

Birmingham Private Sector Housing Strategy Update 2010

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Private Sector Housing Strategy Update 2010

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the 2010 update of Birmingham's Private Sector Housing Strategy. Since its initial publication in 2008, we have made good progress in delivering our objectives.

Improving poor housing conditions is a fundamental objective of our strategy since its publication. The council has helped greater numbers of vulnerable households improve their home towards and up to the Decent Homes Standard. This achievement has been supported by the work of the West Midlands KickStart Partnership, which has pooled expertise

and resources across the region, to improve the efficiency of service delivery and the range of options available to residents.

We have also made considerable progress in our partnership work with private landlords, demonstrating that we remain committed to ensuring that housing standards across all tenures which means the most vulnerable live in decent housing. We will use our enforcement powers in the private rented sector where risk to occupiers health and safety is compromised. At the same time we also

continue to recognise responsible landlords who provide high standards of accommodation through our Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

This strategy has also ensured that the Council continues to provide essential services to enable disabled residents to live independently in their own home. A broader range of solutions have also been delivered in this area including self funded solutions alongside exceeding performance targets in the provision of both major and minor home adaptations.

An introduction by Councillor John Lines, Cabinet member for Housing and Elaine Elkington, Chair of City Housing Partnership (CHP) and Strategic Director, Housing and Constituencies.

With the majority of households in the city living in private sector homes, improving the energy efficiency of existing housing and tackling empty properties remain two important goals in ensuring Birmingham is a well housed city, ready to meet our aspirations for growth and economic prosperity.

Our efforts in tackling empty homes in the private sector, continues to deliver positive results with the number of empty homes hitting an all-time low in 2009. We aim to continue to build on this to ensure the city has the largest, highest quality housing stock

possible to accommodate both its existing and future residents.

Significant progress has been made towards improving the energy efficiency of Birmingham's existing private sector housing, with over 15,000 vulnerable households receiving help to improve levels of thermal comfort in their homes.

In doing this it is imperative we continue to build on progress we have already achieved in our partnership work with housing service providers

from all sectors. With scarce public resources available, the role of private sector housing towards improving the quality of life for the residents of Birmingham will become an increasingly important part in achieving our vision.



INTRODUCTION

In 2008 Birmingham City Council published its inaugural 5-year Private Sector Housing Strategy as a supporting document to the overarching Housing Plan.

The strategy details priority issues and actions to increase levels of decent homes in owner-occupied and private rented sector housing; promote domestic energy efficiency and affordable warmth; and address the growing demand from elderly and disabled residents for assistance to live independently in their own homes. It also set out how the council will fulfil its regulatory role in the

licensing and inspection of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) as prescribed by the Housing Act (2004) and promote better standards of management within the private rented sector (PRS).

The strategy was developed shortly after the Housing Act 2004 requirements concerning the mandatory licensing of certain types of HMOs came into force in April 2006. It also followed the 2008 abandonment of PSA7, a national target to reduce the numbers of vulnerable households living in non decent private sector housing. This remains a challenging issue facing many cities including Birmingham. Primary

research into house conditions available at the time revealed this to be significant issue in Birmingham, with as many as 81,808 vulnerable households in private sector housing estimated to be living in a non-decent home and an estimated 1500-2000 licensable HMO's. Within the private rented sector, the overall condition of housing was found to be markedly worse (62.6% non decent) in comparison to owner occupied housing (50% non-decent). In view of this the strategy focussed actions around assisting vulnerable households to improve their housing conditions and ensuring private rented

sector housing met statutory minimum standards. Alongside this, targets and actions were established to support a range of other strategic housing priorities which included:-

- Focussing action on private sector empty homes in priority areas such as the Urban Living area and the Eastern Corridor, where local affordability and overcrowding issues are found to be most acute.
- Broadening options for older disabled people requiring more accessible homes to maintain independent lives.
- Improving the contribution of the private rented sector as a tenure of quality and choice.
- Complementary actions to support the aims and objectives of the Empty Property and Homelessness Strategies.

The strategy aligned itself with the priority themes set out in the Be Birmingham Community Strategy, Birmingham 2026, and targeted activity in priority neighbourhoods where appropriate. For people in private sector housing the linkages to these themes can be summarised in terms of the following desired outcomes (See box 1):-

Box 1

Succeed economically:

- Vulnerable homeowners given access to a range of affordable financial products to help them fund the cost of maintaining their homes and, to build capacity to manage their finances.

