



# Housing Strategy for Merton

## Part 2: Strategic Options & Priorities

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2004-2007



# Housing Strategy for Merton

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### NOTE:

This book is the second of three publications that sets out the London Borough of Merton's Housing Strategy for 2004-07

The three publications are:

- Part 1: Executive Summary and Background
- Part 2: Strategic Options and Priorities
- Part 3: Past Performance and Future Targets

# Housing Strategy for Merton

# 1. Needs, Conditions and Strategic Priorities

## 1.1 SUMMARY

This section sets out Merton's housing needs and conditions in terms of supply, access, affordability and quality. It describes the following:

- **Merton's population** in terms of growth and demographic trends that impact on this strategy (Section 1.2)
- **Housing conditions** in Merton in the private, public and voluntary sectors and the need for investment and regulation in order to achieve acceptable standards of housing, amenities and sustainable communities (Section 1.3)
- **Private sector prices** and affordability in Merton for households on low and average incomes, including 'key workers' (Section 1.4)
- **Housing supply** in all sectors and opportunities to maximise the availability of affordable and suitable housing (Section 1.5)
- **Unmet housing needs** that this strategy will have to address, including special needs groups and those, such as black and ethnic minority communities, who are disproportionately housed in poor or insecure conditions (Section 1.6)
- **Homelessness and vulnerability** for which the Council has developed a comprehensive strategy for prevention, assistance, planned support and accommodation provision (Section 1.7)
- **Community strength and sustainability** and the contribution that can be made by suitable and accessible housing in popular neighbourhoods (Section 1.8)

## 1.2 MERTON'S POPULATION

Merton has a growing and diversifying population that creates new challenges and demands for housing in the borough. The 2001 census highlights population trends and changes that will impact on present and future housing requirements in terms of number, type, location and size of homes.

### Merton's Population – 2001 Census Extracts

#### Population Size

- Population of 188,000, which has increased by 11.5% since 1991 and is projected to increase by another 11% to 209,000 by 2016.
- This growth rate is similar to that of Croydon and Lambeth.

#### Household Size

- Average household size has fallen to 2.37 and is projected to continue falling to 2.34 by 2011.

#### Ethnicity

- 25% of the population are from a black or minority ethnic background which has risen from 16.2% in 1991.

#### Age Groups

- 13% of the total population are over the age of 65 though the proportion of elderly in the population is declining.
- 16% growth in the population of people under the age of 19 since 1991.

## 1.3 HOUSING CONDITIONS IN MERTON

The Council carried out a condition survey of its own stock in 2002 and of the private sector stock in 1996. A new Private Sector Stock Condition Survey is being commissioned in 2004.

### Extracts from the public and private sector stock condition surveys

- At April 2003 Merton's Council housing contained 2,267 properties failing to meet the Government's 'Decent Homes' standard and 3 properties failing the fitness standard.
- Returns from Housing Associations in the borough indicate that nearly 10% of their homes fail to meet the Government's standard for 'Decent Homes'.
- 14% of private sector properties are unfit.
- Over 2,000 private sector properties were empty at 1st April 2003.

### Council homes

Like all stock-owning housing authorities, Merton is planning to meet the 'Decent Homes' standard by the Government's target of 2010. Resident consultation in Merton shows that tenants' aspirations for their homes go beyond 'Decent Homes' standards and we are working with residents to define a local standard as part of our new stock options appraisal.

The Council's housing is split into three geographical districts and over half the homes are flats or maisonettes. There are a number of post-war estates made up of high density deck access and medium-rise housing. Within the borough there is a large inter-war estate of street

properties built by the London County Council which is now split between the boroughs of Sutton and Merton. The estate in the St Helier ward contains a concentration of the Council's non-decent homes.

The Council's Stock Condition Survey identified a need for investment in double-glazing, affordable heating, kitchens, bathrooms and rewiring. The estimated backlog is £33 million, whilst the arising need over the next 10 years is estimated at £68 million.

The need to bring all the Council's housing up to 'Decent Homes' standard and to attract further investment is addressed in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

### Private sector homes

The majority of accommodation in the borough is in the private sector. Most of the private sector housing in Merton is owner-occupied houses or flats. It also includes houses in multiple occupation, sheltered accommodation and hostels.

The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 1996 found that the majority of private sector housing in the borough was built prior to 1945. In the main it consists of houses and bungalows and many of these are terraced properties. Most of the flats and maisonettes in the borough are purpose-built.

- The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey (1996) found 13.7% (8,000) of properties to be unfit.
- 23% were seriously unfit.
- The highest levels of unfitness were in older pre-war stock (17.2%).
- 11.6% of unfit properties were owner-occupied houses.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

The highest levels of unfitness were in flats over commercial premises and houses converted into flats. These were also the property types with the greatest levels of disrepair. The greatest level of unfitness was in the private rented sector.

### Housing Associations

Responses to a questionnaire from 34 of the 40 Housing Associations working in the borough indicated a decency rate amongst their housing stock (4,300 units) of 91%. This reflects the fact that the majority of Housing Association stock in Merton was built, or acquired and improved, in recent years. Just 2 homes were regarded as unfit.

### Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty is defined as existing where a household spends more than 10% of its income on warmth. It is generally caused by low income, poor heating and insulation standards and the cost of fuel. The average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating is an indicator of fuel poverty as it measures the energy efficiency of a home. The higher the indicator, the more energy efficient the property. Merton's housing stock has an average rating of 60 out of 100 which is in line with national targets for older properties. The average SAP rating in the private sector is estimated to be 43. The average SAP rating for Housing Association properties is unknown as many associations are unable to give an average rating for their Merton stock alone.

Research by the Creative Environmental Networks in November 2003 into fuel poverty in Merton, based on SAP ratings, found that there is no single prominent area in the borough in need of energy efficiency measures more than any other one. Properties with SAP ratings of less than 25 were scattered throughout the borough. This research also showed that one-third of properties in Merton required draught proofing and at least one-fifth required loft insulation.

Between June 2000 and May 2003, over 1,000 Merton residents benefited from the Government's 'Warm Front' Grant which funded the installation of energy efficiency measures in private homes. Generally the average home benefiting from a 'Warm Front' Grant can expect to save £155 per year on their fuel bills. Research by EAGA who administer the grant, indicates a further 3,500 households in Merton could still be eligible for this grant. Strategic Priority 3 sets out how we will improve housing conditions.

### 1.4 PRIVATE SECTOR PRICES AND AFFORDABILITY

The cost of home ownership and renting in the private sector is high, and largely unaffordable to a proportion of the population. The following table shows a comparison of income needed to purchase or rent properties in different parts of Merton. It shows income required for the average price of buying or renting a home in different areas of Merton, assuming a 90% mortgage granted based on 3.5 times earnings.

#### Income needed to purchase or rent a property in Merton by Area

Type	Studio		2-bed flat		3-bed house	
	Purchase*	Rental*	Purchase*	Rental*	Purchase*	Rental*
Mitcham	£24,624	£19,908	£36,550	£27,468	£37,998	£33,192
Morden	N/A	£18,864	£40,611	£27,144	£60,469	£34,920
Wimbledon SW20	£28,330	£22,428	£61,438	£39,780	£87,501	£49,932
Wimbledon SW19	£35,573	£24,372	£67,116	£43,920	£97,858	£56,592

*\*Based on average prices over 3 months*

Source: Findaproperty.com. Period March 03

## Housing Strategy for Merton

The average annual salary in Merton is £21,000 and so affording a first purchase is difficult for many wishing to enter the home-ownership market. Merton is one of the more expensive London boroughs in which to purchase accommodation.

The following table shows the differences in rental prices in the private sector, council stock and housing associations. It shows that private rented accommodation in Merton is approximately 4 times the cost of social housing. The jump in price between property sizes is also greater in the private sector. This illustrates the problems faced by many residents who are unable to afford private renting but are unlikely to qualify for the allocation of social housing.

### Comparison of Merton's private and social sector rents

	<b>1-bed</b>	<b>2-bed</b>	<b>3-bed</b>
<b>Private</b>	£815 pcm	£1179 pcm	£1400 pcm
<b>Council</b>	£220 pcm	£285 pcm	£322 pcm
<b>Housing Association</b>	£259 pcm	£307 pcm	£328 pcm

Private sector rents from [www.findaproperty.com](http://www.findaproperty.com). Period March '03.

Where private rented housing is affordable it may still prove inaccessible to some, as landlords can be unwilling to accept tenants who are in receipt of benefits, who may not have a deposit or who have been homeless.

### Key workers

Meeting the needs of people on 'intermediate' incomes and key worker housing needs are core objectives of a range of plans including the London Plan, London Housing Strategy and Sub-Regional Strategy. Research by Keep London Working in August 2003 found that just under 50% of key workers cited housing and housing related issues as the most important reasons for leaving London.

Research was carried out in March 2002 on the needs of key workers in the borough. This will be further updated using house price information, key worker salary information and research into the needs of key workers.

Recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has identified the difficulty that key workers have in acquiring a home in Merton in terms of the property price income ratio. Taking an average purchase price and income, the average key worker in the borough has only half the income that is required to be able to buy a suitable property.

As part of the Southwest London Housing Partnership we are commissioning new research on key workers from a sub-regional perspective. This work is being led by a sub-group, in which Merton plays an active role.

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## 1.5 HOUSING SUPPLY

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The need for affordable housing is increasing at a time when the supply of new housing is diminishing. The 2003 update to the Housing Needs Survey 2001 indicated there may be a shortfall of nearly 1,000 affordable homes per year.



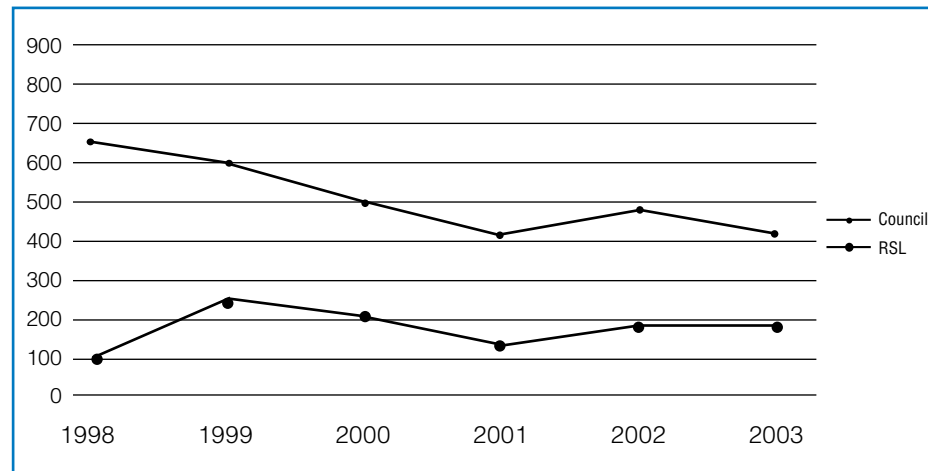
# Housing Strategy for Merton

## Supply Summary

- There are over 11,000 units of social housing in the borough (approximately 7,000 Council and 4,000 Housing Association).
- Right to buy sales of up to 200 annually.
- 72 new Housing Association homes completed in 2002/03.
- 54 new Housing Association homes due to be completed during 2003/4 and 74 during 2004/5.
- A decreasing number of properties becoming available for letting each year with available lettings decreasing by 17% between March 2000 and March 2003.

The above summary shows that the supply of social housing is decreasing as right to buy sales continue to diminish Council stock. New Housing Association development is unable to keep pace with this reduction and existing tenants are less able to move out into the private sector. The graph below shows how the number of social lettings has declined over the past 5 years.

## Social housing lettings 1998 to 2003



## 1.6 UNMET HOUSING NEED

The high cost of housing means for many there is a need for people to be able to access affordable housing in both the private sector and through the development of more social rented housing. The Housing Needs Survey 1999 estimated there were 6,518 households in housing need and this figure is predicted to increase at a rate of 1,300 per year until 2011.

The increasing demand for housing is demonstrated in the New Starters Register. In March 2003, there were 4,312 households on the register, an increase of 2.4% since 2001. Demand is highest for 1-bedroom properties.

The number of households applying for a transfer from existing Council accommodation fell by over 22% (from 1,847 to 1,427 between March 2002 and March 2003). This was largely as a result of a review of the transfer list during the same period. 3-bedroom properties are in the highest demand.

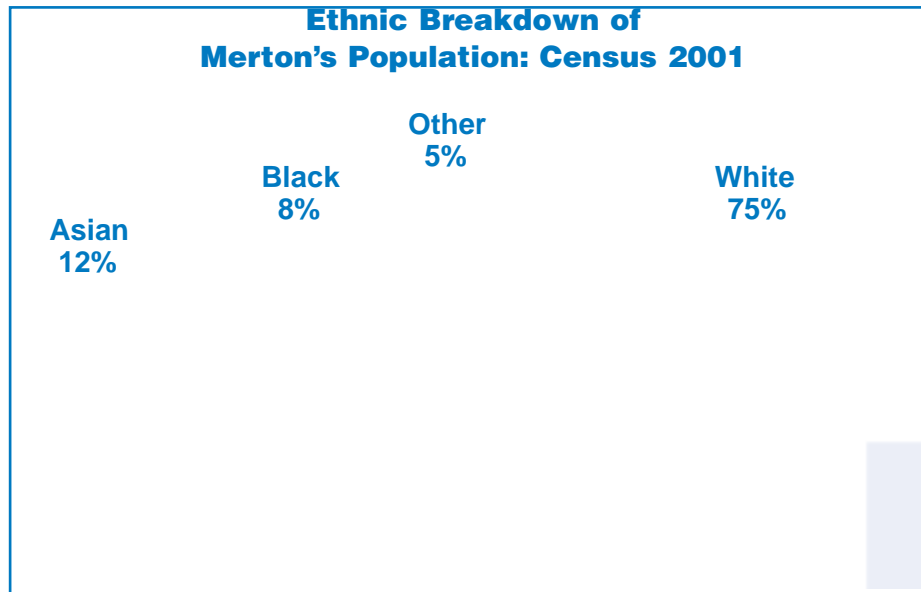
Only 135 transfer applicants were re-housed between March 2002 and March 2003. The minimum number of points required for accommodation is 50 and only 22% of applicants have more than 51 points.

## Housing Needs of Ethnic Minority Communities

Merton has a diverse community, with an increasing proportion of the population coming from ethnic minority communities. Not all the data from the Census 2001 is yet available but the information shows that ethnic minority communities made up a quarter of Merton's population in 2001 compared to 16.2% in 1991.



