

Aims	Where we were in 2004	Where we are now	Where we want to be by 2010
Number of affordable homes provided each year	40 a year	60 a year	300 a year
Reduce the number of empty homes in the private sector by 100 a year	3500	2720	2320
Percentage of Council homes reaching the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard	2%	3%	40%
Percentage of private sector homes unfit for use	11.2%	survey planned for 2010	tbc
Number of applications from homeless people each year	1342	898	750
Average length of time that homeless households stay in temporary housing	11 weeks	9 weeks	4 weeks
Council tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood	64%	65%	76%
People who feel safe after dark in the area where they live	No figure available	76% (2005)	83%
Number of people aged under 55 supported to live independently	551	719	1049
People aged over 75 who have access to assistive technology	0%	0.5%	100%