Stay safe in a clean, green city and Be healthy:

- Fewer risks: minimising Category 1 hazards, a fully licensed HMO sector and minimum standards for all accommodation procured by the public sector.
- More residents able to afford to adequately heat their homes; improving the energy efficiency of the housing stock.
- Older people and people with disabilities enabled to continue living independently in a home of their own; broadening the choices and options that are available.

Enjoy a high quality of life

- Interventions and resources targeted at the Urban Living Housing Market Renewal Area and the Eastern Corridor Market Restructuring area to support housing market renewal programmes.
- Empty properties returned to use.
- Increased number of vulnerable households living in a decent home.

Make a contribution

- Customers involved in the design and improvement of services.
- A business that is more responsive to the needs of customers, addresses the current policy agenda and provides better value for money.
- The third sector playing an enhanced role in working in partnership with the council to deliver private sector housing services.

PART ONE: PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS 2008-10

In line with the outcomes of the Community Strategy specific actions were identified for the Council's Private Sector Housing Services to deliver with resources secured from various sources totalling £17.5m covering 3 service areas: Independent Living (£10.93m), HomeWorks (£5.03m) and Private Rented Sector Services (£1.61m). A comprehensive set of challenging targets and actions were published in an accompanying action plan. The first two years of delivery have resulted in some notable achievements.

The targets reviewed for this update relate to progress made against those identified for delivery between 2008 and 2010. These are listed in the summary of performance and achievements below:-

Decent Homes

Number of **non-decent** private sector homes occupied by **vulnerable households** made **decent**:

- 2008/9 – 1296;
- 2009/10 – 1596.

In addition **2,025 households** received assistance in **2008/9** from the council in improving their home towards the decent homes standard. **For 2009/10 this increased to 4,087.**

Fuel Poverty, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

For tackling fuel poverty, targets were established to provide affordable warmth measures to households via advice, assistance and property improvements designed to increase the energy efficiency of their home. In **2008/9, 9518 households** were assisted

with affordable warmth measures, **exceeding the target of 7000**. At the year ending 2009/10, 6,932 households received affordable warmth measures.

Adaptations and independent living

Frail older people and people with disabilities enabled to continue living independently in a home of their own. This outcome was supported through the following targets and actions:-

- A target of 725 major home adaptations for 2008/9 with actual performance of 956. For **2009/10, 912 major adaptations were completed against a target of 700**.
- A **target of 4050** minor adaptations for completion in 2008/9 with actual performance of **8,190 completed**. For 2009/10, 5517 minor adaptations completed against a target of 4000.
- A 2008/9 **target of 125** households assisted to self-fund their home adaptations, which was **exceeded** as **234** households were assisted; 2009/10 target 150 households with actual performance 142 households.

Empty properties

The strategy action plan reflected targets contained within the Empty Properties Strategy.

- **2008/9 target** to reduce the number of privately owned empty properties by 200 homes was **exceeded** with **248** returned to use. For 2009/10, 253 properties were brought back into use against a target of 250.
- The **target** to deliver **60%** of empty homes brought back into use during 2008/9 being 3 bed or larger and within council tax bands A-C was also achieved with an **outturn of 64%**.
- The **target** to bring **40%** of empty homes back into use located within the Urban Living and East Birmingham housing markets during 2008/9 was also **achieved**, with a **46%** of private sector empty homes returned to use in these two locations.

Private rented sector (PRS) housing services

In view of their enforcement and regulatory remit, PRS Housing Services were tasked with enforcing and implementing Housing Act 2004 requirements for private rented sector housing in the City. PRS Housing Services were allocated performance targets to reduce hazards in private rented sector housing, implement licensing and carry out

inspections of Houses in Multiple Occupation. Alongside this, in conjunction with partners, PRS Housing Services were tasked with developing a programme of actions to promote better rented sector housing. This includes establishing a private landlord accreditation scheme and a targeted programme of actions across priority areas in the city, containing high levels of private renting.

The following targets and actions were assigned to PRS Housing Services in the Private Sector Housing Strategy & Action Plan:-

- **Administering HMO licences:** Process all HMO licence applications within 56 days. Since HMO licensing was launched in Birmingham monitoring the average length of time taken to process and issue a HMO licence is 44 days.
- **Inspecting licensed HMOs:** 219 licensed HMOs were inspected for the year ending 2008/9 and 359 were inspected against a revised target of 300 for the year ending 2009/10.
- **Non-HMO inspections** were established in order to prioritise accommodation where it was known that there were vulnerable people being housed. This included properties procured and de-commissioned under the Supporting People

Programme. At the end of 2008/9 210 properties were inspected with the majority found to be in good condition.

