

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy (Introduced by the Executive Member for Partnerships and Planning )	Executive Cabinet	20 October 2011

## PRIVATE SECTOR STOCK CONDITION SURVEY 2010

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To inform Executive Members of the major findings of the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey and how the information will be used.

### RECOMMENDATION

2. That Members note the findings of the survey.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The Private Stock Condition Survey was a sample survey carried out in 2010. The survey concentrated on the physical condition of Chorley's 38,236 occupied privately owned and rented residential properties. Whilst the survey estimated 1,348 vacant private sector properties, the majority were short term with only 345 private sector properties empty for over 6 months at the time (Council Tax 01/04/10). For comparison purposes a sample of the 6000 social rented properties were also surveyed. The two most significant measurements used by the survey were the number of homes classed as Non-Decent and the number of households in Fuel Poverty. The data from the survey showed Chorley's stock condition compared favourably to national averages.
4. Survey forms were sent to 2,315 households. A target of 1,350 surveys was set and 1,359 surveys were achieved (1175 private 184 Registered Social Landlord). The sample was subdivided into two sets of categories through a process known as stratification. The strata used were the neighbourhood areas of the borough and the 7 rural and 13 non-rural wards.
5. The Decent Homes Standard is the barometer for quality of housing. Decent homes are more likely to attract and retain households, ensuring that communities are more sustainable. Non-decent housing is likely to affect the mental and physical well being of occupiers. To be considered 'decent' a home must meet the following criteria:
  - i) That the property meets minimum statutory standard. This means that the property is free from category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System which replaced the 'fitness' standard in 2006.
  - ii) It is in a reasonable state of repair (e.g. structure weather and wind proof)
  - iii) It has reasonably modern facilities (e.g. kitchen, bathroom, size, sound insulation)
  - iv) It provides a reasonable degree of 'Thermal Comfort' i.e. the property has an effective heating system and insulation).
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  - iv) It provides a reasonable degree of 'Thermal Comfort' i.e. the property has an effective heating system and insulation).

7. Overall 24.4% of private sector properties were found to be non-decent, a total of 9,321 properties failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard compared to 28,915 homes which met the standard. Compared to the English House Condition Survey in 2007 with 35.8% of properties being considered non-decent, the condition Chorley's stock is significantly better than the national average. Private rented properties are more likely to be non-decent than privately owned properties at 34.6% and 23.1% respectively. The two neighbourhood areas that were significantly above the borough average of 24.4% were the central Chorley Eastern and Western wards, both with just over 30% non-decent. There was found to be no real disparity in decency between rural and non-rural wards with 24.6% and 24.3% non-decency respectively.
8. Category 1 Hazards were found to be present in 8.5% of Chorley's private sector housing, with the majority of these related to the danger of falling (on steps/stairs or between levels) and excess cold. However the English House Condition Survey showed that the national average for category 1 hazards was around 2.8 times the Chorley level at 23.5%, and therefore Chorley residents are far more unlikely to have their health and safety adversely affected by their housing than in England as a whole.
9. The cost to address non-decency in Chorley's private sector stock is estimated to be £42 million, equivalent to £4,500 per non-decent property. Households who may need more assistance to achieve the decency standard are likely to be classed as 'economically vulnerable'. These are households who qualify for means tested benefits. 2,461 economically vulnerable households were found to live in private sector non-decent housing, representing 32.2% of vulnerable households, £11.9 million is the cost of making these homes decent.
10. Fuel Poverty is defined as being when a household spends more than 10% of its annual income on fuel e.g. gas and electric or heating oil. 10.4% of households were found to be suffering fuel poverty in the private stock in the borough. The southern parishes (consisting mainly of Coppull in terms of population) were found to have a significantly higher percentage of residents in fuel poverty than the borough average at 18%. Older households also showed a bias towards being in fuel poverty with 25.8% of homes with a head of household over 65 years old falling into this category, and 36.8% of single pensioner households also showing in this category. Under-occupation and low income are likely to amplify the figures for older people, especially for single pensioners. The SAP rating (measured on a scale of 1-100) in private stock was found to be 61 which shows the energy rating is significantly above the national average of 48, meaning Chorley homes are more energy efficient than the national average. The only area that was significantly below the Chorley wide rating was again in the southern parishes with a SAP rating of 54.
11. The stock condition survey will help to inform private sector housing policy, such as Chorley's Home Energy Saving Scheme which provides free loft and wall insulation to economically vulnerable households and people aged over 70. Both of these groups are at higher risk of experiencing fuel poverty. The Coppull parish newsletter has been used to promote this borough wide scheme, as households in Coppull are more likely to be fuel poor and have lower SAP ratings. The survey has highlighted the need for continuing the discretionary Minor Repairs Assistance grant which assists vulnerable home owners who could not otherwise afford to carry out repairs. The Minor Repairs budget for 2011/12 is £50k, with the maximum individual grant being £3,000. The survey data helps the council prioritise areas that are in the most need of assistance. It will also help to inform future housing and neighbourhood policy, and bids for funding.
12. The Environment and Neighbourhood's team will use the survey report as a reference document as, for example, it helps to identify areas that have poorer standards in private rented accommodation and potential issues with landlords, and can therefore help to inform proactive work. The report will help us to identify areas best suited to initiatives such as selective licensing of landlords, if this is needed in the future. In addition the stock condition

survey information is needed to complete the mandatory Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix of the Housing Investment Programme.

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

13. It is recognised good practice to conduct stock condition surveys every 5 years. The previous survey was carried out in 2004.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

14. Not Applicable.

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

15. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Strong Family Support		Education and Jobs	
Being Healthy	✓	Pride in Quality Homes and Clean Neighbourhoods	✓
Safe Respectful Communities		Quality Community Services and Spaces	
Vibrant Local Economy		Thriving Town Centre, Local Attractions and Villages	
A Council that is a consistently Top Performing Organisation and Delivers Excellent Value for Money			

## BACKGROUND

16. The Housing Act 2004 states that, 'a local housing authority must keep the housing conditions in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken by them'. To comply with this private sector stock condition surveys are required to be reasonably up to date. Undertaking a stock condition survey every five years is also considered good practice. The last survey was carried out in 2004. The commissioning process for the current survey began in late 2009. Consultants, David Adamson & Partners Ltd., were selected to do the work following a competitive tendering process.

## THE SURVEY REPORT

17. A summary of the survey findings is appended to this report (Appendix 1). A copy of the full report is available on request and as a background document. The full document is extensive and contains findings by neighbourhood area, rurality, age of construction, property type and household type. The consultants will give a presentation on the report to Members at the Member Learning session on 21<sup>st</sup> November.

## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

18. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	✓

Summary of survey findings attached at Appendix 1

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<b>Background Papers</b>			
<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>File</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>
Summary of the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010	August 2010		Included with this report.
Full Report of the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010	August 2010		Strategic Housing Office, Union Street.

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David Adamson & Partners Ltd.	0131 229 7351	August 2010	