

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **DATE:** 15th October 2009

CONTACT OFFICER: Manju Dhar, Private Sector Housing Manager
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875251

WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR INFORMATION**

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING AND HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) SURVEYS 2009

1. **Purpose of Report**

The propose of this report is to feed back to O&S the results of the Private Sector housing and HMOs condition surveys

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to note the report

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

The report contributes to the emerging priorities in the Community Strategy of

- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**
- **A Cleaner, Greener place to live, Work and Play**
- **Prosperity for All**

4. **Other Implications**

Financial There are no financial implications of proposed action". At this stage

Risk Management None at this stage

Human Rights Act and Other Legal

There are no Human Rights Act Implications at this stage.

5. We have now received the draft report of the private sector stock and HMOs condition Surveys commissioned in August 2008 to assess residential properties in all private housing sectors within Slough. The final report will be published at the end of October 2009.

Main outputs from the surveys are:

- An assessment of the housing and occupants under the decent homes standard
- Profile of the housing stock

- Number of homes with category one and two hazards (Housing act 2006)
- State of disrepair of private sector homes
- Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Energy efficiency of homes

5.1 **Profile of Stock**

It is estimated that there are 39,814 private sector dwellings in the Borough; of these 740 are empty.

Data from the survey suggests that the private sector housing stock in Slough has a notably different profile to the housing stock nationally. When compared with national data some of the main differences found were:

- The Borough has a higher than average proportion of private rented accommodation, with 23.2% of all private sector dwellings being in this sector, compared to 14.5% across England. An estimated 76.8% of private sector dwellings are therefore in the owner-occupied sector.
- There are approximately 157 long term (over 6 months) vacant properties

5.2 **Housing Health and Safety Rating System**

This is nationally adopted method of identifying defects in a dwelling which have the potential of causing injury or death to the occupiers. Local authorities have a statutory duty to take action where a defect is deemed to be a “Category 1 Hazard”

- It is estimated that 17.3 % of private sector dwellings have at least one category 1 hazard.
- The highest incidents of category 1 hazards are within the private rented sector (27.5 %),
- Properties having such hazards are occupied predominantly by vulnerable households.

5.3 **Energy Efficiency**

An energy rating is intended to give a measure of the overall energy efficiency of a dwelling. The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the Government’s recommended system for home energy rating. The SAP rating is standardised for floor area so that the size of the dwelling does not strongly affect the result.

- The average SAP rating for the private sector in Slough is 55. This compares with an average private sector SAP of 47 for England in 2006. The most recent SAP estimate for the South East of England (2003) for the private sector is 51,
- A greater proportion of vulnerable households have very low SAP ratings. Overall it is estimated that 17.2% of vulnerable households have a SAP of less than 40, this compares with only 12.2% of other households.
- Overall, 6,207 private sector households in Slough are in fuel poverty. This represents 15.9% of private sector households in the Borough.
- Households in the private rented sector are most likely to be considered fuel poor, with 28.5% of those in the private rented sector in fuel poverty.

5.4 **Decent Homes**

The Government defines a home as 'decent' if it meets all of the following four criteria:

- No Category 1 hazards
 - Is in a reasonable state of repair
 - It has reasonably modern facilities and services
 - It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort
- 28.3% of dwellings failed the standard under one or more of these headings. This figure compares with a national estimate (for private sector dwellings) of 36.3%.
 - The total cost of remedying non-decent homes in the Borough is estimated to be £34.0m, which equates to approximately £3,017 per non-decent dwelling

5.5 **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

- Overall, it was estimated that there are over 3,500 HMOs.
- The survey data also suggested that HMOs are more likely to be found in the Upton, Central and Chalvey Wards.
- HMOs are more likely to have a Category 1 hazard than other private sector dwellings and higher levels of non-decency.
- 31% of these properties were considered to be inadequately or poorly managed.

5.6 **The Private Rented Sector**

- The total privately rented stock is 23½ %. An estimated 27.5% of private rented dwellings have a Category 1 hazard
- 42.4% of private rented dwellings were found to be non-decent, which is significantly higher than owner-occupied sector dwellings.

5.7 **Overcrowding**

The report shows that overcrowding exists in 22% of dwellings.

6. **Implications for Private Sector Housing**

Specifically, these include:

- Reducing the number of dwellings with a Category 1 hazard under HHSRS standards (as stated in the Housing Act 2004).
- Increase the number of households living in decent homes, specifically the proportion of private sector housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable households.
- Reducing energy consumption and domestic carbon dioxide emissions of private sector stock under the 1995 Home Energy Conservation Act
- Reducing the number of vacant properties as part of an Empty Homes Strategy.

- Licensing HMOs and improving the number in a good condition under the Housing Act 2004.
- Review of all our policies against the new data to ensure that we are targeting and using our resources effectively and meeting the needs of the community.

We will use our existing resources and the funding allocated from other sources such as the migration bid funding from the Government to continue to address the concerns raised.

7. A copy of the full report will be available in the Members' Room by the end of October.

8. **Background Papers**

2009 Private Sector stock and Houses in Multiple Occupation condition survey.