- **Reactive HMO inspections.** A further 100 HMOs were inspected following complaints received and requests for assistance from private rented sector tenants. During 2009/10 enforcement schedules of work notices were issued by the council's private rented sector team where properties failed to meet the minimum health and safety standards – 25 Category 1 hazards notices were issued. For Category 2 hazards a further 121 notices were issued to the owners of the properties concerned.
- **Enforcement of Housing Act 2004 requirements** – 5 successful prosecutions were completed for non-compliance during 2009/10 following the successful establishment of a courts team. 11 landlords have been prosecuted for offences under the Housing Act 2004. In total prosecution work targeted breaches relating to 24 PRS properties. Enforcement activity helped identify 66 Category 1 hazards in PRS properties during 2008/9 and 85 Category 1 hazards in 2009/10. In addition 85 Category 2 hazards were identified in 2008/9 and 126 in 2009/10.

- **Accreditation and partnership work** with the Private Rented Sector has been prioritised with a focus on mainstreaming landlord accreditation schemes. Since 2008 Birmingham has been proactively working at a regional level with the West Midlands Homestamp Consortium, the Urban Living Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and the Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme (MLAS) to progress this action. Since 2008 an action plan developed with Urban Living and Sandwell MBC has helped deliver a joint, Birmingham Sandwell Landlord Forum, a programme of on going-research and consultation with Birmingham Landlords. This activity has also supported the work of MLAS to accelerate the number of accredited landlords covered by the scheme which now totals over 1000 landlords.
- The **Private Tenancy Unit (PTU)** has handled over 2000 enquiries each year. Between 2008 and 2010 the PTU successfully helped 226 private rented sector households from being made homeless and continued to provide a wide range of advice and support to tenants and landlords, including giving home options advice to almost 500 households over the last 2 years.



PART TWO: EMERGING ISSUES

Since 2008 there have been a number of significant changes impacting upon private sector housing. These are summarised below:-

Regulatory changes from the Rugg Review

A key driver behind reforms concerning rented sector housing includes the follow up work of the Rugg Review, which examined the future role and regulation of the private rented sector (PRS).

The review commenced in 2007 and highlighted how the PRS has expanded in recent years, estimated to represent over 2.5 million homes in England rented

from over 500,000 private landlords. An early reform included the requirement for all private rented and owner occupied property to have **Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's)** to be prepared for properties with private tenancies which commenced after October 2008. In May 2009 the government published its consultation paper entitled, **"The Private Rented Sector: Professionalism and Quality"** which followed the **Rugg Review**, carried out by the University of York's Centre for Housing Policy. Following this a number of commitments to reform the regulatory framework for private rented sector housing were announced in early 2010, these

included the creation of a national register of private landlords, the introduction of planning Use Classes Order powers providing local authorities new local powers to limit the spread of high concentrations of shared rented homes and proposals to introduce written tenancy requirements for all private rented sector tenants. Since the introduction of the new Coalition Government however the proposal to establish a national register of private landlords has been abandoned and statements have been issued with regards to revoking existing regulation related to the control of HMOs.

Planning powers to regulate and control high concentrations of HMO's

On 6th April 2010 changes were introduced to increase the number of new HMOs which require planning permission by the previous governments. This gives local authorities the opportunity to consider the impacts of such proposals when determining consent for planning permission. Since the introduction of the new coalition government the housing minister has announced on the 17th June his intention to remove this requirement on the basis of existing powers being sufficient to deal with this issue. Where local authorities have concerns about the impacts of HMOs in particular they will instead need to adopt planning measures known as Local Development Orders as part of their local planning policies to control the density and spread of HMOs or to introduce standard conditions for HMO development e.g. to deal with parking or noise issues.

Devolved powers for declaration additional and selective licensing

Also announced by the previous government in April 2010 was the removal of Secretary of State approvals previously required for council's wishing to make use of Housing Act (2004) powers to declare additional and selective licensing in

particular local areas where the private rented sector presents issues of anti-social behaviour and poor management. The duration of discretionary licensing areas is five years and declarations must be issued by local authorities in accordance with the Housing Act requirements. To date the new coalition government has not signalled any intentions to revoke this delegated consent.

