



Customer Summary

**“More than just a place to
live”**

A STRATEGY FOR BETTER NEIGHBOURHOODS 2009/2012

Directorate: Services In Neighbourhoods

Date of issue: July 2009

Issue number: V1

A strategy for better neighbourhoods 2009-2012

Our Vision: 'More than just a place to live'

Our Aim: To become an excellent organisation that provides quality homes and services and helps to make neighbourhoods in Central Salford popular places to live and work.

Our Organisational Objectives:

- S Services that continuously improve** - and meet the needs of all our customers and achieve value for money
 - P Promoting respect** - and making neighbourhoods safe
 - I Improving Neighbourhoods** - by working in partnership to improve the choice of homes and the environment around our customers' homes
 - R Reducing inequalities** – in Central Salford
 - I Improving homes** - by making them decent
 - T Three stars** - an employer of choice, a leader in our field, delivering excellent services to our customers
-

Our Values:

'As an organisation we will place our customers at the centre of everything we do'

- P Partnership** – Work in partnership with customers, communities & organisations
- R Real Difference** – Embrace new technologies to achieve effective ways of working
- I Integrity** – Be well managed & financially sound
- D Diversity** – Be inclusive – recognise Equality & Diversity
- E Empowerment** – Well trained, empowered & valued staff encouraged to make a difference to customers lives

Author: *Sue Sutton*

This document will be reviewed in: *July 2010*

Our Vision for Better Neighbourhoods in Salford

Our Better Neighbourhoods strategy covers the period from April 2009 to March 2012 when our management agreement is reviewed with the council. It recognises the key role we play in helping to ensure that all neighbourhoods we work in become neighbourhoods of choice. Our vision 'more than just a place to live' places us in a unique position as an ALMO. We provide good quality housing services and ensure the homes we manage meet the Decent Homes standard. We also focus on the wider neighbourhood and provide a broad range of services, particularly regeneration services, enabling us to make an important contribution to the creation of Decent Neighbourhoods and not just Decent Homes.

We have recognised a real responsibility for maintaining neighbourhoods as places where people want to live but also want to work and relax. Our reorganisation of directorates in 2008 was a key step change in our development as a housing services provider, enabling us to develop neighbourhood blueprints that recognise all neighbourhoods are different and have different needs and to deliver better services.

Our five Strategic Objectives for Better Neighbourhoods:

Objective 1: Making neighbourhoods better places for people to live, work, learn and play

Objective 2: Helping residents to feel good about their neighbourhoods by making them cleaner and greener

Objective 3: Making Neighbourhoods Safer in reality and perception

Objective 4: Effectively managing empty properties to promote settled and sustainable neighbourhoods

Objective 5: Supporting residents in their own home and in their own neighbourhood

A key overall objective is to provide maximum value for money in the services that we deliver. The greater our efficiency, the greater the funding available to support additional or complementary programmes of works that directly benefits our customers and their wider community.

Our mission, to become an excellent organisation that provides quality homes and services and helps to make neighbourhoods in central Salford popular places to live and work, shows our commitment to better neighbourhoods is embedded in everything we do.

Our customer focus

We believe that there is no barrier between tenants and residents. People live together in a neighbourhood regardless of tenure and in Salford there is no such thing as a 'council estate' or 'private estate' anymore. Every area of housing is made up of homes owned by the council, housing associations, private landlords, institutional investors or owner occupiers. The issues and problems faced by the people at the neighbourhood level are the largely the same, and therefore all can and must benefit from the activities of organisations like our own.

Our Better Neighbourhoods customer focus includes customer profiling and its use in action planning and decision making; engagement at the most practical and informal level; making information and engagement easy to understand; making what we do easy to access and influence and providing a framework for monitoring and review that has our customers at its core.

Local Neighbourhood Panels are a range of local groups, including existing groups, for the development of local decision making and accountability, devolved budgets, and performance monitoring. The Panels are flexible and outward looking; make good use of informal opportunities to get involved and the wider community engagement structures; and use their results and the Community Involvement Incentive Scheme to shape the development of Area Plans. They also link into the council's Community Committee and Neighbourhood Management arrangements.

Addressing these issues at the neighbourhood level will result in a decent neighbourhood, a neighbourhood that is popular and sustainable, and where people are empowered and confident to take a positive lead in their community.

The context that shapes our strategy

The environment of our Better Neighbourhood Strategy is shaped by the strategies, policies and procedures of the council; our own strategic objectives, business plan, strategies, policies and procedures; legislation and Government policy and the relationships we have developed with our partners.

The **national context** includes an increased focus on the need to prioritise existing homes and neighbourhoods, not just the provision of new homes; the need for housing providers to help address worklessness and support the livelihoods of tenants more effectively; tackling disadvantage within communities and promoting community cohesion and setting new objectives and a system for the regulation of social housing.