## Housing Strategy for Merton



The Housing Needs Survey 1999 found that ethnic minority communities in the borough were more likely to be in housing need than white households.

Ethnic minority groups are over represented on the New Starters and Movers Registers and in households who approach Merton's Homeless Persons and Housing Advice Units for assistance. This indicates a high level of stress and insecurity.

- 41% of housing applicants in 2001 were from ethnic minority communities, compared to their 25% share of the population.
- The Housing Needs Survey 1999 shows black African households are more likely to be living in unsuitable housing than other groups.

- A high proportion (17%) of black African Caribbean households applied for transfers in 2001 compared to their representation in Council tenancies (12%).
- Asian households are more likely to rely on private rented accommodation, with 13.3% renting privately (Housing Needs Survey 1999).

These aspects are supported by more current data. In September 2003 ethnic minority communities made up 38% of all households applying for social housing and 27% of those applying to transfer were also from ethnic minority communities.

To address the the specific needs of ethnic minority communities in Merton we have developed an Ethnic Minorities Housing Strategy.

Through this strategy we will update information about the needs of various ethnic minority communities through statistical analysis and research projects and making full use of 2001 Census data as it becomes available. The higher level of needs amongst Asian and 'other' households for bigger sized accommodation will also be addressed and research undertaken into the reasons behind the high level of homelessness amongst ethnic minority households.

Research will also be conducted into the housing needs of ethnic minority elders and information will be gathered about the supported housing needs of ethnic minorities with physical or learning disabilities or mental health problems. Up to date neighbourhood level information will be analysed looking at deprivation at ward level by ethnicity and tenure.

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### **1.7 HOMELESSNESS AND VULNERABILITY**

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Some vulnerable people require help to access a suitable home that meets their needs and also to live independently. They may also need assistance to maintain their home to prevent them from becoming homeless or face housing crisis. We therefore need to work with our partners to ensure they have this assistance and support. The ability of people to access and retain housing helps to make communities sustainable and also contributes to the objectives of the Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Strategic Priority 4: Developing Sustainable Communities. It also relates to the objectives of our Homelessness and Supporting People strategies.

The 1999 Housing Needs Survey found that there were approximately 8,561 households in Merton containing people with a special need. Data on different client groups has been collected for the homelessness and interim supporting people strategies.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

### The housing and support needs of vulnerable groups

<b><i>Client Group</i></b>	<b><i>Current Situation</i></b>	<b><i>Needs Identified</i></b>
<b>Mental health</b>	80% of mental health service clients live in their own homes or with family or friends. 26% wish to move and some would like to live in more supported housing.	A range of supported housing options.
<b>Learning disabilities</b>	548 people in Merton over the age 16 are registered as having learning disabilities. 23% were living with their families but were considered to need alternative accommodation.	Independent accommodation with support.
<b>Physical disability</b>	It is estimated that 1,046 households contain someone with a physical disability. 63 disabled households are known to the Occupational Therapy Service as requiring accessible accommodation	Fully adapted supported accommodation.
<b>Drug or alcohol misuse</b>	Many clients with substance misuse problems will require support to maintain tenancies. 75% of clients who were receiving aftercare and resettlement service were without a home of their own.	A floating support service and a range of accommodation to meet needs at various points on the recovery process.
<b>Ex-offenders</b>	Over 100 ex-offenders require specialist housing advice and accommodation annually. In addition, there are a number of ex-offenders re-housed outside Merton who require resettlement within the borough. Many clients have complex needs to cope with substance misuse and mental health problems. 19 young people left custody during 2001.	Suitable accommodation in the community that meets needs and manages risk.
<b>Older people</b>	Few older people approach the Council as homeless and only 3 were found to be homeless during 2002/3. Many older people are living with families and carers who, without support, would be unable to continue to care for them. There is evidence of demand for special needs accommodation for certain groups of ethnic elders.	Research required into the housing and support needs of older people, including ethnic elders and asylum seekers.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

<b>Client Group</b>	<b>Current Situation</b>	<b>Needs Identified</b>
<b>Young people</b>	Many young people do not have the life skills to live independently and maintain tenancies and therefore require supported housing. They can have a range of complex needs including drug use and teenage pregnancy. Merton Young Single Homelessness Forum reports supported housing schemes are often over subscribed and there is insufficient accommodation for young people to move on to. Full Housing Benefit for under 25 year olds also often does not cover full rent charged by private landlords.	Temporary supported housing and permanent affordable move on accommodation.
<b>AIDs/HIV</b>	Nearly 200 people in Merton access NHS services and nearly half of these are in contact with Social Services. Approximately half of the client group are families with dependent children.	Good quality warm housing of appropriate size to meet need.
<b>Teenage pregnancy</b>	Rates in Merton are in line with national trends although rates are nearly double this average in the more deprived wards of the borough. The Social Exclusion Unit has a target that there should be no under 18 year old parents in unsupported accommodation. Anecdotal information indicates there is a lack of supported housing.	Needs mapping is required to improve information.
<b>People fleeing violence</b>	Relationship breakdown is the second main cause of homelessness. Violence was present in over half of these cases.	Adequate refuge spaces for people fleeing violence. Measures to ensure safe return or safely to remain at home.

The table above illustrates some of the housing and support needs of vulnerable people are not yet being met, although many will be addressed through our Homelessness Strategy.

Through implementation of the Homelessness Strategy we will continue to add to our knowledge and improve our information. The needs of

vulnerable people will also to be addressed through our new Supporting People Strategy, which will be completed by March 2005. This will identify currently unmet needs and set out priorities to address them.

# Housing Strategy for Merton

## Merton's Homelessness Strategy

Homelessness has an increasing profile on the Government's agenda and this is underpinned by greater emphasis on prevention, early intervention and on tackling the causes of homelessness in a co-ordinated and strategic way.

All authorities are expected to meet the Government's target to end bed and breakfast use for homeless families, except in emergencies, and then for no longer than six weeks and to reduce the levels of rough sleeping to two-thirds below the levels recorded in 1998.

Merton responded to these challenges by completing its first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003 and information about how to get a copy of the strategy is in appendix 2. The strategy places early intervention and prevention at its heart. It acknowledges that homelessness does not just have its roots in the inadequate supply of affordable housing but reflects broader issues where people face complex social and financial issues making it hard for them to sustain tenancies.

Homelessness can result in long-term social exclusion and can impact on the sustainability of the community. Ensuring sustainable communities is key to the objectives of the Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and to the objectives of Strategic Priority 4: Developing Sustainable Communities.

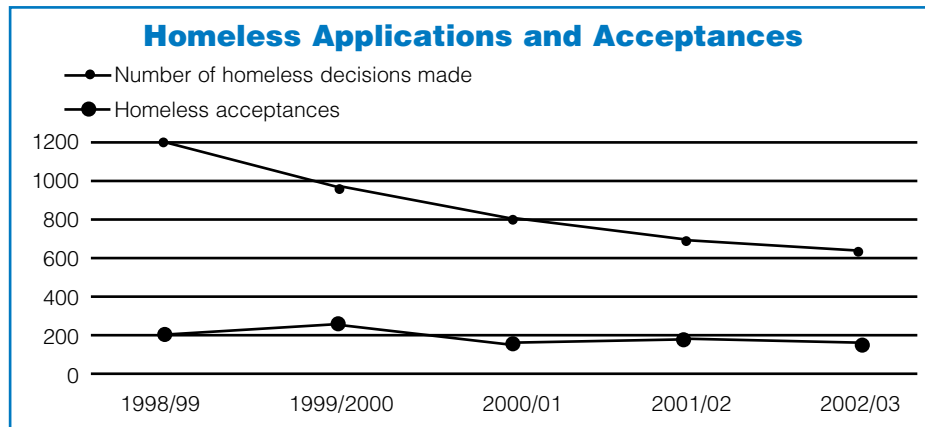
The key aims of Merton's Homelessness Strategy are:

- To reduce the incidence of homelessness through prevention.
- To maximise housing and support options and choice for all homeless households.
- To develop an effective, evidence based inter-agency strategy that minimises homelessness in the longer term.
- To meet the diverse needs of all people who are homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless.

## Homelessness in Merton

The following graph shows that the number of acceptances in Merton has remained fairly constant over the last 5 years while the number of homeless applications made has been decreasing .

## Housing Strategy for Merton



The Council's research has not found any evidence of street homelessness on a level found in some other London boroughs. A count completed in November 2000 recorded only one rough sleeper.

Merton's approach is to prevent homelessness through its allocation scheme, thus providing permanent housing solutions before invoking homelessness procedures. Officers in the Housing Needs Team work to prevent and delay homelessness, through advice work and negotiation with the client and the person responsible for excluding them.

This effective approach to dealing with homeless applications can mask the true pressure from homelessness faced by the authority.

In addition to the 156 applicants found to be homeless in 2002/03 in Merton, homelessness was delayed in a further 96 cases through this type of direct intervention by the Housing Needs Team. The ongoing success of this approach depends on the supply of available properties. Actions being taken to increase supply are detailed in Section 3.1: Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing.

The biggest cause of homelessness in Merton is parental or family eviction and this accounted for homelessness in 40% of cases in 2002/3. Over 60% of the households found to be homeless in 2002/3 had dependent children.

Ethnic minority households are over-represented in households who approach Merton's Homeless Persons Unit for assistance, and in homeless people not in 'priority' need who seek advice from Merton's Housing Advice Team.

- The Council is not a high user of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- In households applying as homeless, households from ethnic minority groups are over-represented, particularly in the 'black' and 'other' ethnic groups.
- Those from ethnic minority communities are over represented on the New Starters Sub-Register and also seek more general housing advice from the Council.

### Improving knowledge and information

Before developing the Homelessness Strategy a review of homelessness in Merton was conducted and this formed the evidence base for the strategy. It is an objective of the Homelessness Strategy to improve this knowledge and information. This includes undertaking an analysis of repeat homelessness to identify needs and services required to ensure it is reduced. Research will also be undertaken into the reasons why young people and households with children become homeless and into the 'hidden' homelessness amongst ethnic minority households in the private sector, particularly amongst Asian households who are disproportionately affected by overcrowding.

Section 3.2 sets out how we will support vulnerable people and prevent homelessness.

## 1.8 COMMUNITY STRENGTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Improving homes in all sectors helps to create stable communities where people want to live. This contributes to the Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and to Strategic Priority 4: Developing Sustainable Communities. Improving housing conditions is not just about meeting the Government's 'Decent Homes' Standard, but also about improving homes to meet the aspirations of our residents.

### A profile of Merton

Merton is a vibrant and diverse borough with residents of many cultural backgrounds. It is also a borough of contrasts with areas of affluence and deprivation. There are areas of intense deprivation in some of the eastern wards. The most deprived wards are Lavender, Pollards Hill and Phipps Bridge. They are amongst the 15% most income deprived in England and the 5% most deprived wards for housing amenities.

- Merton is a borough of contrasts with general deprivation clustered in the eastern wards. However wards in the Wimbledon area are in the top 5% most affluent in the country.
- Amongst neighbouring boroughs, Merton is the second most deprived local authority by average ward deprivation.
- The unemployment rate is 2.4%, below the outer London average. The majority of unemployment benefit claimants live in the Morden and Mitcham parliamentary constituency.
- Ethnic minority households in Merton are more likely to be on a low income and the Housing Needs Survey found that black and African and black Caribbean households in particular had average incomes that were significantly lower than the borough average.

An audit of crime and disorder in Merton found that crime rates are below average for nearly all categories of crime. However, there is growing public unease about disorder and anti-social behaviour. This has been reflected in local public attitude surveys and demonstrates widespread concern about quality of life issues. Foremost amongst these are concerns about the visible signs of anti-social behaviour such as graffiti, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles and aggressive or threatening behaviour.

Despite the generally low levels of crime, Merton has a higher than average rate of reported crime in two categories:

- Racially motivated crime.
- Criminal damage.

- The worst wards for racially motivated crime are Lavender, Phipps Bridge, Figges Marsh, Pollards Hill and St Helier.
- The worst wards for overall crime levels are Lavender, Phipps Bridge, St Helier, Abbey and Trinity.
- The wards with the highest registered dissatisfaction with graffiti are Phipps Bridge and St Helier; with fly tipping, Longthornton and Phipps Bridge.

### Community safety

There are high concentrations of Council housing in the most deprived wards in the borough and in the top wards for crime, racially motivated crime and dissatisfaction with services.



## Housing Strategy for Merton

A survey of our tenants and leaseholders in 2003 revealed that 88% felt there were problems in their area, although this represents a fall since 2000. Despite this, 63% were generally satisfied with their neighbourhood and there has been a reduction since 2000 in the number of people citing issues such as noise and abusive language as a problem. The survey also found that Mitcham tenants were more likely to have experienced burglary or vehicle break-in than those in other districts. They were also more likely to have had problems with where they live and more likely to cite problems with people and drugs.

- 33% of tenants sought help from the Council in response to crime.
- 36% of Mitcham tenants think that drug abuse is becoming more of a problem, compared to 17% in Morden and 21% in Wimbledon.
- Mitcham tenants are more likely to think there are problems where they live – 93% compared to 85% in Morden and 87% in Wimbledon.

# 2. Strategic Options Appraisal

The five strategic priorities of this Housing Strategy have been informed by and are based on the Council's corporate vision and priorities, the national and regional policies that influence our housing services in the borough and a sound understanding of local housing markets, needs and opportunities.

They have been developed with the involvement of residents, stakeholders and partners as described in Part 1 of the Strategy: Executive summary and background. Some of the events that contributed to this process were:

- The Housing Conference, 'Moving Forward in Partnership' in March 2003, attended by nearly 100 delegates.
- A newsletter, following the conference, to over 200 partners identifying key issues from the conference and providing the opportunity to comment on the draft strategic priorities.
- Consultative strategy groups and forums concerned with developing the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and our Homelessness and Ethnic Minority Housing Strategies. These all integrate with and inform the overall Housing Strategy.

These five key strategic priorities are inter-dependent with each other, and are therefore of equal importance in priority to improve the service.

Section 3 looks at each strategic priority in depth and the Action Plan in Part 3 of this strategy sets out the detailed objectives and targets for each of the priorities.

In order to ensure that the selected priorities are the right ones to deliver the strategic objectives most effectively, we have considered a wide range of actions. An options appraisal by senior managers has selected those that represent the best value for money in terms of cost and impact. These are included in the action plan.