Economic downturn

In terms of the scope of this strategy there are a number of actual and potential impacts. These include:

- A reduction in the ability of many homeowners affected by unemployment or higher costs of living to maintain their home coupled with a lack of house price growth. The latter acts as a disincentive to improve homes as homeowners recognise that the cost of improvements is unlikely to be realised in any increased value for their home.
- A growth in the proportion of private rented sector as households, particularly potential first-time buyers are increasingly unable to access home-ownership. First time buyers are currently required to provide much higher deposits than in recent years. Household surveys carried out in

2005 and repeated in 2008 covering the Urban Living area indicate that significant growth in the private rented sector in this part of the City has taken place. This is a strong indication that levels of private renting are now significantly higher than those reported in 2001 census.

In view of this improving the standards and quality of accommodation within the private rented sector has become increasingly important.

Within the private rented sector the impact of lenders repossessing private rented property has also resulted in adverse impacts upon tenants renting from private landlords. This has prompted national legislation established under the **Mortgage Repossessions (Tenant Protection) Act 2010**. Up until the enactment of the legislation, if a borrower had not specifically taken out a buy-to-let mortgage but had let the property anyway, private rented sector tenants were defined as "unauthorised tenants". This enabled possession orders to be made resulting in an eviction from their home, regardless of whether they had paid their rent to the landlord. The overall impact of this Act will give tenants more time if faced with eviction under such circumstances from 14 days under previous law to up to 2 months under the new legislation.

Reduction in private sector housing renewal funding

During the summer of June 2009 the impact of the recession on housing became increasingly apparent and the government announced a series of revised spending priorities under the Building Britain's Future programme. Amongst the re-prioritisation of public spending was a housing pledge which featured £1.5Bn allocated to fund the building of new homes, a package of mortgage rescue support measures to households at risk of repossession and support to the construction sector.

In July 2009, the Department of Communities & Local Government (CLG) announced that £75 million it had previously allocated for private sector renewal in 2010-11, including decent homes, would be used to fund the construction of new affordable homes. For Birmingham the net result of reduced funding for private sector housing renewal has a direct impact on resources programmed for 2009/10 in the city. These were set to be £5million but now stand at £3.1million. Since publication of the Private Sector Housing Strategy, Birmingham has received £4m in 2008/9 from the West Midlands Kick Start programme to deliver improvements to private sector housing and support private sector housing renewal

programmes with a target to make 300 homes decent through programmes of advice support and assistance using primarily loan based forms of assistance.

Warm Homes Greener Homes: New targets and standards

In March 2010 the government launched Warm Homes Greener Homes: A Strategy for Household Energy Management, which is significant in terms of its focus upon private sector housing. This ten year strategy is based on targeting improvements in the energy efficiency for existing homes, the aims of which fall into two clear programmes. Firstly in terms of energy management relating to the installation of cavity wall and loft insulation for every home where practical to do so by 2015 and secondly to, roll out the installation of 'eco-upgrades'. These go beyond standard insulation measures to include solid wall insulation and / or micro renewable energy generation in up to 7 million homes by 2020.

The strategy also introduces a new Warm Homes Standard which expects social housing providers to take a lead in developing schemes designed to help raise the energy efficiency of social housing from around SAP 59 to SAP 70. This will supplement the

Decent Homes Standard with an aim for social housing to achieve the Warm Homes Standard by 2020. Alongside this strategy a pending consultation has been announced on how the Warm Homes Standard will form part of future private rented sector regulation. The strategy also calls for greater levels of partnership working between fuel utility providers and local authorities. This follows new obligations on fuel utility providers to work with local strategic partnerships to deliver targets from 2013 onwards.

Update of Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE): Strategic Housing

The Strategic Approach to Housing Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) is the Audit Commission benchmark designed to assess how well a council works with its partners and other stakeholders to address the housing needs and challenges within its area.

In January 2010 the audit commission revised this document with a greater focus included on improving housing outcomes in private sector housing.

The revised KLOE includes the need for local authorities to have up-to date information on the condition, viability and suitability of existing social homes and private homes, with strategies and plans

in place for key areas. Furthermore the new KLOE defines well performing authorities as ones which can demonstrate improvements in the reduction of empty homes and fuel poverty, by making the best use of investment programmes for improving the quality of social and private sector housing.