The **regional context** includes the Regional Housing Strategy's four key priorities:

- Delivering an urban renaissance, and the delivery of the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programme in particular
- Providing affordable homes and maintaining balanced communities

- Delivering Decent Homes in thriving communities
- Meeting the needs of communities, and provided services to promote independent living

The 2007 Multi Area Agreement for Greater Manchester includes proposals around skills and employment opportunity, better infrastructure and a transformation of the overall range and quality of the housing offer. The MMA sets out the scale of employment growth expected over the next 15 years.

The **local context** is reflected initially in the most recent STATUS survey shows that our residents are less satisfied with the area where they live than the home they live in. Our strategy is to improve the balance between the two; contribute to the council's objective of "narrowing the gap"; complement and contribute towards the realisation of Salford's Sustainable Community and Housing Strategies and Local Area Agreement and the vision of Partners in Salford of creating by 2016:

'...a beautiful and welcoming City, driven by energetic and engaged communities of highly skilled, healthy and motivated citizens, who have built a diverse and prosperous culture and economy which encourages and recognises the contribution of everyone, for everyone.'

The Manchester and Salford Pathfinder (MSP) provides a long term strategy for ensuring the transformation of weak housing markets across Manchester and central Salford including significant new development as well as targeted support for existing homes and their immediate environment. The overall objective of reshaping places to ensure that they become neighbourhoods of choice has already made a significant impact in attracting value and confidence into areas previously subject to neighbourhood collapse and abandonment. The Housing Market Renewal Programme is likely to come to an end, at least in its current form, possibly within the life of this Strategy and we need to plan our exit strategy following careful analysis of the impacts and options available.

What Salix Homes contributes to the Strategy

The successful delivery of our Strategy for Better Neighbourhoods Strategy will depend on a number of factors, but in particular how Salix Homes uses its own resources, such as staff and financial resources and how our resources are used in partnership with others.

Salix Homes has completed a significant reconfiguration of its staffing resources to ensure a strong focus on, and commitment to, our five strategic objectives for Better Neighbourhoods resulting in five key teams: Better Neighbourhoods; Cleaner, Greener Neighbourhoods; Safer Neighbourhoods; Empty Property and Supporting Neighbourhoods.

Critical to the teams working effectively at the neighbourhood level has been the appointment of 'Neighbourhood Champions' responsible for specified management areas and the Neighbourhood Blueprint areas contained within them. They can

draw on the resources of the new teams to meet key milestones, deliver projects and complete tasks.

The Customer Service and Involvement Team enables customer access to our neighbourhood services and helps the neighbourhood teams to develop capacity and leadership within communities.

Our partnership approach

Developing partnerships with other organisations, particularly the council, is another important factor in ensuring the delivery of this Strategy. Salix Homes cannot transform or maintain neighbourhoods in isolation. The development of effective and committed local partnerships, focused on the delivery of our Neighbourhood Blueprints will be a major success measure the Strategy itself.

Salix Homes continues to support the council as our key partner in a number of areas including the Co-location pilot; the Sustainable Communities Strategy, Community Safety Strategic Assessment, Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership; links with the council's own neighbourhood services such as youth, planning and environmental services, as well as its arrangements and structures for neighbourhood management and monthly co-ordination meetings held with Housing Connections. Performance is considered along with procedural and customer access issues.

Other key partners and partnership arrangements in the central Salford context include:

- Central Salford Urban Regeneration Company (URC)
- Manchester Salford Pathfinder (MSP):
- New Deal for Communities (NDC)
- Partners in Salford
- Developers such as the Legendary Property Company (LPC), Countryside PLC, Urban Splash, Miller Homes, Inspired Developments and the Higher Broughton Partnership
- Voluntary and community groups such as the Broughton Trust, Seedley and Langworthy Trust, River Valley Credit Union and Salford Money Line; police, fire and health services and Schools and Colleges.

The Ordsall and Langworthy **Co-location pilot** is facilitated by Salix Homes. Data collected under the Spotlight Initiative showed the neighbourhood had the highest levels of crime in the City and significant incidences of fly tipping, general littering, graffiti, overgrown green spaces and derelict land and property. The pilot involves supporting the delivery the Ordsall and Seedley South Neighbourhood Blueprints and contributing to the action plan; significant responsibility in contributing toward the Pendleton Neighbourhood Blueprint; responsibility for ensuring partners commit to the Neighbourhood Blueprints and improving capacity within the community.

Our Objectives for Better Neighbourhoods

Our objectives for Better Neighbourhoods form the backbone of everything we seek to achieve as an organisation.

Our starting point is the 2008 STATUS survey with only 73% of our customers satisfied with the area where they live. The most commonly cited neighbourhood problems are rubbish and litter; car parking; disruptive children and teenagers and noisy neighbours. Our target is to achieve 80% satisfaction during 2009/10.