### Criteria

The linked criteria for considering the available options for inputs and interventions by the Council are:

- **Statutory duties** – meeting the Council's obligations.
- **Corporate priorities** – the links and support provided.
- **The local market** – addressing needs and conditions.
- **Stakeholder views** – responding to ideas and feedback.
- **Regional and sub-regional priorities** – strategic fit.
- **Deliverability and resources** – likelihood of success, partnership opportunities and available resources.

The broad range of options for delivering the strategic priorities has been assessed against the above criteria.

A summary of the outcome of the appraisal is set out in the following table.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

### Summary options appraisal

Strategic Priorities	Broad Option	Applying the Criteria – A Summary	Selected Objectives	Action Plan Ref.
<b>1. Maximising the supply of new housing</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Improving access to existing housing <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxing planning requirements to encourage developers <input type="checkbox"/> Using planning agreements to ensure that a proportion of private developments are affordable <input type="checkbox"/> Council grant support for Housing Associations <input type="checkbox"/> Maximising Housing Corporation and Regional Housing Board investment <input type="checkbox"/> Making Council-owned sites available	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The local market and stakeholder feedback demonstrate the need for an 'intermediate' sector between social and market housing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resources are insufficient for development grants without local authority social housing grants <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other social housing investment should be encouraged locally and at regional and sub-regional level. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limited scope for using planning beyond the government guidance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The overall findings were a need to make much better use of existing housing in all tenures and to improve access to vulnerable groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus on making best use of Council stock <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of Council-owned sites to facilitate affordable housing development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Address the needs of ethnic communities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Developing the 'intermediate' and 'key worker' housing market <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make best use of existing private sector housing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assist vulnerable groups to gain access to the private rented sector	1-3  6  8 & 9  10  11-13  14
<b>2. Supporting vulnerable people and preventing homelessness</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional hostel accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> Council funding of additional support agencies <input type="checkbox"/> Education and awareness projects	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Homelessness Review and associated strategy arise from the application of all the criteria <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> There is a need to focus on 'housing' inputs in the Housing Strategy while encouraging an inter-agency approach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrate on implementing the approved Homelessness Strategy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Link the inputs to the Supporting People Strategy for those vulnerable to homelessness	18-29 56 & 58

## Housing Strategy for Merton

### Summary options appraisal – continued

Strategic Priorities	Broad Option	Applying the Criteria – A Summary	Selected Objectives	Action Plan Ref.
<b>3. Improving housing conditions</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Sub-regional working <input type="checkbox"/> Area renewal strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Additional expenditure on targeted improvement grants <input type="checkbox"/> Council loan provision, including equity release <input type="checkbox"/> Development of a targeted loan scheme through others i.e. authorities and providers <input type="checkbox"/> Advice and practical assistance to home owners <input type="checkbox"/> Registration, licensing and regulation in the private sector <input type="checkbox"/> Links with energy providers to support measures to tackle fuel poverty <input type="checkbox"/> Major investment in the Council stock	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An options appraisal for Council stock will ensure that the Decent Homes Standard and tenant aspirations can be met <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Housing Renewal Strategy for private housing follows guidance accompanying the Regulatory Reform Order <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Most borough residents can afford to invest in their homes with the appropriate advice <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The wards in the east of the borough need to be targeted for assistance in line with needs along with corporate and sub-regional strategies on quality of life and equalities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder and corporate priorities include energy conservation and tackling fuel poverty <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The over-arching Private Sector Housing Strategy needs to be completed and implemented	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Options appraisal for delivering Decent Homes ‘plus’ and improved services in partnership with Council tenants and leaseholders <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Developing a comprehensive Private Sector Housing Strategy including:  the Renewal Strategy of grants, advice and enforcement  the Fuel Poverty Strategy  develop advice and assistance service for home owners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensure that development and use of energy resources are sustainable	30 & 31  34  35-39  40 & 41  34, 37, 39  42-44

## Housing Strategy for Merton

### Summary options appraisal – *continued*

Strategic Priorities	Broad Option	Applying the Criteria – A Summary	Selected Objectives	Action Plan Ref.
<p><b>4. Developing sustainable communities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Area based economic development</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social and economic balance through mixed tenure developments</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Neighbourhood management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local strategic partnership focus on ‘failing’ neighbourhoods</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community empowerment through training, facilities and supportive action</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Intervention to improve local quality of life and show concern for the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing is a key contributor to balanced and sustainable communities</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Locally co-ordinated service delivery can be based around housing management initiatives</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> As a social landlord, the Council and any successor Housing Association landlord(s) are responsible stakeholders in the communities within which the stock is located</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing issues in all tenures are a platform for community engagement and empowerment</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local research shows the need to break the links between social exclusion and crime</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All the discussions raised this delivery process to the level of a Strategic Priority for housing because of the success and potential of partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus on supporting the delivery of the corporate Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy with the Local Strategic Partnership</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting Neighbourhood Management through local housing services</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increasing the effectiveness and extent of tenant and leaseholder involvement in the management of their localities</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting communities by tackling crime and the fear of crime</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improving joint working with agencies providing housing solutions and tackle the cause and effect of homelessness</li> </ul>	<p>45 &amp; 46</p> <p>47</p> <p>48 &amp; 49</p> <p>50</p>

## Housing Strategy for Merton

### Summary options appraisal – continued

Strategic Priorities	Broad Option	Applying the Criteria – A Summary	Selected Objectives	Action Plan Ref.
<b>5. Delivering through effective partnerships</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Making current partnerships more effective  <input type="checkbox"/> Better managed and integrated use of the voluntary sector – including Housing Associations  <input type="checkbox"/> Looking beyond traditional partners and engaging with private sector landlords  <input type="checkbox"/> Shared strategies and functions with neighbouring authorities  <input type="checkbox"/> Outsourcing of functions to gain wider experience and economies of scale	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All the discussions raised this delivery process to the level of a Strategic Priority for housing because of the success and potential of partnerships  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council should increasingly see itself as an enabler and facilitator to draw on the skills, resources and potential that exists in the borough and the sub-region  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Although the Council cannot delegate its statutory duties it can often meet them more effectively through specialists or through the strength of partnership working  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All of the other Strategic Priorities rely to some extent on the effectiveness of partnership and joint working arrangements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improving joint working with agencies providing housing solutions and tackle the cause and effect of homelessness  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Responding to the sub-regional context of meeting local housing needs  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improving strategic partnerships with Housing Associations as developers of both 'social' and intermediate housing  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extending the partnership working with private landlords to improve the availability of good-quality accommodation	51-55 56-58  51-55  53 & 54  59, 13

# 3. Strategic Priorities

## 3.1 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1. INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- **67 new affordable homes built or refurbished in 2002/03 and a target of 120 in 2003/04.**
- **70 social housing tenants helped in 2002/03 to move on from their homes releasing them for new households in housing need.**
- **29 privately owned empty properties brought back into use in 2002/03, with a target of 40 in 2003/04.**
- **60 key workers (33 teachers, 3 police officers and 24 NHS staff) helped to acquire affordable homes in 2002/03.**
- **A web page and marketing campaign to promote affordable housing for key workers.**
- **Review of under used Council-owned housing land and property to assess new development potential.**
- **Started a review of sheltered housing to promote new opportunities for older people in the borough.**

We will maximise the supply of affordable housing through the following actions:

### Objective 1.1 Making best use of existing affordable housing

As the largest social landlord in the borough we will let our properties more quickly by:

- **Strengthening the focus on our empty properties** ensuring the time taken to let properties continually improves over the lifetime of this strategy. This will include increasing the proportion of properties that are pre-allocated; that is, offered to housing applicants as soon as we know a property is becoming available for letting.
- **Entering into a partnering arrangement** with appropriate contractors by 2005 to reduce the length of time it takes to carry out major repairs to our properties.
- **Implementing the recommendations of our sheltered housing review** to eliminate difficult-to-let sheltered housing. This will also generate opportunities for developing new affordable housing.

Other strategic priorities within this strategy will also assist us to make better use of our housing. In particular 'Improving Housing Conditions' and 'Developing Sustainable Communities' will make our properties more desirable and easier to let.



## Housing Strategy for Merton

We will make more homes available by helping our tenants move on to more appropriate housing. This will be achieved by:

- **Helping people move from houses that are too big for them** by offering an incentive to move to smaller, more appropriate accommodation. We will cover the cost of moving and give an additional incentive payment to all Council and Housing Association tenants to move who are under-occupying.
- **Linking up with councils in the west and north of England** through LAWN (London Alliance with the West and North), so we can offer both our own and Housing Association tenants the opportunity to move to other parts of the UK.
- **Helping tenants to buy homes in the private market** by giving them a financial contribution through the Tenants Incentive Scheme. We prioritise applications according to the demand for the size of property vacated. The scheme is over subscribed, which is an indication of its success.

### Objective 1.2 We will maximise the number of new affordable homes built or refurbished in the borough

<b>Planned 3-year affordable housing development programme</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Completions</b>
2004/05	120
2005/06	140
2006/07	140
Total	400

An appropriate supply of affordable housing, land and properties will be ensured by:

- **Using affordable housing policies**

We recognise that clear affordable housing planning policies within the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), and efficient turn-around of planning applications are critical to developing new housing.

Merton's recently adopted UDP (October 2003) which is the Local Plan for the borough, requires that on residential developments of 15 units or more, 30% of the total number of dwellings proposed, should be affordable housing. The Draft London Plan has a requirement for 50% affordable housing which is applicable to strategic sites within the borough. The weighting attached to the Draft London Plan requirement is limited at this stage as it has yet to be adopted. The Council will shortly be embarking on the preparation of its Local Development Framework (LDF) which is due for adoption in 2007 and will replace the UDP. As part of the preparation of the LDF, the Council will consider revisions to its Affordable Housing Planning Policy in the light of the London Plan and the findings of an updated Housing Needs Survey. During this interim period the Council will be making every effort to secure 50% affordable housing on strategic sites subject to satisfying other corporate priorities, such as economic development and open spaces, specific to the land in question.

The draft London Plan identifies three areas of intensification in the south west sub-region. One of these, South Wimbledon/Colliers Wood (Wandle Valley in Merton), is located in Merton and offers the potential to provide 1,300 new homes and 2,000 new jobs. Developing plans for this area will be a priority in the preparation of the Local Development Framework.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

We have reduced planning application processing times and have met the current year's handling targets set by central government. We will continue to meet revised government targets by ensuring that the process is adequately resourced and efficiently managed

We will identify land for development of new housing by:

- **Continuing our close partnership** with Housing Associations and developers. This will continue to drive our search for appropriate sites in Merton and across the south west London sub-region.
- **Identifying sites for affordable housing.** Merton has identified over 30 affordable housing sites for which no funding is allocated. The majority of the sites could be available in the next 2 years with some sufficiently advanced to take up funding immediately if it were available. We will continue to monitor these and review them in the context of sub-regional priorities.
- **Reviewing land and properties owned by Merton Housing** to access more development opportunities and by implementing recommendations.

We will maximise resources for affordable housing by:

- **Meeting regional priorities.** When considering bids for funding for new developments submitted by our partner Housing Associations, we will support only those that meet regional as well as our own local needs and are agreed with our partner boroughs in the south west London sub-region.

### ACTION IN MERTON

#### Review of Land and Property

**At the end of 2003 we carried out a review of our under-used land and property, held by the Housing Revenue Account. The first phase of this review has identified 6 sites that form the basis of bids by our partner Housing Associations to the London Housing Board for 'Innovative Scheme' funding. The schemes will provide mixed tenure accommodation to include key worker housing.**

**By reducing the sale price of the land to the Housing Association, this will allow the Social Housing Grant to stretch further and also deliver 100% nomination rights to the Council. The capital receipts that will be generated from the sales will pay for new leased properties that will provide an improved quality of temporary accommodation for homeless households.**

**Phase two of the review has identified potential for a further 15 new units of accommodation which will be reserve schemes for the first phase bids.**

**Phase three is a longer-term initiative that will consider the Council's sheltered housing. It is intended that this will not only identify opportunities for new housing to be built but it will also improve the standard, and popularity, of our sheltered housing.**

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Maximising financial support from the borough.** We will be seeking to recycle 100% of the capital from HRA land and bidding for corporate capital receipts from 2006/07. *(This is fully explained in Chapter 4: Resources).*
- **Ensure deliverability.** The borough, and the sub-region generally, already have a good track record in the delivery of new developments and take-up of financial allocations. We will continue to work closely with our partners to ensure that sites are well prepared in advance of funding bids.

We will ensure that housing is appropriate and sustainable by:

- **Strengthening control over the nature and quality of housing.** It is important that any new social housing is sustainable in terms of design, location, bedroom sizes, tenure and materials used. It should also be consistent with the wider aims of our emerging Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the Sub-Regional Strategy. We will ensure our requirements for affordable housing are agreed between our development partners and ourselves, and are readily available to Housing Associations and developers.

We are committed to helping Housing Associations working in the borough to meet the Housing Corporation's target for all new homes to incorporate modern construction methods as set out in the EGAN report.

- **Ensuring homes for vulnerable people** by working closely with the Supporting People team to identify gaps in provision for vulnerable people and to co-ordinate housing provision with care and support. *(Further details about homes for vulnerable people can be found in 3.2).*

A new Supporting People Strategy will be completed by March 2005 and this will continue to inform the development of housing for vulnerable people.

Our development programme will also complement the Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities which requires housing solutions to be found for 8 people each year over the 5-year life of its strategy. *(For information on other strategies and how to access them please see Appendix 1).*

- **Providing housing for ethnic minority communities.** Working with a wide range of community organisations and Housing Associations, we have developed an Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy that complements and feeds into this overall Housing Strategy. In order to address ethnic minority needs and gain a better understanding of housing issues facing ethnic minority communities, we will encourage appropriate ethnic minority Housing Associations to work in the borough.

Our Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy has identified a number of actions to be included in the Housing Strategy Action Plan *(See Part 3 of this strategy for the Action Plan and Appendix 2 at the end of this book for information on Merton's Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy).*

### Meeting key workers housing needs.

We will continue to make provision for key workers through the following activities.

- **Starter Homes Initiative** – this is currently delivered through Tower and Moat Housing Associations.
- **Challenge Funding** – the borough will work with Housing Associations in the borough to help key workers via funding from the 2003/2004 Challenge Fund.
- **New Housing for Key Workers** – we are currently working with Housing Associations and developers on two proposals to offer intermediate rented housing for key workers. Subject to planning permission being obtained, they will provide over 50 new homes for key workers. The borough will be seeking similar opportunities for key workers in the future.
- **Housing Advice for Key Workers** – We will provide advice for key workers on the range of options available to them. These activities will be reviewed once new research has been completed.