Local Changes and Developments

In addition to national policy and regulation, within Birmingham there have also been a number of local developments impacting upon the private sector housing strategy. These are summarised below:-

2008 Audit Commission Inspection of Strategic Housing: Recommendations relating to private sector housing services

During 2008 the Audit Commission undertook an Inspection of the Council's Strategic Housing Service. This resulted in Birmingham achieving a 2 star rating with excellent prospects for improvement. The inspection reported on a number examples of positive practice, in particular targeted actions to improve housing conditions which are contributing to improving the poor health of residents. In total three recommendations were made by the Audit Commission with one relating in particular to private sector housing services, which was to implement by

April 2009, appropriate means of proactively identifying high-risk HMO's within the City.

The Audit Commission also recommended that the Council develop by August 2009, service standards for each service area including those provided to private sector households, regularly monitoring and publishing performance against these standards. All Audit Commission recommendations made with regards to private sector housing have now been completed.

Climate Change Action and 2015 Birmingham Declaration:

In March 2010 the City Council's Cabinet approved Birmingham's Climate Change Action Plan. This outlines the practical steps that the City Council will take in conjunction with partners from Be Birmingham, to achieve a 60% reduction of the CO² emissions in Birmingham by 2026. As a city, Birmingham emits approx 6.5m tonnes of CO² each year.

Section 3 of the document on Homes and Buildings outlines action to support the generation of renewable energy for homes. It has been estimated that the City's 440,000 homes account for approximately 33% of the city's carbon emissions.

Given that over 300,000 homes are private sector homes, this action plan has clear implications for owner-occupied and privately rented homes. The Action Plan commits the council to improving energy efficiency in homes, stated the following benefits and outcomes through taking action on reducing domestic emissions by 1.3million tonnes of CO² by 2026 include:-

- Reduced energy bills of householders and tenants which will increase disposable incomes
- Reduced numbers of people affected by fuel poverty leading to subsequent improvements to the quality of life
- Improved health outcomes for those who are vulnerable through improving insulation standards
- Improved educational outcomes by providing warmer and more comfortable learning places for children in their homes.

In recognition of this being a long term task, the following milestones for achievement over the next 5 years were announced earlier in January 2010 under the, "2015 Birmingham Declaration", on tackling Climate Change:-

- 10% of Birmingham homes linked to district heating systems (by this date, the locations to be linked will have been identified and programmed)
- 10% of Birmingham homes have extended retrofit insulation (this continues to build on the Decent Homes and Kick Start programmes)
- There will be at least 10 "low carbon communities" similar to the successful example of Summerfield Eco-neighbourhood
- Support the generation of renewable energy for homes and buildings through a programme of financial and best practice schemes.

Birmingham Energy Savers – Housing improvements and new jobs:

As part of its commitments under the 2015 Birmingham Declaration in January 2010, the city council launched a pilot Birmingham Energy Savers programme. The programme offered up to 25,000 homeowners and 1000 businesses the chance to have significant improvements made to their

properties, both through insulation and small scale generation of energy. This project will offer whole house energy efficiency retrofits and solar photovoltaic installations at economic costs to private householders across the city, and is designed specifically to create jobs and business opportunities for local firms.

The scheme is the first major project in the UK to use the 'feed in tariff' (a payment to householders for renewable contributions to the grid) as a mechanism to scale up installations and provide means of recovering the costs of new measures.

The pilot phase will commence in Aston, Lozells, Newtown and Northfield. It is anticipated that by hitting its five-year target 1 in 5 homes in the pilot area will take up the retro-fitting offer (5,000 homes) and there will be an annual CO² saving of more than 3750 tonnes, and the creation of 270 jobs in the process.

Migration Impact Fund – Private Rented Sector Service

Additional funding of £0.22 million over 2 years from the Migration Impacts Fund has been secured to help safeguard tenants and work with providers and

landlords to inspect private rented dwellings occupied by asylum seekers, refugees and European migrant workers. Proactive work in North West Birmingham as part of the scheme is identifying new potentially licensable properties and these are being rigorously pursued along with liaison with other organisations including the Police, Gangmasters Licensing Authority and the UK Borders Agency.

Updates, Reviews and new Strategies

Since the publication of the Private Sector Housing Strategy in 2008, the City Housing Partnership has implemented a process of updating its suite of local plans and strategies.