Objective 1: Making neighbourhoods better places for people to live, work, learn and play

Helping to make neighbourhoods of choice and empowering our communities places three specific requirements on Salix Homes:

- A need to work in **partnership** with key agencies, service providers, funders, developers, communities and the council to maximise opportunities for communities and their neighbourhoods
- Provide a **value added** approach to what we do; making the most of our resources, expertise and partnerships in making a wider contribution to improving neighbourhoods
- Act as a **champion** for neighbourhoods and our customers

Our Neighbourhood Champions pull together the resources within Salix Homes, using a virtual team approach, to help improve neighbourhoods and work closely with key partners on neighbourhood level plans, projects and priorities. Neighbourhood Champions are also responsible for our Neighbourhood Blueprint approach to improving a neighbourhood.

Each Salix Homes Management area has a Neighbourhood Profile that helps us to understand the health and sustainability of the local area. The profile helps us identify the needs, strengths and opportunities and helps us to assess the interventions and actions required. This information is shared with residents and key partners as a basis for consultation on developing a vision and blueprint for specific neighbourhoods and for determining priorities for the Blueprint action plans.

The neighbourhood profile looks at those things that have a high impact on a neighbourhood and the sustainability of the local community and our dashboard of Neighbourhood Indicators identify high impact performance indicators:

Neighbourhood Profile	Dashboard of Neighbourhood Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gender ● Age ● Ethnicity ● Household composition ● Economic activity ● Health description ● Number and types of council properties in the neighbourhood ● Number and types of all properties in the neighbourhood ● Tenure mix ● Stock condition information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Turnover ● Percentage of tenancies more than 3 years ● Percentage of stock void ● Average weeks void ● Community Based Letting bidding activity ● Average house price ● Anti Social Behaviour cases per 100 customers ● Average arrears per tenancy ● Environmental grade

As progress is being made in relation to all these indicators, the sustainability of the neighbourhood will improve, as will its popularity and levels of self-confidence. A key feature of our neighbourhood profile will therefore be monitoring of the level of resident satisfaction with the neighbourhood.

Salix Homes has an ambitious programme of **Neighbourhood Blueprint** activities across central Salford. These activities are encouraging greater involvement from local people and their communities in developing a vision for the neighbourhood and the priorities for action.

Alongside the Neighbourhood Blueprint programme is a range of community development activities, designed to help develop the skills and confidence of people in communities to get more involved in the various events undertaken by Salix Homes.

Working closely with local Neighbourhood Panels, community groups such as the Broughton Steering Group, Pendleton PFI Steering Group and the Seedley and Langworthy Trust and with our Tenant Management Organisations embeds community leadership and empowerment further. Specifically, the Neighbourhood Panels will scrutinise the Blueprint Action Plan with staff and help ensure the performance of Salix Homes and partners is targeted to the action plan.

We are working with residents to tackle inequalities and provide encouragement and support to give them more confidence to get involved and become more committed to the neighbourhood. We provide or promote a number of projects:

- Our 'Work Pays Money Counts' - helping to tackle financial exclusion and improve awareness of employment and training opportunities.
- B4Box - train members of the community in construction skills.
- Salix Academy - offering access to NVQ level 2 and

- Using our influence with our partners to provide employment and training opportunities for local people
- Tackling Worklessness Referral System - record and co-ordinate the signposting of candidates to opportunities.
- Working Neighbourhoods Team - enables residents to tackle their barriers to employment and training with a strong emphasis on interventions aimed at developing the ability of people to get into work and stay in work
- Migrant Workers project provides a focal point, a link with services and creates a central point for information exchange between agencies.
- Our Income Team are currently undertaking a pilot which includes dedicated officers providing customers with welfare advice

To tackle poor health within our communities we have and are engaging with a number of activities:

- The launch of Salix Homes Workforce Health and Wellbeing initiative.
- Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth Strategy - to “Alleviate fuel poverty and the risks of ill health, hypothermia and cold-related deaths”.
- Salford’s Healthy Weight Strategy: Working together for a change for life 2009-12 - ‘Salford will halt the rise of obesity across all age ranges by 2012’.
- SMART - a support group for young people suffering alcohol and drug addiction

The most significant way that we can improve the health and wellbeing of our customers is to deliver the Decent Homes and improvement programmes which are aimed at ensuring the homes of our customers reach and are maintained to a decent standard. This is covered in more detail in our Investment and Asset Management Strategy 2009/12.

The **Housing Market Renewal** programme for 2008/11 focuses activity within agreed Major Intervention Areas (MIAs) and Areas of Stabilisation (AoS):

- North Irwell (MIA)
- Higher Broughton (MIA)
- Lower Broughton (MIA)
- Seedley and Langworthy (MIA)
- Claremont and Weaste (AoS)

The full details of the interventions and types of work undertaken within the HMR programme are detailed in our Investment and Asset Management Strategy 2009/12.