Many of the initiatives elsewhere in this strategy, particularly regarding homelessness prevention and accessing private-sector housing, will also help meet the needs of key workers.

### ACTION IN MERTON The Rent Deposit Scheme

**At the beginning of 2003, Merton Council successfully bid for 'homelessness' funding to develop a Rent Deposit Scheme. The scheme was widely promoted and, by providing a rent deposit and financial incentive to landlords, we are on target to help 40 households move into good quality accommodation in the private sector during 2003/04. Leases are for 2 years or longer giving families a degree of stability. All proposed rents are referred to the local rent officer to ensure that they are eligible for housing benefit. For under £2,000 per household, we are housing clients in better quality accommodation more cheaply than alternative forms of temporary accommodation.**

### Objective 1.3 Accessing good quality, affordable housing in the private sector

We will gain access to private sector housing by:

- **Extending the Rent Deposit Scheme** – we will build on the current Rent Deposit Scheme and develop further initiatives in the private sector should they be necessary.
- **Raising the standard of houses in multiple occupation** – by developing an effective licensing scheme, in line with the national scheme.
- **Bringing empty homes back into use** – we have re-organised our Housing Advice Service to incorporate services to property owners aimed at addressing the problem of empty private sector properties in the borough. This includes the provision of an empty homes telephone hotline, identification and inspection of empty properties, and liaising with the owners or their representatives to return the properties to use. We have recently introduced interest free loans of up to £10,000 over two years as an incentive for property owners to bring empty properties back into use.
- **Bringing empty space above shops into use as residential accommodation** – subject to funding from ODPM, we will participate in a sub-regional initiative to promote and deliver this scheme. This involves provision of grants of up to £20,000 and the advice services of a Home Improvement Agency where appropriate.
- **Engaging with private sector landlords on a partnership basis** through the South West London Housing Partnership. We will continue to contribute to the work of the Sub-Regional Private Sector Housing Working Group which is exploring options for improving dialogue between councils and local landlords.
- **Re-launching our Landlords Forum** which will provide landlords with a range of advice and information about letting a property. We will also distribute our 'landlord pack' which covers the main issues concerning letting out a property.
- **Assisting vulnerable peoples' access to private sector housing** – We will prioritise working with this group by developing a range of access initiatives.

### 3.2 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

#### RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Two posts were funded through the Supporting People Programme to provide tenancy support – one for teenage lone parents and another for tenants with drug addiction problems.**
- **Seven one-bedroom flats have been provided with support for ex-offenders, 8 for young people and 5 for people with mental health problems during 2003/4.**
- **We met the Government target for having no households with dependent children, or a pregnant household member, in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks, at 31st March 2003. This was one year in advance of it becoming a national target.**
- **Completion of the first Homelessness Strategy for Merton in July 2003, co-ordinated by a multi-agency strategy team.**
- **Completion of a review of all Council-owned temporary accommodation.**

We will support vulnerable people and prevent homelessness through the following actions:

#### **Objective 2.1 – Ensure vulnerable people are supported in their homes so they can live independently**

We will ensure support is available by:

- ***Working in partnership to identify gaps in provision.***  
The Housing Service will continue to work closely with the Supporting People Team to complete a new Supporting People Strategy by March 2005. Research by our Homelessness Strategy Team will improve our understanding of the housing needs and support requirements of a range of client groups. This information will continue to inform the development of housing for vulnerable people.
- ***Making the best use of existing supported housing.***  
Through the supporting people programme, all supported housing will be reviewed by March 2006. These reviews will include an assessment of whether services are strategically relevant and meeting current needs and demand. A needs assessment will also be carried out in the sub-region to look at the support needs of a wider client group so there is linkage between each borough's supporting people strategy.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Supporting vulnerable people to live independently through our programme of housing grants to voluntary organisations.** This programme, which is reviewed annually, currently supports voluntary organisations providing living skills and support for move-on to young people and to Care and Repair who help elderly and vulnerable owner-occupiers live independently in their homes. Three-year funding agreements will be developed with some organisations from April 2004 which will provide them with more security and enable them to plan services more effectively.
- **Developing a range of new supported provision.** Current programmes include developing 6 one-bedroom flats for people with learning disabilities and supporting a bid for funding and revenue resources to develop a sheltered scheme for African Caribbean elders. Further information about new developments can be found in our Action Plan.
- **Reviewing our Housing Support Team** and assessing the scope for expanding the team to meet the support needs of a wider range of vulnerable people.

### Objective 2.2 – Ensure homeless households have access to suitable temporary accommodation

We will improve our current temporary accommodation by:

- **Implementing the review of temporary accommodation.** The review found much of our temporary accommodation within Council housing to be in poor condition and no longer suitable particularly as it has shared facilities. Hall Place, the bed-and-breakfast accommodation used by Merton,

has, however, been declared a category A standard by the Bed-and-Breakfast Inspection Service. Its quality will be further improved by the conversion of 20 rooms into self-contained units which will mean households can live independently, in more appropriate temporary accommodation with their own cooking, washing and toilet facilities.

- **Reducing our use of bed-and-breakfast facilities.** Merton will meet the Government target to have no families with children in bed-and-breakfast, except in an emergency, by further extending the Rent Deposit Scheme and developing other initiatives in the private sector, should they be necessary. We will also reduce the number of single people in bed-and-breakfast to 20 by March 2006.
- **Addressing the needs of older people in housing crisis** by completing a full assessment of the availability of suitable temporary accommodation and ensuring provision is planned.

### ACTION IN MERTON

#### Joint Working to Address Homelessness

**We address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people through joint working with inter-agency groups and forums. In partnership with the Teenage Pregnancy Taskforce we are researching the needs of teenage lone parents to inform both our development programme and the Supporting People Strategy. We are also supporting the Merton Young Single Homelessness Forum to hold an accommodation day for young people, which will look at all the housing options available to them.**



## Housing Strategy for Merton

### Objective 2.3: Reduce homelessness through early intervention and prevention

We will better understand the causes of homelessness and early risk factors that can contribute towards it through:

- **Completing research into the causes of homelessness and repeated homelessness through our Homelessness Strategy.** This will include an understanding of why households with dependent children become homeless and the development of a multi agency protocol that highlights people at risk and targets assistance.
- **Improving arrangements for identifying vulnerable households** by introducing joint vulnerability assessments. Early intervention means support mechanisms can be put in place before housing crisis occurs.

We will ensure advice and information is widely available by:

- **Reviewing our Housing Advice Service** and ensuring it is proactive and preventative and is tailored towards our customers' needs. Through this review we can ensure information is widely available to all client groups and a detailed analysis of gaps in existing literature will be undertaken.
- **Improving current information to young people through joint working.** We will improve information about housing and homelessness for young people through working closely with Connexions and the Teenage Pregnancy Taskforce to produce a fact sheet that addresses a range of housing issues.

### ACTION IN MERTON Preventing Homelessness

**We prevent homelessness in many cases through our Allocations Scheme, providing permanent housing solutions for people threatened with homelessness before they are evicted. Officers in the Housing Needs Team work closely with the excluder to delay homelessness, and in many cases the homeless household is able to remain in their accommodation until alternative housing is found. This enables us to keep our use of temporary accommodation, which can be unsuitable and disruptive for many households, to a minimum.**

### Other Housing Solutions

**All homeless applicants are offered one to one interviews with the Housing Officers so a range of housing options can be assessed.**

## Housing Strategy for Merton

We will seek to prevent homelessness through mediation by:

- **Using a mediation service** on a pilot basis to intervene, where appropriate, when households become homeless due to family or parental exclusion. This is the major cause of homelessness in Merton and is particularly evident when young people approach the Housing Needs Service.

We will assist the transition from temporary supported housing into permanent accommodation and prevent homelessness by:

- **Setting targets in our Allocations Strategy** to house a range of customers that otherwise may not be accommodated. These include young people moving on from hostel accommodation, people with learning disabilities and mental health problems, and those with substance abuse problems.

We will assist non-priority single homeless people by:

- **Developing with Threshold Housing Advice** an assisted tenancy scheme. This will offer landlords incentives to accommodate single people who can often find it difficult to access private sector accommodation, due to the lack of a deposit and being on low incomes.

We will ensure homeless people play an active role in preventing homelessness through:

- **Working with homeless people**, their families, customers and former customers of the Homeless Service to identify sustainable solutions to homelessness. An objective of the Homelessness Strategy is for homeless people to actively pursue

their own solutions with the support of information and advice. The necessity to be clear with customers about limited housing resources was raised at our Homelessness Forum in September 2003 as this will help influence people's choices.

- **Developing programmes of effective consultation** with homeless people and methods whereby homeless customers can feedback their views on an on going basis.

### Objective 2.4 Develop an effective, evidence-based inter-agency strategy that minimises homelessness in the longer term

We will ensure agencies work together effectively to meet the needs of homeless and potentially homeless people through:

- **Developing and improving partnerships.** This will be done through our inter-agency Homelessness Strategy Team, which will continue to meet 4 times each year throughout the life of our Homelessness Strategy (2003-2008). We will also improve partnerships with the youth service, education, probation service, Housing Associations and voluntary organisations. Our key aim is for partners to have a joint understanding of homelessness issues so they can work effectively together to address them in a co-ordinated way.
- **Working with other boroughs in the south west London sub-region to develop an integrated housing strategy** that contributes to minimising homelessness. We will also establish a network with at least 3 critical friends in other London boroughs to share good practice and hold an inter-agency Homelessness Forum at least twice each year.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

We will promote social inclusion through equal access to health, education, training and employment by:

- **Using the NOTIFY system** to improve the way in which housing, education and social services are informed when a household moves out of temporary accommodation.
- **Ensuring homeless people, particularly those with children, in temporary accommodation have access to appropriate health services.** Often homeless people can suffer from poor health and we will improve the information provided by the Housing Needs Team to the health visiting service.
- **Encouraging people to go into education, training and employment to break the cycle of homelessness.** We will be raising the profile of adult education through awareness raising events and improving the life chances of children in care through the Local Preventative Strategy. This strategy was developed by a range of partners, including housing, to improve the quality of life of children in the borough. We will also develop the key skills of those who are homeless and potentially homeless by working with partners to implement targeted training programmes. We will also maximise all opportunities to be gained from the European Social Fund and other external funding.

Further details of the actions being taken to meet this priority can be found in our Action Plan. Other measures to address and prevent homelessness can be found in our Homelessness Strategy.

### ACTION IN MERTON

#### The Homelessness Strategy Team

**The inter-agency Homelessness Strategy Team monitors the Homelessness Strategy and ensures targets are being met. It also ensures the homelessness review is kept up to date.**

**The team regularly invites representatives from services and agencies to discuss the needs of particular customers. This not only improves our information-base but will inform the future development of our Homelessness Strategy.**

### 3.3 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: IMPROVING HOUSING CONDITIONS

#### RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

##### Improving Council homes

- The number of non-decent homes has been reduced by one-third.
- Tenants endorsed a borough-wide implementation plan for eliminating non-decent homes.
- An improved data base of housing stock condition was introduced.
- Tenants agreed the basis for option appraisal consultation and approved the boundaries of local neighbourhoods.
- 'Community Voice' was launched in December 2003. This is a tenant and leaseholder participation initiative to ask residents about their views and aspirations for their homes and neighbourhoods.

##### Improving private homes

- 96 renovation grants were awarded to vulnerable households, 34 owner occupiers received Disabled Facilities Grants and enforcement action was taken in 3 cases where properties were unfit for habitation during 2003/4.

- A new Private Sector Renewal Policy was implemented in July 2003 in response to the Regulatory Reform Order.
- A partnership with Houseproud was established to give older and more vulnerable people access to equity release loans to improve their homes.

##### Reducing fuel poverty

- A multi-agency Energy Strategy Group was formed.
- A Fuel Poverty Seminar was held in partnership with EAGA and Warm Front.
- An Affordable Warmth Strategy was completed for Council properties.
- Funding was obtained for a 'Health Through Warmth Scheme' to train health workers about fuel poverty.
- An Energy Efficiency and Environment Officer for the Council's housing was appointed with a budget of £77,000.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Merton was awarded flagship status by British Gas, in a national scheme for targeting fuel poverty.**
  - **Central heating was installed in 115 council homes and solar heating fitted into 5 council homes through 'Clear Skies' match funding .**
  - **A Home Safety Partnership was launched and staff have been trained to identify energy inefficient homes.**
  - **Multi-agency energy efficiency training for front-line staff was given by the Creative Environmental Networks (CEN).**
  - **'Here to Help' programme in Morden completed in partnership with EAGA and British Gas.**
  - **20,000 leaflets were distributed giving information about the cheapest energy suppliers.**
  - **£40,000 in match-funding was awarded from British Gas to develop the 'Home Energy for Life Programme' with the EAGA partnership.**
- Promoting sustainable energy**
- **A Sustainable Development Policy was drafted for Council and private sector homes.**
  - **We assessed in partnership with Powergen, the feasibility of using ground-source heating in Council and Housing Association properties.**
  - **Mini guides were produced for private developers and housing associations about sustainable construction.**

## Housing Strategy for Merton

We will improve housing conditions by the following actions:

### **Objective 3.1 Meeting the 'Decent Homes Standard' set down by Government for council homes and the aspirations of our tenants towards their home**

The 'Decent Homes' standard will be met through:

- **Developing a clear strategy for eliminating non-decent homes by 2010** involving a phased programme of bringing approximately 310 units per year up to the standard. Approximately £9 million has been made available for this programme by top slicing funds from the Major Repairs Allowance.
- **Acquiring more comprehensive stock condition information over the next two years.** This will be used to improve information about our stock and to inform the repairs programme. The new software system (Codeman) will work in conjunction with our mainframe computer system and allow better access to information. It will also establish stronger links between the stock condition database and the responsive repair system.
- **Reviewing our 'Decent Homes' strategy and funding position** in 2005 in light of the improved stock condition data being collected. Information on the rate at which existing 'Decent Homes' fall outside the decency standard over time will also be taken into account.

We will meet our tenants' aspirations for their homes by:

- **Continuing to work with our tenants and leaseholders** to agree acceptable and desired housing standards.

Our tenants have already told us that they:

- Expect their homes to exceed basic decent homes standards.
- Are not happy with current levels of investment.
- Are interested in considering all available options for the future of the housing stock.

We will continue working together as the improvement programme develops.