The updated Empty Property Strategy has increased its headline five year target to reduce the number of private sector empty homes from 1250 to 1400 as a result of success in delivering previous targets and actions.

In 2009 the council approved its first older persons Housing Strategy. Entitled 'Planning for Housing in Later Life' the strategy focuses upon actions to support and deliver on the housing needs and aspirations of older people. The accompanying

action plan recognises the role of private sector housing services. It contains a number of actions identified by older people in Birmingham as being important to help them remain living independently in their homes through the provision of Home Improvement Agency services alongside alternative housing options such as Extra Care housing.

The **Supporting People** programme in Birmingham oversees a wide range of service provision in the areas of housing-related support. This enables people to move to independent housing or to assist them in maintaining independent living. During 2008, the Birmingham Supporting People Team developed a commissioning strategy to move towards a more strategic approach to procuring housing related support. A review of needs in these service areas identified a number of significant issues with regards to households with support needs accessing private rented sector housing. In particular it was recognised that when households leave supported and temporary accommodation and move into private rented sector housing they often experience a number of difficulties that may lead to tenancy breakdowns, evictions and arrears.

This has highlighted the need to develop a private rented sector access scheme to provide the necessary support in order to help vulnerable households sustain tenancies once leaving specialist supported accommodation.

In response the Housing and Constituencies Policy and Development Team have developed a Private Rented Sector Access Service for vulnerable tenants who wish to move from temporary accommodation housing or who will require support. The scheme will involve accredited landlords making properties available that meet the Decent Homes Standard together with caseworker support and a Bond scheme for tenants moving into the sector.

Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2010 – Key Findings

In line with best practice and duties under part three of the Housing Act 2004, a new survey of private sector housing conditions was carried out in 2010. The initial outputs of the survey show a positive direction of travel indicating significant impacts, particularly around the effectiveness of affordable warmth programmes.

- The survey indicates that 37.4% of private homes in Birmingham fail the decent homes standard (36% nationally). This equates to 117,580 homes.
- Decency rates vary by tenure. 41.6% of privately rented properties are non-decent compared with 36.7% of owner-occupied dwellings.
- The survey indicates that there are 41,690 vulnerable households living in a non-decent home. Vulnerability is defined in terms of households in receipt of certain benefits and/or tax credits.
- Lower income households are more likely to be living in a non-decent home.
- Older (65+) and younger households (16-24) are more likely to be living in a non-decent home.
- There are more heads of household living in the private sector aged over 65 in Birmingham than the national average.
- Overall average incomes are well below those reported for England – 40% of households living in the private sector have an income of less than £15k, whilst benefit take-up is more than double the national average at 35%.

- The average cost of bringing properties up to the decent homes standard is £6,800. The estimated total cost of improving all private sector homes to the standard is c£800m. For homes occupied by vulnerable households the total estimated cost is c£280m.
- Whilst levels of fuel poverty are above the national average – due to low income levels – the energy rating of dwellings in Birmingham is better than the national picture (average SAP rating of 52 compared with national average of 48).
- The survey indicates that 17% of private sector households contain at least one person with a long term illness or disability, although 52% of these relate to being unsteady on their feet or needing a walking aid.
- The survey estimates that the costs, after means testing, of meeting the need for adaptations is in the region of £46m – spread over a 5 year period.

Implications of changes for the Private Sector Housing Strategy

The implications of changes that have taken place since 2008 suggest the following issues will need to be considered alongside developments emerging from the new Coalition Government:-

- An increased role for private rented sector housing in addressing current and future housing requirements in light of the economic downturn and recent developments in the growth of private renting.
- Increased emphasis placed by the Audit Commission and the National Energy Management Strategy with regards to improving Birmingham's existing housing stock.
- The Council's Birmingham Energy Savers programme launched this year to promote the take-up of domestic renewable energy measure and provide opportunities for employment and training.
- Reductions in the levels of funding received for delivery of Private Sector Renewal.

These emerging priorities have been reflected in the revised Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan through:-

- New and revised targets associated with the delivery of the Green New Deal initiative.
- Exploring and securing new finance to support the delivery of affordable warmth programmes from private fuel utility providers who are obligated to generate CO² savings each year under the CERT programme.

- The development of a private rented sector access scheme to support vulnerable households sustain private tenancies once they leave supported housing.
- A continued focus on delivery of landlord training and accreditation schemes designed to improve management standards in private rented sector.

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