- **Consulting at neighbourhood level with all members of the community to develop a stock options appraisal in compliance with ODPM guidance.** The key message which came out of our Housing Conference in April 2003 was that it is essential to identify what is important to tenants in considering options for housing and that housing which is more locally and community based can be more effective in meeting the needs of the community. Our consultation will encompass new ways of managing homes, e.g. through greater tenant control; local boards or tenant management organisations. The process may involve partner agencies in the local area such as Police, Housing Associations, other Council services and health services. Consultation with our residents started in December 2003, with the launch of 'Community Voice'. 'Community Voice' will be a major boost to tenant participation in Merton. It is a long-term commitment to find out what residents want in terms of how their homes are managed, levels of modernisation and their aspirations for their neighbourhoods. New ways of getting in touch with residents to hear their views will be found and independent advice will be available if necessary.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Ethnic minority tenants will be particularly encouraged to participate in the decision making process.** More details of how this will be achieved, for instance, through open days, community groups and newsletters, can be found in the borough's Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy.

More details of how we will engage tenants in this process can be found in our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

### Objective 3.2 Address issues of non-decent condition homes in private sector housing occupied by vulnerable people

We will meet this objective through the following actions:

- **Completing a Private Sector Housing Strategy,** key objectives of which will be to improve private sector housing conditions. This strategy will also set out how the Council will meet the requirements of the Housing Bill.
- **Utilise equity release to enable essential repairs and adaptations to privately owned homes.** We will work with other London boroughs to promote and deliver this scheme through Care and Repair and Houseproud.
- **Improving the condition of houses in multiple occupation and developing a Health and Safety Rating System** to identify risks to vulnerable people in private sector accommodation. This is also a proposal in the new Housing Bill and a system will be developed in line with government guidance.

- **Offering grants to vulnerable people,** our non-repayable small repairs grant of up to £3,000 is targeted towards people and properties most in need. Disabled Facilities Grants are available for owner-occupiers and assistance is available to landlords for fire precaution work to houses of multiple occupation. Further assistance is also available to landlords to remedy unfitness in properties occupied by regulated tenants.
- **Working in partnership to promote Merton's grants** and providing households with wide ranging advice about home repairs and financing options. Our partnership with Care and Repair will continue and develop. We will assist them to extend their hospital discharge and home safety work and assess their potential for delivering Disabled Facilities Grants.
- **Working with the Home Safety Partnership.** The partnership is made up of a range of officers and agencies such as the fire service, health workers, social services and police. Frontline staff from each of these services have been trained to identify risks in vulnerable peoples' homes and signposts them to services which can assist them.

### Objective 3.3 Reduce fuel poverty in all tenures

Fuel poverty will be tackled in the Council sector through:

- **Setting aside £77,000 from the Major Repairs Allowance to address fuel poverty.** With this budget we will continue to develop partnerships to tackle fuel poverty.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

Our partnership work will include:

- **Working with EAGA and British Gas** to further develop the 'Here to Help Programme'. Through this community-based scheme, energy efficiency measures will be implemented and advice given on raising incomes.
- **Working with the Creative Environmental Network**, who provide energy efficiency advice and financial assistance to tenants; Powergen and Simply Energy to provide advice and information to residents about the cheapest rates fuel.

More details of how we will address fuel poverty in Council homes can be found in our Affordable Warmth Strategy for Merton's housing stock and the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

Fuel poverty will be tackled in the private sector through:

- **Completing a Private Sector Stock Condition Survey** to allow a better understanding of energy efficiency levels in private sector homes and inform our Fuel Poverty Strategy.
- **Strengthening partnerships** with a range of organisations including, neighbouring authorities, health workers and other Council services in order to raise awareness about fuel poverty, promote the availability of Warm Front Grants and target advice and assistance.

We will address fuel poverty in all tenures by:

- **Completing a Fuel Poverty Strategy by March 2005**, which will be driven by the multi-agency Energy Strategy Group. The strategy will set base line levels of fuel poverty in Merton and include an action plan for addressing fuel poverty and meeting the national target.

### Objective 3.4: To actively promote sustainable energy

Sustainable energy will be promoted by:

- **Raising awareness** amongst Merton staff and the wider community about funding sources and the environmental and financial benefits of sustainable energy and materials. Seminars will be held for a range of staff about renewable materials and sustainable energy.
- **Developing Merton's Sustainable Development Policy** for Council homes and using renewable energy where possible in Council stock. Solar heating was installed as part of a pilot scheme during 2003/4 and the success of this scheme will be evaluated during 2004/5.
- **Developing a sustainable housing scheme using renewable energy.** We aim to develop a scheme similar to Bed Zed in Sutton, which has received much acclaim and publicity, and funding has been obtained to carry out an initial feasibility study.



### **ACTION IN MERTON**

#### **Energy Efficiency Advice**

**Council residents are being helped to save money on fuel bills as a result of our partnership with energy brokers, Simply Energy. Residents are given free impartial advice from Simply Energy about the best deal available. This helps them to reduce their fuel bills and protects them from undesirable sales tactics which are common since the de-regulation of the domestic energy market.**

#### **Energy Saving Funding**

**We attend the South West London Sub-Regional Private Sector Housing Group. This is made up of officers responsible for private sector housing standards in neighbouring boroughs. We are bidding jointly for funding from 'Coldbusters' to install insulation measures in fuel poor private sector households.**

#### **Renewable Energy Website**

**During 2003 we worked with students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the USA to develop an interactive web site which identifies funding sources for a range of renewable energy schemes.**

### 3.4 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

#### RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- **The Housing Management Service has supported the development of Merton Partnership Against Crime (MPAC), who led the Crime and Disorder Strategy.**
- **An inspection by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) in December 2002 said, “There is evidence that the partnership is delivering improved outcomes. MPAC has been successful in achieving key areas of the crime and disorder strategy 1999-2002.”**
- **Three working groups under the Local Strategic Partnership, including housing representation, examined social renewal, economic renewal, and quality of life.**
- **Partnership working through MPAC contributed to a 47% reduction in reported crime between September 2001 and August 2002 in the Sadler Close estate in Mitcham.**
- **MPAC has joined with Southwark Mediation to recruit local mediators and has launched a mediation service for Merton.**
- **The Neighbourhood Warden Scheme has been expanded and is supported by a multi-agency steering group and local support panels, including Police and local residents.**
- **The Merton Warden Scheme was nominated in the National Warden awards under Team of the Year and for a personal achievement award, and was selected as one of three schemes nationally to take part in three videos for use by warden schemes across the country.**

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **The Council's Housing Service has been pro-active in addressing nuisance and anti-social behaviour; 24 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) with young people have been agreed, 16 Notices of Seeking Possession have been served, 3 Possession orders have been granted and 2 injunctions were obtained on nuisance grounds during 2003/4.**
- **A new initiative was launched in 2003 with funding for 2 staff to respond to prolific offenders.**
- **Estate surgeries for residents in Council housing have been expanded and are now held in conjunction with the Police and Neighbourhood Wardens.**
- **The Council's Mascot Community Alarm service has 818 customers and provides alarm services to Housing Associations. The services provided by Mascot are recognised for quality by the current award of Chartermark and include:**
  - **A dispersed alarm service for use by the general public.**
  - **A dispersed alarm service for the victims of racial harassment.**
  - **An out-of-hours repairs emergency service to our tenants in Council housing, and**
  - **Monitoring and response to tenants of Merton's sheltered housing.**
- **Recent achievements of Merton's Drug and Alcohol Action Team include: sponsoring information through a youth video; the provision of drugs/substance awareness training for over 60 front line staff in Housing and Social Services; distribution to every Council tenant/leaseholder of information for parents '*Do your children know more about drugs than you do?*'; agreement on the provision of accommodation for Merton residents who have successfully completed drug treatment; appointment of a floating support worker funded by the DAAT in the Housing Support Team and the operation of a pilot Rent Deposit Scheme in private sector housing.**

## Housing Strategy for Merton

In 2001, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) adopted the development of a neighbourhood renewal strategy for Merton as its sole priority. The vision for the strategy is 'to reduce the gap between the most deprived wards in the borough and the rest of the borough so as to improve the quality of life of all residents of Merton'. In January 2003, three multi-agency working parties were established in order to set the agenda for this strategy. The Housing Service has been an active participant in each of these working parties. The draft strategy was available in December 2003. Its three themes are:

- Creating sustainable suburbs.
- Strengthening social cohesion.
- Improving well being.

The final strategy will be completed by July 2004. Our commitment to 'develop sustainable communities' will be in the context of the corporate Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

### **Objective 4.1: Contribute to a successful Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy for the borough with a leading role by the Housing Service**

This will be achieved by:

- **Contributing to the development of Merton's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.** Housing will be represented at both the Neighbourhood Renewal Steering Group Partnership, chaired by the Leader of the Council, and the Community Forum which also involves local people through working parties, theme teams, surveys and workshops.

- **Actively participating in multi-agency working in support of the strategy including:**

- Phipps Bridge Partnership.
- Merton Partnership Against Crime.
- Merton Race Equality Partnership.
- Healthy Schools Partnership.

- **Reconfiguring the Housing Service** with the Phipps Bridge office to be the first pilot neighbourhood in the borough.

### **Objective 4.2 Encouraging sustainable housing through development and improvement**

This will be achieved by:

- **Prioritising the development of mixed use, multi-tenure housing schemes within the target areas.** The Plans and Projects Team has developed a sustainable Suburbs Policy which recognises the suburbs multi-functional role.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Ensuring that any new development in the target area contributes to sustaining the local community.** This will be through training and employment schemes, tenant empowerment initiatives and the use of lettings plans to ensure balanced communities.
- **Prioritising empty homes activity in the target area.** Empty homes, in both the private and public sector, will be targeted towards the neighbourhood renewal areas.
- **Working with the Supporting People programme** to ensure that tenants and residents with support needs are able to play an active role in their community.

### **Objective 4.3 Increasing the involvement of residents, particularly those from ethnic minority communities, in the Housing Service.**

This will be achieved by:

- **Working with residents on the options for Council housing in smaller, more local neighbourhoods.** The Council has agreed the basis of this new approach (under the heading of 'Community Voice') and this will be a major activity in year 2004/2005.  
(For more detailed information on this please refer to the HRA Business Plan).

To resource this, the Council's Housing Management service will appoint 9 staff exclusively to develop communities within Council housing and underpin the approach that the Council takes on option appraisal for Council housing.

- **Holding an annual borough-wide conference to promote tenant participation and community development.** This will be an annual event, last held in December 2003, aimed at involving people who are usually excluded from participation and involvement.

### **ACTION IN MERTON**

#### **Involving Residents from the High Path Estate, South Wimbledon**

**The community of High Path Estate in South Wimbledon have worked closely with the Council, MPAC and Groundwork to develop proposals and carry out improvements to their estate.**

**The initiative has been widely publicised and a number of events held including two open days, and presentations and discussions in local Schools. All of these events were aimed at raising awareness and gathering opinions and giving residents the opportunity to flag areas of concern. The inclusion of youth has been an important aspect of the Partnership.**

**Phase one will see the transformation of an abandoned corner of the estate into a garden. This will be funded jointly funded by Living Spaces (ODPM), the Police, Groundwork, MPAC and the Councils community safety budget.**

**It is intended that Phase two will result in the development of a skateboard park.**

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Increasing the involvement of ethnic minority groups.**

The Government's Social Exclusion Unit found high concentrations of ethnic minorities in the most deprived areas, and these communities are disproportionately at risk of social exclusion. They are more likely to be affected by poor housing, unemployment, low educational attainment, ill health, as well as crime. This has been highlighted in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2001) and reiterated in the Communities Plan. In partnership with Housing Associations and community groups, we will:

- Research the extent of, and aspirations for, ethnic minority involvement through impact assessment, analysis of our tenant satisfaction survey and mapping of ethnic minority households.
- Increase involvement of ethnic minority communities through ethnic minority open days and other initiatives.

### **Objective 4.4: Greater promotion of community safety – dealing with nuisance and anti-social behaviour, racial harassment, domestic violence, graffiti and work to reduce crime**

This will be achieved by:

- **Review of funding arrangements for community safety through housing budgets.** We will build upon the current financial commitments from the housing budget to Community Safety Schemes for local residents (£200,000 per year); CCTV and neighbourhood wardens.
- **Consult with tenants about funding new initiatives in community safety** through the 3 year budget review process.

- **Continue to work with a range of partners** including the Police, Merton Racial Equality Partnership and Housing Associations to take firm action in cases of racial harassment. The borough-wide Racial Incidents Panel will continue to meet regularly to agree the best course of action in individual cases and to monitor and tackle racial harassment in a strategic way.
- **Prioritising the removal of racist and obscene graffiti** within 24 hours.
- **Working with social landlords in the borough** to adopt an agreed communications strategy and publicity about race crime in the borough.
- **Tackling youth crime** and disorder through the Crime and Disorder Strategy. Youth crime has been identified as a high risk affecting communities in the borough, especially in Council housing.

### **ACTION IN MERTON**

#### **Ethnic Minority Open Days**

**In June 2003 an open day was held for ethnic minority residents at Merton Civic Centre. It was an informal event that included refreshments and a prize draw and attracted over 70 residents. As a consequence, there now is ethnic minority representation on the majority of residents associations. The chair and over 50% of the membership of Mitcham Residents' Association are now from ethnic minority backgrounds.**

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Working with partners** in the DAAT and MPAC to adopt preventive strategies with particular emphasis on crime hot spots.
- **Tackling anti social behaviour in the Ravensbury Ward** through the appointment of a new dedicated Development and Initiatives Officer. This has been funded by the Anti Social Behaviour Unit as a pilot scheme.

### MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Leader, Merton Council

Chief Executive, Merton Council

Member of Parliament for Mitcham and Morden

Member of Parliament for Wimbledon

Borough Commander, Merton Police

Chair, Merton Chamber of Commerce

Jobcentre Plus

Chair, Merton Voluntary Service Council

Director of Policy and Performance Management-Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth Primary Care Trust

Chief Executive, Merton and Sutton Primary Care Trust

Principal, Merton College

Learning and Skills Council

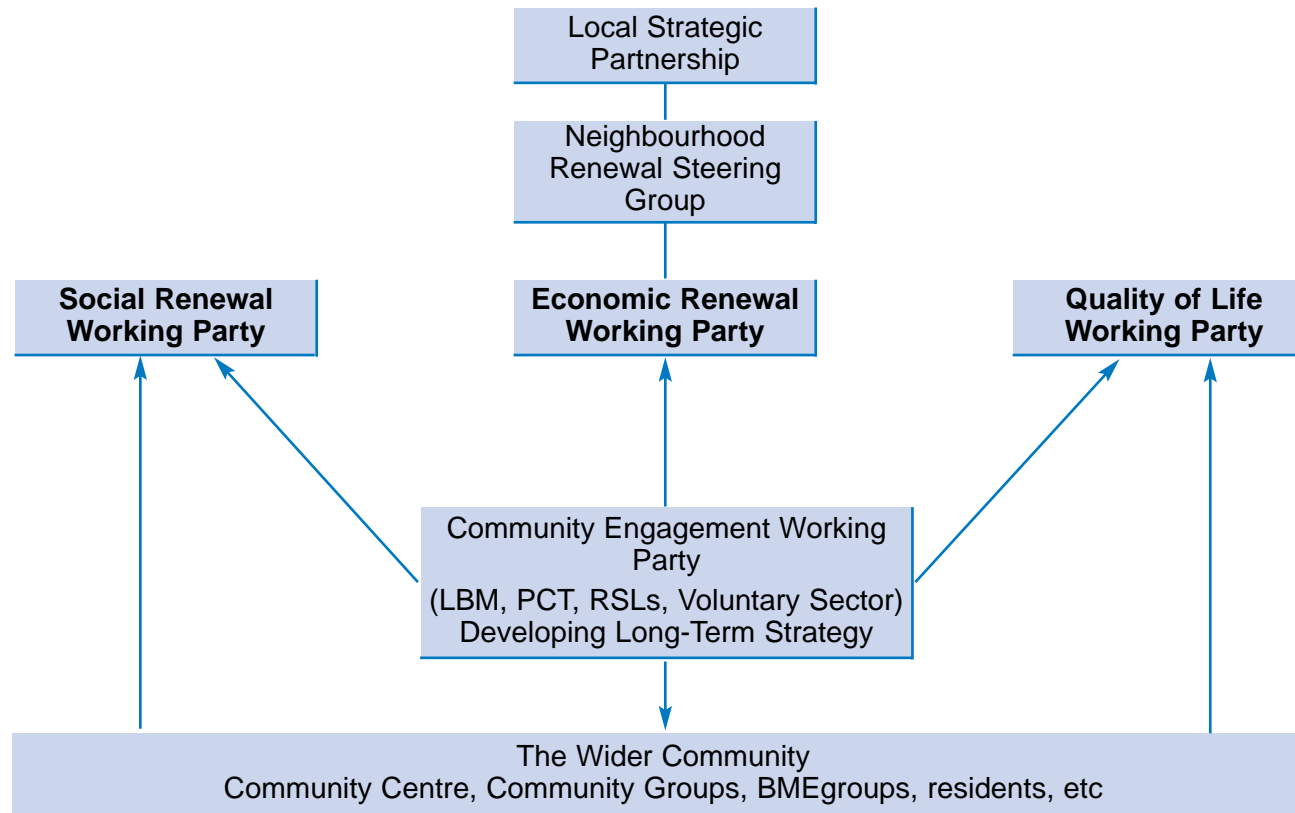
Chair, Merton Race Equality Partnership

Interfaith Forum

Trade Union Representative

# Housing Strategy for Merton

## NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL STRUCTURE





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### 3.5 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: DELIVERING THROUGH EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

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#### RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Housing Strategy Conference 2003 set out our housing partnership agenda and agreed our objectives.**
- **Formation of the South West London Housing Partnership made up of 7 London Boroughs (Croydon, Kingston, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth).**
- **Completion in October 2003 of the first South West London Sub-Regional Housing Strategy.**
- **Agreement on cross borough nominations to housing developed by Housing Associations across the sub-region with funding from the Housing Corporation in 2003/04.**
- **Ongoing involvement of a wide range of local partners in the implementation and development of the Homelessness Strategy.**
- **Completion of an Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton with local community organisations and partner Housing Associations, endorsed by Merton's Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations.**
- **Work with Housing Association partners to identify the feasibility of new or improved use of under-used housing land and properties within Council ownership.**

### **Objective 5.1: To work effectively both across borough boundaries and on a sub-regional basis with local authorities, Housing Associations and others in order to deliver whole area solutions to increase the supply of affordable housing and meeting housing needs**

We will achieve this by:

- **Contributing 1,290 new homes** to the housing capacity target for the South West London Sub-Region.
- **Working with the Housing Corporation and other boroughs to identify preferred partner Housing Associations for the sub-region.** Whilst doing this we will also maintain and respect our relationship with Housing Associations already owning and developing housing in the borough.
- **Exploring with other boroughs in the sub-region** whether a common set of standards for planning policy for affordable housing is beneficial.
- **Benchmarking performance** in the use of planning (Section 106) agreements and compare good practice to maximise affordable housing and diversify tenure.
- **Driving and co-ordinating research into the housing needs of ethnic minority communities in the sub-region.** Merton has established a Sub-Regional Ethnic Minorities Housing Group. The group will ensure the housing needs and aspirations of black and ethnic groups are addressed and incorporated into the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy which is due to be completed by autumn 2004.
- **Researching with other boroughs in the sub-region the housing needs of key workers.** This involves defining and prioritising key workers and researching their housing needs and also looking at wider public sector workers where there are recruitment problems. Merton will also contribute to establishing partnering arrangements to set up 'marketing zones' which will allow key workers a single point of contact to make enquiries about provision.
- **Planning cross borough provision to meet the needs of vulnerable people.** The needs of some vulnerable customers will be best met at a sub-regional level, especially if they require specialist support which is unavailable in the borough where they live. There is already strong Supporting People cross working team and Merton will continue to work with the South West Cross Authority Group to develop priorities for new services which meet the needs of the whole south west region. The need for a cross authority sheltered housing scheme for African Caribbean elders has already been identified. The review programme for supported housing schemes began in April 2003 and will be completed by March 2006. This will provide an opportunity for some services to be remodelled and new needs to be met.
- **Appointing a sub regional co-ordinator.** This will be done jointly with other boroughs and the co-ordinator will develop the South West London Housing Strategy, service the partnership, lead on consultation and communication and also manage the implementation of the strategy.
- **Revising our forums and partnerships.** Each borough in the sub-region has its own forums and partnerships and Merton, along with other south-west boroughs, will review these to ensure they best meet the needs of the sub-region and that there is no unnecessary duplication.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Investigating how to improve mobility across and out of the sub-region.** With other boroughs, we will explore how mobility can be improved in the south-west region and share good practice on choice based schemes. Croydon for example, has piloted a choice based lettings scheme and the whole sub-region can learn from this experience.

### Objective 5.2 To improve partnerships that reduce and address homelessness

We will achieve this by:

- **Building on the work undertaken by the Homelessness Strategy Team.** The Homelessness Strategy Team has representatives from a number of different agencies with a key role to play in the homelessness arena. We will continue to develop this partnership to ensure that information continues to be gathered on the needs of homeless households, and that an effective network of services is available to meet these needs.
- **Building on the work of the Homelessness Forum.** Nearly 100 services from a variety of agencies are represented on the Homelessness Forum. We will continue to use the Forum as a means of building partnerships, to exchange information and increase awareness of the needs of homeless households.
- **Developing partnerships with homeless households.** People who become homeless or who are threatened with homelessness are key partners in developing effective services. We will develop a programme that ensures effective consultation with homeless people. Working in partnership with customers in the planning, delivery and review of services is a key factor in providing quality services.

- **Developing partnerships across borough boundaries and on a sub-regional basis.** It is important to ensure that we work effectively with colleagues in neighbouring boroughs to maximise the opportunities for sub-regional working. We will work with sub-regional authorities to develop an integrated housing strategy that contributes to minimising homelessness.
- **Ensuring that the Homelessness Strategy is effectively linked with other key strategies.** The Homelessness Strategy cannot be achieved in isolation. We will ensure that the work undertaken to fulfill the Homelessness Strategy is effectively linked to other strategies. These include the Housing Strategy, Supporting People Strategy, the Children's Strategic Plan, Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, Health Improvement Action Plan, and the Education Development Plan.

### Objective 5.3 To improve and develop partnerships which increase accessibility to good quality private rented housing and which promote the improvement of private sector housing conditions

We will achieve this by:

- **Re-launching Merton's Private Landlords Forum.** Through this forum we will provide landlords with a range of advice and information. Representatives from the Landlords Association at our Housing Conference identified issues which are of particular concern to private landlords and these include: housing benefit, tenancy agreements, repairs and maintenance, health and safety, evictions and re-possession. This forum will also encourage new partnerships and initiatives in the private housing sector.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

- **Extending the Rent Deposit Scheme.** We will build on the success of the current scheme, on our already established relationships with private landlords and on the interest shown by new landlords to assist homeless households move into the private sector.
- **Completing a Private Sector Housing Strategy.** The need for an integrated strategy to address private sector housing issues is recognised. This will be completed by March 2005 and will be developed by the Private Sector Housing Strategy Team which includes representatives from a range of Council departments and the voluntary sector. Key objectives of the strategy will be increasing the accessibility of good quality private rented housing, ensuring sound housing advice is available, promoting and maintaining improved conditions and enabling the elderly and disabled to retain independence at home.
- **Working across borough boundaries and sub-regionally.** We have been meeting regularly with partner authorities in the sub-region to address a range of issues including non-decency in the private sector, empty homes, disrepair, fuel poverty and landlord accreditation. Jointly we will develop initiatives to address these issues and bid for funding to implement schemes where possible.

### ACTION IN MERTON

#### Help for Elderly Owner-Occupiers

**Our partnership with Houseproud gives elderly and vulnerable owner-occupiers the opportunity to access equity release loans to fund home improvements and repairs. If households choose this option, Care and Repair can provide support to customers both in choosing and negotiating with contractors. Ensuring elderly and vulnerable people can improve and repair their homes not only improves the condition of private sector housing in the borough overall, but helps vulnerable people to live independently and remain in their homes.**

# 4. Resources

This section sets out the resources available for delivery of the Housing Strategy. The strategy sets out an ambitious agenda and the Council alone does not have the resources available to meet all of the strategic objectives. Some of the resources depend on allocations from government, whilst others are linked to partnerships with other organisations. Details of our performance over the past three years is included in Part 3: Past Performance and Future Targets.

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### 4.1 KEY FACTORS AFFECTING THE LEVEL OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE

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There are a number of factors that affect how the Council will harness financial resources during the life of this strategy.

**The Communities Plan** – From 2004/05, housing capital resources in London, for Councils and Housing Associations, will be allocated on the basis of recommendations by the London Housing Board. These recommendations will be made through regional priorities set out in the London Housing Strategy.

**Pooling of capital receipts** – From April 2004, 75% of all useable capital receipt income from the sale of Council houses under the right to buy scheme, and 50% of receipts from the sale of other Council owned housing land and property, will be pooled. This pool of money will be re-allocated nationally on the basis of housing needs. It is not yet clear whether Merton will gain or lose from this process. A medium-term financial strategy is being developed by the Council for all its services to plan how best its revenue and capital resources will be used.

**Retention of 100% of capital receipts for affordable housing and regeneration** – There is one exception to the proposed pooling arrangements. This is that 100% of capital receipts from the sale of Council owned housing land and property (excluding right-to-buy sales) may be applied to new affordable housing and regeneration where these areas have been identified as a strategic priority.

We will take advantage of this by reviewing our Housing Revenue Account land and property holding, and, subject to detailed Council approval, using funds from the disposal of some land to pay for affordable housing and regeneration.

**Abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant** – Local authorities now have to meet the full costs from their own resources of funding housing associations to build new affordable housing. This is because, from the 1st April 2003, they have not been able to claim the Social Housing Grant.

In response, we are considering funding new affordable housing ourselves. The money will come directly from the resources generated from the sale of our Housing Revenue Account land and property (see above).

**Prudential Framework** – From April 2004 individual authorities will be able to determine their own borrowing levels, taking account of the value of their assets and how much it would be sensible for them to borrow. First indications suggest that this option would benefit Merton Council.

# Housing Strategy for Merton

## 4.2 HOW FINANCIAL INVESTMENT DECISIONS ARE MADE

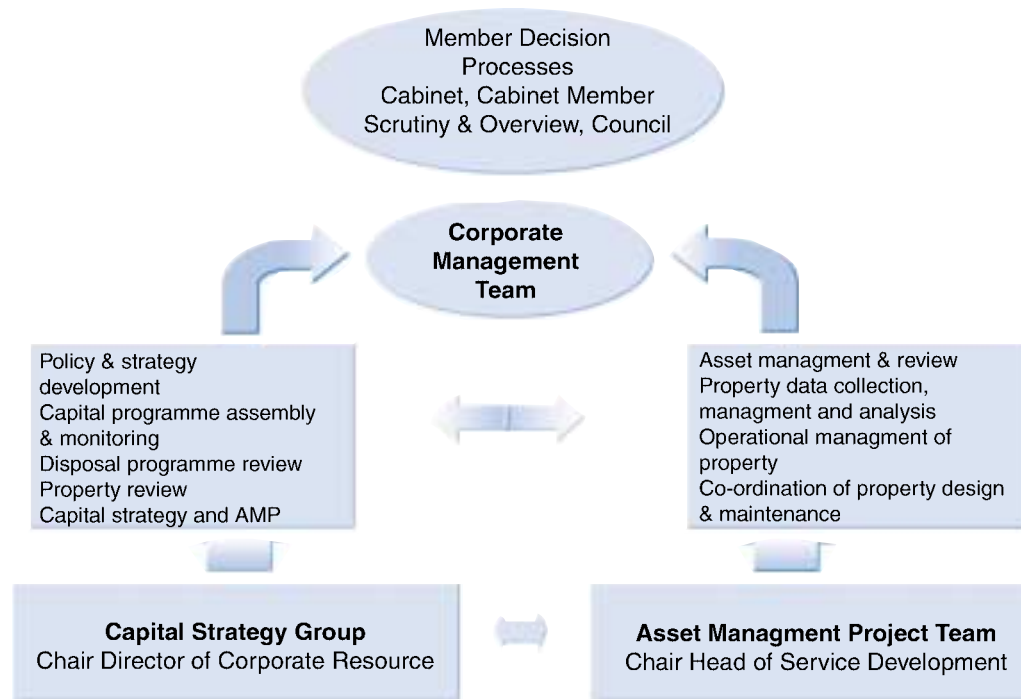
### For improvements and investment funded by Capital

The Council's Capital Strategy provides the framework for capital investment by the Council in all its services. The Council's strategy demands that allocation of resources must be consistent with corporate strategic objectives. This means that any bid for resources is prioritised on the basis of a matrix that awards points against council priorities. The diagram below illustrates the decision-making process for capital

schemes. Merton's Capital Strategy 2002/2005 and Corporate Asset Management Plan 2002/2003 were rated as "good" by the Government Office for London in 2002 and are, therefore, 'fit for purpose'.

The Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) is a government allowance provided annually to repair and improve the Council's housing. Tenants are involved in the selection of repair and improvement schemes through the District Housing Panels and the Housing Consultative Forum.

### Corporate decision-making process for capital schemes



# Housing Strategy for Merton

## For revenue funded schemes

We have two sources of revenue funding for the Housing Service. The Housing General Fund includes income generated from Council Tax and other government grants and can be applied to the wider community, for instance, giving advice to tenants and landlords in private housing or paying for the cost of temporary accommodation for homeless families. The Council will decide how much revenue from the general fund will be made available for housing purposes. The Housing Revenue Account is income generated from Council house rents and subsidies. This can only be used on Council-owned housing and services for Council tenants and leaseholders.

Regarding the Housing General Fund, a Council wide review of all Council services funded from Council Tax is taking place. It will require over 100 'service units' to justify their level of resources.

For the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) we will set rents each year taking account of government guidance, the current performance of the HRA and anticipated growth and savings. The Cabinet Member for Housing takes the initial decision on rent setting. Afterwards we will consult tenants through the Housing Consultative Forum. Taking account of any representations by the Life Chances Overview and Scrutiny Panel, rent levels will be agreed by a meeting of the full Council.

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## 4.3 PRESSURES ON THE HOUSING CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGETS

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The Council's over-riding commitment to the capital programme for 2002 to 2006 is the delivery of the schools re-organisation programme to move from a three-stage to a two-stage structure. As a consequence, during that period, capital resources directly provided by the Council are restricted for other Council services, including housing.

HRA spending projections show that the revenue account will be under increasing pressure in the coming years. It will be sustainable if assumptions of government subsidy are as forecast, and we are able to make budget savings. This will, however, need to be kept under review.

A summary of the Council's current and forecasted HRA budget is provided in the HRA Business Plan.

HRA capital funding also shows a gap, estimated to be in excess of £57m over five years, based on existing resources. There was a close vote against an entire stock transfer in July 2002. During 2003/04 we are looking at other options for meeting the Government's 'Decent Homes' targets and the Council's overall investment needs. This is detailed in the HRA Business Plan.

In addition, this Housing Strategy contains a challenging set of targets, including those set by central Government, that require funding:

- Delivery of 500 new affordable homes in Merton by 2007. This will make a significant call on capital funding but is vital if we are to meet targets to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for homeless people.
- Meeting the aspirations of tenants and leaseholders as well as the 'Decent Homes' standard will make a substantial demand on capital resources.
- Delivery of neighbourhood renewal objectives will require a mixture of revenue and capital and will require a creative way of working within existing resources.



## Housing Strategy for Merton

- Improving performance, and re-organising the Housing Management Service will have restructuring, accommodation and Information Technology costs, however this will also bring about efficiency savings.

### 4.4 HOUSING CAPITAL BUDGETS 2003 TO 2007

The updated programme for 2003/4, and proposed programmes for 2004/5 to 2006/7 are shown below.

#### Expenditure

**Increasing the supply of affordable housing:** with local authorities no longer able to claim the Social Housing Grant, the Council will continue supporting the development of new affordable housing. We will do this through the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme and, subject to detailed Council approval, recycling of capital generated by any sales of housing land or properties.

**Improving Council homes:** given the constraints on the capital programme, a high proportion has been targeted towards improving our own housing stock. The majority of this is aimed at meeting the 'Decent Homes' target although provision is also made for work not related to decent homes. This includes £200,000 each year for community safety schemes and £157,000 each year to help tenants buy their own homes and release Council accommodation (Tenants Incentive Scheme).

**Private sector renewal:** We are committed to involvement in private sector renewal. We are seeking to increase our funding in this area of work year on year by making contributions from capital receipts as well as using government grants and allowances. The new grants regime for private sector housing means that take-up of grants is uncertain and this will be closely monitored.

The Housing Capital Budget – 2003/2007				
£000	2003/4 Budget	2004/5 Budget(1)	2005/6 Budget(1)	2006/7 Budget(1)
<b>Council Housing Stock</b>	5,758	5,495	5,900	6,107
<b>Support for Housing Associations</b>	764	1,317	1,317	1,317
<b>Private Sector Renewal</b>	200	200	350	400
<b>Disabled Facilities Grant</b>	350	350	425	425
<b>Total expenditure</b>	7,072	7,361	7,992	8,249
<b>Major Repairs Allowances (2)</b>	5,157	5,138	5,193	5,250
<b>Borrowing (3)</b>	340	340	370	370
<b>Revenue contributions</b>	422	357	357	357
<b>Capital Grants</b>	210	210	255	255
<b>Useable capital receipts (4)</b>	374	0	500	700
<b>Section 106 funds</b>	569	1,317	1,317	1,317
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>7,072</b>	<b>7,361</b>	<b>7,992</b>	<b>8,249</b>



## Housing Strategy for Merton

Notes:

1. *Proposed figures*
2. *MRA is assumed to vary with stock levels and an inflation figure of 2.5% per annum has been added between 2004/5 and 2006/7.*
3. *To be decided within the context of the Single Capital Pot for 2004/5 to 2006/7.*
4. *For 2004/5 onwards, contribution from capital receipts is subject to pooling proposals within the Local Government Bill and the new 'in and out' rules for disposal of HRA land and properties. The implications are to be fully valued and considered. For 2005/6 onwards it has been assumed that housing will receive these resources as the schools reorganisation programme nears completion and these will be used for HRA 'Decent Homes' and Private Sector grants.*

### Financing the programme

The level of borrowing that the Council can use for housing purposes is also uncertain. Corporate decisions will be taken within the medium term financial strategy on the use of the Single Capital Pot for the authority for 2004/5 and 2005/6. In addition, while funding allocations to London for 2004/5 and 2005/6 look relatively stable, the increased level of discretion available to the London Housing Board in 2006/7 means a period of continuing uncertainty.

We hope to boost the budget in 2005/6 and 2006/7 by generating capital funds from a review of HRA land and property. In addition, a review of the Corporate Asset Management Plan will be completed by April 2004. This will identify capital resources that can be redeployed to priority services. Until this has been completed the usable capital receipt amounts of £500,000 and £700,000 (in the table) are indicative only. It is intended to apply these receipts to meet our Decent Homes targets and private sector renewal.

### **If higher levels of receipts can be generated from the review of HRA land and properties then we will prioritise the development of new affordable housing**

'Section 106' funds, negotiated through planning agreements, of £3,951,000, from Merton Abbey Mills and Raynes Park Library have been agreed. They have been notionally divided across each of the three years of the strategy. It is not possible to anticipate how much finance from new section 106 agreements will be agreed during that time, if any. The programme delivery section of this strategy outlines how spending plans are monitored and maintained. Risks to the strategy will be managed through the departmental Risk Management Working Group within the corporate risk management framework.

### **Approved Development Programme – Funding for new affordable housing**

The Housing Corporation has the ability to pre-allocate 80% and 70%, respectively, of the planned Approved Development Programme over the next two years. Over that period there are unlikely to be major changes to funding availability. However, there will be an increasing emphasis on regional priorities and levels of funding will depend on how closely local schemes meet these.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

We will be working closely with other boroughs and Housing Associations in the south west London sub-region to identify and progress schemes that match regional priorities.

### **Bed and Breakfast Unit revenue funding**

We have been allocated funding from the Bed and Breakfast Unit of £90,000 and £52,000 in 2003/04 and 2004/05 respectively. We will continue to bid competitively for similar allocations should they become available in the future.

**Private funding:** is brought in by Housing Associations and developers who work with us in the supply of affordable homes.

**New sources of funding:** our work with external agencies means we can harness each other's resources to meet commonly agreed aims.

This also provides us with the opportunity to bid for the agreed priorities of the Homelessness Strategy and Ethnic Minorities Strategies, as well as the emerging Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and will see an increase in partnership working, and sharing of resources, during the life of this strategy.

### **4.5 OTHER RESOURCES**

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In addition to financial resources we also make the best use of other resources to deliver the housing strategy.

**Good management of our stock:** this can improve access to affordable housing, provide more homes for the homeless and develop communities. The review of our land holdings, sheltered housing and temporary accommodation provides some of our best opportunities for providing additional, or more appropriate, housing (see *Strategic Objective 1.1*).

**Partnerships:** with tenants and leaseholders, external agencies and other Council departments are also a key resource. We support two Tenant Management Organisations and the involvement of tenants in much of our work helps us to ensure that our resources are focused to meet their needs (see *Strategic Priority 5*).

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Glossary of Terms

Term	Initials	Meaning
Affordable Housing		Housing which is below market prices (rental and low cost home ownership).
Local Agenda 21	LA21	Plan to promote environmental sustainability.
Anti Social Behaviour	ASB	Behaviour by people that affects others within the community. ASB is wide ranging and can include graffiti, playing music loudly and harassment.
Approved Development Programme	ADP	The process whereby the Government allocates money to Housing Associations, through the Housing Corporation, for building new homes.
Assets		Items which have a relatively high value and are usually long lasting e.g. property.
Basic Credit Approval	BCA	The amount of money the Government allows the local authority to borrow for spending on capital projects.
Bed and Breakfast	B&B	Temporary accommodation, with shared facilities, provided for homeless people while their homeless applications are assessed or they are waiting for permanent housing.
Best Value	BV	A process by which council services are reviewed and plans made to continually improve them. Residents play a key role in the process.
Cabinet		The body which makes the key decisions in the Council. It is chaired by the Leader of the Council and has 9 other Council members who each have responsibility for a key area e.g. education or housing.
Capital		Money spent on an asset (see above) to maintain it or extend its life.
Commission for Racial Equality	CRE	Government funded body to promote racial equality.
Community Plan		Long term plan identifying resident priorities for action in their communities. Also aims to promote economic, social and environmental well being of the community.
Community Housing Taskforce		A body established to help local authorities, tenants and Housing Associations through the process of stock transfer and to guide them through the option appraisal process.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

<b>Term</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	CPA	The assessment helps Councils improve their local services for their community. It looks at how good services are and how well the Council is run and rates authorities as excellent, good, fair, weak or poor. After the review the Council agrees an action plan to improve or maintain performance.
Decent Homes		A Government standard for all social housing to ensure that it is structurally sound, has modern facilities and is energy efficient.
Department of Trade and Industry	DTI	Department which works with businesses, employees and consumers.
Disabled Facilities Grant	DFG	Grants to adapt properties occupied by disabled people.
District Housing Panel	DHP	Consists of a representative of Merton Tenants and Residents Federation, two representatives from each Tenants Association in the District, two majority councillors and 1 opposition councillor and officers if necessary. The panels monitor housing services.
Draft London Plan		The London Mayor's plan for development in the capital.
Drugs and Alcohol Action Team	DAAT	Strategy partnership responsible for delivering the Government's 10-year strategy 'Tackling Drugs Together to Build a Better Britain'.
Early Years Development & Childcare Implementation Plan	EYDCP	Describes planned actions of the Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership in relationship to pre-school children and the provision of childcare places.
Fuel Poverty		Households which spend more than 10 percent of their household income on trying to keep their homes adequately heated, are suffering from fuel poverty.
Geographic Information System	GIS	Computer system for storing, mapping and manipulating geographical information.
Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme	HIMP	Supports health improvement and funds projects which promote health and well-being in the community.
Home Energy Conservation Act	HECA	The act requires local authorities to publish a report on progress made in meeting targets to improve the energy efficiency of residential properties and on future plans.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

<b>Term</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
House in Multiple Occupation	HMO	Properties occupied by a number of people who are not part of the same household. They can include bedsits, shared houses and flats, boarding houses and hostels.
Housing Consultative Forum	HCF	Forum where residents associations representatives are consulted with and informed about housing matters in the borough.
Housing Corporation	HC	The body that funds and regulates Housing Associations. This includes funding for building new properties.
Housing General Fund	HGF	Income and expenditure for Council services which are not to do with Council housing are recorded in the authority's General Fund. General Fund expenditure is met from charges for services, specific grants, Council Tax, non domestic rates and other government grants. Housing services which affect the wider community, such as advice to private tenants and housing benefit are paid for from the General Fund.
Housing Health and Safety Rating System	HHSRS	A scheme proposed in the Housing Bill that will replace the current Fitness Standard. It will be based on a risk assessment of a variety of factors and their impact on the most vulnerable occupier.
Housing Needs Index	HNI	A national index which identifies housing need in different areas.
Housing Revenue Account	HRA	This is an income and expenditure account for Council housing. Income is made up from rents and housing subsidy and expenditure is for housing management and maintenance.
Housing Strategy Review Group	HSRG	A multi departmental group of officers who contribute, direct and monitor the Housing Strategy.
Insecurity Points		Points given to those on the new starters sub register whose present accommodation is insecure and will shortly be coming to an end.
Intermediate Housing Need		Affects those who find market rents and purchase prices unaffordable but are unlikely to be allocated social housing due to a low level of housing need. This would include keyworkers.
Joint Investment Plan	JIP	Programme agreed by local authorities, health bodies and other partner agencies to improve support to specific groups of people.
Keyworker		Any worker, defined by the authority as being essential to the delivery of services in the borough.
Local Authority Social Housing Grant	LASHG	Money channelled through Local Authorities to fund Housing Association development. (It was abolished in March 2003).

## Housing Strategy for Merton

<b>Term</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Local Strategic Partnership	LSP	Consists of representatives from the public, private and voluntary sector. It is designed to develop and pursue a vision for neighbourhood renewal and improve the delivery of local services through better planning.
London Alliance with the West and North	LAWN	Scheme to help people in Council and Housing Association properties move to social housing in other parts of the country (mainly the North) where there are more properties available.
London Housing Board	LHB	A board consisting of representatives from the Government Office for London, Greater London Authority, Housing Corporation, Association of Local Government, London Development Agency and English Partnerships that is responsible for developing a London Housing Strategy.
London Housing	LH	Provides expert advice and analysis on social housing issues in London.
Major Repairs Allowance	MRA	A subsidy from Government for major repairs to Council housing.
Merton Young Single Homelessness Forum	MYSHF	Partnership between Housing Associations, voluntary organisations and the local authority to address single homelessness.
Merton Housing Association Group	MERHAG	A group of social landlords who meet with the local authority to discuss issues of common interest and concern.
Merton Partnership Against Crime	MPAC	A partnership between the Council, Police, Health Authority and other agencies which work together to reduce crime in the borough.
Merton Tenant and Residents Federation	MTRF	An umbrella group for all the tenant & resident associations concerned with Council housing in Merton.
Movers sub register		A list of Council and Housing Associations who require a move to other accommodation for various reasons.
Neighbourhood Renewal		A strategy to tackle problems of deprivation in the borough. It is based on a partnership approach and addressing a wide range of issues.
New starters sub register		A list of all people who are waiting for Council accommodation.
Office for the Deputy Prime Minister	ODPM	Government Department which deals with housing, neighbourhood renewal and planning amongst other things.
Private Sector Leasing Scheme	PSL	Scheme where private landlords lease properties to the Council or a Housing Association to house those most in need.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

<b>Term</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Registered Social Landlord	RSL	Housing providers who are registered with the Housing Corporation. The organisations are not for profit, often known as Housing Associations.
Scrutiny Panel		The Panel that consists of councillors, provides a check on Cabinet decisions by looking at areas of work where decisions are due to be made. Panel meetings are open to members of the public and views, concerns and recommendations are passed on to the Cabinet.
Section 106 agreement	S106	Agreements where a developer may be required to provide new social housing as part of larger development.
Sheltered Housing		Housing specifically designed and allocated to elderly people which also includes various forms of support.
Social Housing		Affordable housing provided by Housing Associations, the Council and other housing providers for rent.
South West London Housing Strategy		A strategy developed by the 7 south west London authorities in response to the London Housing Strategy.
Special Educational Policy	SEN	Sets out how the Local Educational Authority will manage special needs in Merton.
Supplementary Credit Approval	SCA	An approval from Government for an authority to borrow money for a particular capital project.
Supporting People	SP	The Supporting People programme is designed to fund support services which help improve people's lives and maintain independence within their own homes.
Stakeholders		Those who will be affected or have an interest in a particular issue or policy.
Standard Assessment Procedure	SAP	A method of rating the energy efficiency of a home. It is calculated taking account of thermal insulation, efficiency of heating system and ventilation in a property. A property can be rated from 1-100, the higher the number the better the standard.
Stock Options Appraisal		This involves looking at the advantages and disadvantages of different options for owning and managing the Council's stock. It takes account of funding, stock condition and the housing needs and aspirations of tenants.

## Housing Strategy for Merton

<b>Term</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Tenant and Resident Association	TRA	An association of tenants and residents who meet in an area to address issues of common concern and influence the services they receive and the communities in which they live.
Unitary Development Plan	UDP	This sets out the Council's plan for using land. Planning applications are considered against this plan.
Zero Budget approach		Looking at services from a starting point of zero budget and working out how much money would be required to provide the service.



## Appendix 2

### Contacts

If you have any comments or questions about this strategy, please do not hesitate to contact:

Housing Strategy and Development Team  
Housing and Social Services Department  
5th Floor, Civic Centre  
London Borough of Merton  
London Road  
Morden  
Surrey  
SM4 5DX

By e-mailing: [strategy&development@merton.gov.uk](mailto:strategy&development@merton.gov.uk)  
or by 'phoning: 020 8545 3685

## Housing Strategy for Merton

### Appendix 2

#### Contacts (continued)

Document	Contact	Telephone & Email
Allocations Policy	Steve Langley Housing Needs Manager Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3712 steve.langley@merton.gov.uk
Allocations Strategy (annual)	Michael Furnival-Adams Principal Housing Strategy Officer Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 4155 michael.furnival-adams@merton.gov.uk
Asset Management and Capital Plan	Tony Skillbeck Property Liaison Manager Environment & Regeneration London Borough of Merton	020 8545 4167 tony.skilbeck@merton.gov.uk
Best Value Performance Plan	Diane Bailey Head of Policy and Scrutiny Chief Executives London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3963 diane.bailey@merton.gov.uk
Children's Services Plan	David Wright Children's Strategy & Development Manager Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3710 david.wright@merton.gov.uk
Community Plan	Rob Moran Head of Regeneration Environment & Regeneration London Borough of Merton	020 8545 4152 rob.moran@merton.gov.uk

## Housing Strategy for Merton

Document	Contact	Telephone & Email
Sustainable Communities Plan	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	<a href="http://www.odpm.gov.uk">www.odpm.gov.uk</a>
Crime and Disorder Strategy	Steve Brennan MPAC Manager Environment & Regeneration London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3240 <a href="mailto:steve.brennan@merton.gov.uk">steve.brennan@merton.gov.uk</a>
Economic Development Strategy	Nick Smart Principal Environmental Planner Environment & Regeneration London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3064 <a href="mailto:nick.smart@merton.gov.uk">nick.smart@merton.gov.uk</a>
Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy	Angela Chu Principal Housing Policy Officer Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3619 <a href="mailto:angela.chu@merton.gov.uk">angela.chu@merton.gov.uk</a>
Health Improvement Programme	Jatinder Bhuhi Health Partnership Officer Chief Executives London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3440 <a href="mailto:jatinder.bhuhi@merton.gov.uk">jatinder.bhuhi@merton.gov.uk</a>
HECA Progress Report	Annette Acik Principal Environmental Health Officer Environment & Regeneration London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3029 <a href="mailto:annette.acik@merton.gov.uk">annette.acik@merton.gov.uk</a>
Homelessness Strategy	Michael Furnival-Adams Principal Housing Strategy Officer Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 4155 <a href="mailto:michael.furnival-adams@merton.gov.uk">michael.furnival-adams@merton.gov.uk</a>
Housing Needs Survey and Update	Michael Furnival-Adams Principal Housing Strategy Officer Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 4155 <a href="mailto:michael.furnival-adams@merton.gov.uk">michael.furnival-adams@merton.gov.uk</a>

## Housing Strategy for Merton

Document	Contact	Telephone & Email
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	Keith Marshall Housing Stock Manager Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3722 keith.marshall@merton.gov.uk
Learning Disabilities Housing Strategy	Julie Phillips Planning Commissioning Officer, Housing & Social Services, London Borough Of Merton	020 8545 3967 julie.phillips@merton.gov.uk
Local Agenda 21 Action Plan	Adrian Hewitt Principal Environmental Officer Environment & Regeneration London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3457 adrian.hewitt@merton.gov.uk
London Housing Strategy	Government Office for London	020 7217 3328 www.go- london.gov. uk/housing/index.asp
Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy	Joanna Switalska Regeneration Manager Environment & Regeneration London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3233 joanna.switalska@merton.gov.uk
Private Sector Housing Strategy	Michael Furnival-Adams Principal Housing Strategy Officer Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 4155 adam.smith@merton.gov.uk michael.furnival-adams@merton.gov.uk
Race Equality Action Plan	Monica Wambu Equalities Policy Officer Chief Executives London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3864 monica.wambu@merton.gov.uk

## Housing Strategy for Merton

Document	Contact	Telephone & Email
South West London Housing Strategy	Michael Furnival-Adams Principal Housing Strategy Officer Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 4155 michael.furnival-adams@merton.gov.uk
Supporting People Strategy	Eileen Nutting Supporting People Manager Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3841 eileen.nutting@merton.gov.uk
Tenant Participation Compact	Lesley Smith Tenant Participation Manager Housing & Social Services London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3618 lesley.smith@merton.gov.uk
Unitary Development Plan	Steve Cardis Principal Planner Environment & Regeneration London Borough of Merton	020 8545 3060 steve.cardis@merton.gov.uk

# Housing Strategy for Merton

## Appendix 3

### Programme Delivery 2000 - 2003

#### Expenditure 2000/2003

##### Capital Expenditure

Total capital expenditure between 2001/2 and 2000/01 was broadly similar (see Table 2 below). In 2002/3 actual expenditure on housing fell by over £1m due to scarce resources and other Council priorities within the capital programme. Although expenditure on the HRA Capital programme increased over the 3 years, Housing General Fund capital expenditure reduced significantly especially on Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG). The expenditure on private sector grants has also reduced by £400k over the 3 year period.

<b>Table 1: Housing Budgets and Expenditure 2000/03</b>						
<b>£000</b>	<b>2002/03 Budget</b>	<b>2002/03 Expenditure</b>	<b>2001/02 Budget</b>	<b>2001/02 Expenditure</b>	<b>2000/01 Budget</b>	<b>2000/01 Expenditure</b>
<b>Council Housing Stock</b>	<b>6,249</b>	<b>6,211</b>	<b>6,310</b>	<b>5,717</b>	<b>4,964</b>	<b>4,894</b>
<b>Social Housing Grant</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>1,379</b>	<b>1,317</b>	<b>2,493</b>	<b>2,424</b>
<b>Other support for Housing Associations</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Private Sector Renewal</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>690</b>
<b>Disabled Facilities Grant</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,129</b>	<b>6,909</b>	<b>9,010</b>	<b>8,222</b>	<b>8,847</b>	<b>8,399</b>

## Housing Strategy for Merton

### Revenue Expenditure

Table 2 below sets out revenue expenditure for the period 2000 - 2003. In 2002/03, the main items of general fund expenditure were on Bed & Breakfast Accommodation (£208k), Homelessness (£149k) and on financing the Housing Strategy Service (£130k). The total HRA income in 2002/3 is nearly £35m. This is from rents (£23m), housing subsidy (£10.5m) and service charges (£1.2m). This is used to fund services such as Rent Rebates (£13m), Repairs and Special Services (£8m), Management including Overheads (£7.6) and technical adjustments including depreciation (£6m).

**Table 2: Revenue Expenditure 2000/03**

£000	02/03	01/02	00/01
<b>General Fund Expenditure</b>	1,081	905	954
<b>HRA Expenditure</b>	34,960	34,395	29,557
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,041</b>	<b>35,300</b>	<b>30,511</b>

### Performance 2002/03

#### Housing Capital Performance

**Table 2(a): Housing Capital Expenditure Performance 2002/03**

£000	2002/03 Revised	2002/03 Actuals	2002/03 Variance	2002/03 Variance %
<b>HRA Capital</b>	6,249	6,211	(38)	-0.7
<b>HGF Capital</b>	880	698	(182)	-20.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,129</b>	<b>6,909</b>	<b>(220)</b>	<b>-3.1</b>

## Housing Strategy for Merton

The overall housing capital underspend in 2002/03 was approximately 3.1% of the revised budget. This is largely attributable to a 20.7% underspend on Housing General Fund capital attributable to a lack of take-up of £118,000 on renovation grants and £44,000 on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The £118,000 underspend on renovation grants allowed capital receipts to be retained and re-distributed in 2003/04. The Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) can be spent over two years.

**Table 2(b): Housing Capital Expenditure Performance 2001/02**

£000	2001/02 Revised Budget	2001/02 Actuals	2001/02 Variance	2001/02 Variance %
HRA Capital	6,310	5,717	(593)	-9.4
HGF Capital	2,700	2,505	(195)	-7.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,010</b>	<b>8,222</b>	<b>(788)</b>	<b>-8.7</b>

Underspend on the Housing Revenue Account was attributable to underspend across a variety of items. This was managed by carrying forward capital receipts of £514,000 into the following year. In the General Fund, underspend of £145,000 arose from low take-up Disabled Facility Grants.

**Table 2(c): Housing Capital Expenditure Performance 2000/01**

£000	2001/01 Revised Budget	2000/01 Actuals	2000/01 Variance	2000/01 Variance %
HRA Capital	4,964	4,894	(70)	-1.4
HGF Capital	3,883	3,505	(378)	-9.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,847</b>	<b>8,399</b>	<b>(448)</b>	<b>-5.1</b>



## Housing Strategy for Merton

The majority of underspend in 2000/01 was in the General Fund. This was attributable to low take-up of Disabled Facilities Grant (£100,000) and underspend on renovation grant (£260,000)

### Housing Revenue Performance

**Table 3: Housing Revenue Expenditure Performance 2002/03**

<i>£000</i>	<i>2002/03 Budget</i>	<i>2002/03 Actuals</i>	<i>2002/03 Variance</i>	<i>2002/03 Variance %</i>
<b>General Fund Expenditure</b>	1,068	1,081	13	1.2
<b>HRA Expenditure</b>	35,013	34,960	(53)	0.2

The HGF revenue budget was underspent by £13,000 as shown in Table 3 above. The bed and breakfast accommodation budget was underspent by £44,000 and the housing advice budget by £47,000. This was offset by increased overhead costs for the housing general fund.

In 2002/3 an HRA revenue contribution of £651,000 was made to fund HRA capital expenditure (reflected in Table 3 above). Both general management (£318,000) and Repairs and Special Services (£179,000) were overspent. The HRA balances as at 31st March 2003 were £732k.

# Housing Strategy for Merton

# Housing Strategy for Merton

## Housing Strategy for Merton

If you would like more information in your own language, please contact us at the address shown in the box below.

**Albanian** Nese deshironi me shume informacion ne gjuhen tuaj, ju lutemi te na kontaktoni ne adresen e dhene ne kutine me poshte.

**Arabic** إذا أردت معلومات إضافية بلغتك الأصلية الرجاء الاتصال بنا في العنوان المدون ضمن الإطار أدناه.

**Bengali** যদি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় লেখা আরও তথ্য চান তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন, তলার বক্ সে আমাদের ঠিকানা রয়েছে।

**Chinese** 如果你需要用中文印成的資料，請按低端方格內提供的地址與我們聯系。

**Farsi** اگر مایل به اطلاعات بیشتر به زبان خود هستید، لطفا با ما از طریق آدرس زیر تماس بگیرید.

**French** Pour tout renseignement complémentaire dans votre propre langue, veuillez nous contacter à l'adresse figurant dans l'encadré du bas.

**Gujarati** જો તમને તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં વધારે માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને નીચે અંતમાં આપેલા ખાનામાં દર્શાવેલા સરનામે અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

**Punjabi** ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਖਾਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਠਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

**Somali** Hadii aad u baahan tahay faahfaahin intaa kabadan oo ku soobsan afkaaka hooyo ama Af Somali fadlan lana soo xiira cinwaanka hoos ku qoran.

**Spanish** Si usted desea más información en su propia lengua, por favor contáctenos en la dirección al pie del formato.

**Tamil** உங்கள் மொழியில் மேலதிக தகவலைப் பெற விரும்பினால், அடியிலுள்ள பெட்டிக் குள் தரப்பட்டுள்ள விலாசத்தில் எம்முடன் தொடர்பு கொள்ளுங்கள்.

**Urdu** اگر آپ اپنی زبان میں مزید معلومات حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم ہم سے اس پتہ پر رابطہ قائم کریں جو کہ نیچے کے بکس میں درج ہے۔

You can also get this information in large print, in Braille and on tape.

**Public Information Officer**  
3rd Floor, Merton Civic Centre,  
Morden SM4 5DX Tel: 020 8545 3475