As a consequence Neighbourhood Blueprints will be developed in full partnership with the council's existing arrangements for **neighbourhood management** including Neighbourhood teams; Neighbourhood Partnership Boards; Community Committee's; Community Forums; Local Partnership Delivery Groups; Health Action Partnerships; Environment Task Groups; Young People's Partnership and U-11's Partnership.

There are eight community committees across the whole of the city which bring together community, voluntary and faith organisations with local councillors. The committees provide a route for all citizens to respond to, comment on and influence the decisions being made in their area. Each community committee is supported by a cross sector neighbourhood management team which works closely with the residents to generate an annual community action plan. These plans detail the concerns of local people in a way that encourages agencies to respond and each community committee has a substantial budget to spend on these priorities.

Key priorities for Better Neighbourhoods

2009/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivery of Blueprint programme ● Delivery of 2009/10 HMR programme ● Co-ordination of the Pendleton PFI initiative ● Inspection preparation ● Evaluate Blueprint process ● Develop and evaluate collocation initiative ● Develop and Implement neighbourhood indicators
2010/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement recommendations from the AC inspection ● Delivery of 2010/11 HMR programme and exit strategy ● Development and implementation of NDC exit strategy ● Review and develop neighbourhood indicators ● HMR succession arrangements ● Manage the implications on Salix Homes of the Pendleton PFI initiative ● Review of Better Neighbourhoods Strategy

Objective 2: Helping residents to feel good about their neighbourhoods by making them cleaner and greener

During 2008, and in partnership with the central Salford Urban Regeneration Company, we commissioned the Groundwork Trust to undertake a baseline assessment of open spaces located in our neighbourhoods. By creating a database of open spaces in central Salford, service providers and regeneration partners can be more responsive to neighbourhood needs in creating cleaner, greener and safer public spaces and managing environmental quality.

We are negotiating increased investment in environmental maintenance across central Salford with the council. The Cleaner, Greener Service Specific Panel is currently assisting in the development of a workable model that will see environmental budgets devolved at a local level.

Salix Homes has established a Rapid Response team to help tackle environmental vandalism and 'hot spots' more effectively. A programme has been developed to allow a mini-sweeper to effectively cover the areas/estates within central Salford to mirror the service provided by the council. A degree of flexibility has been built into the programme to allow for the sweeper to attend hot-spot areas identified from estate inspections or referrals from our customers.

A review of our cleaning and caretaking services has ensured the development of a new standard for cleaning within and around our many apartment blocks.

We have negotiated and agreed with our customers an ambitious regularised block and estate inspection regime. The Cleaner, Greener Customer Panel is developing a best practice model to introduce a qualitative grading system of our estates and blocks that will guide our bespoke improvement plans.

The 'Dig it Yourself' initiative will help to convert poorly maintained open space into allotments and garden areas to promote healthier living as well as a greener environment.

Our Winning in Neighbourhoods (WIN) programme enables all our staff to support local communities in cleaning up their neighbourhood on a regular basis, get involved in community groups and initiatives and to provide much needed capacity, knowledge and skills.

An application has been submitted for Keep Britain Tidy for 'Cleaner, Safer, Greener' accreditation. The Kitemark is a neighbourhood based quality assessment and award scheme for housing providers who want to take a lead role in cleaner, safer, greener issues in the neighbourhoods they manage

Key Priorities for Cleaner and Greener Neighbourhoods

2009/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conclude the caretaking/cleaning services review ● Implement recommendations of the caretaking/cleaning services review ● Develop neighbourhood environmental grading system ● Review environmental service provision through market testing ● Undertake neighbourhood Keep Britain Tidy/ENCAMS accreditation in one neighbourhood ● Review low rise cleaning provision ● Develop processes to delegate environmental budgets to customers for investment ● Analyse the Groundwork Audit and agree 2010/12 priorities for investment ● Inspection preparation
2010/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implementation of low rise cleaning review ● Roll out of Keep Britain Tidy (ENCAMS) accreditation ● Implementation of outcomes of the review of environmental services provision ● Implement recommendations of AC Inspection ● Review of Better Neighbourhoods Strategy

Objective 3: Making neighbourhoods safer in reality and perception

Salford is one of forty Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) nation-wide that has secured Respect Area Action status. We are an active member of the CDRP and a key partner in helping to successfully deliver the Respect Agenda in central Salford, creating safer, stronger and more sustainable communities.

We have signed up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management providing a benchmark of the key elements that make up an effective landlord service in tackling anti-social behaviour. By signing up to the Standard we demonstrate our commitment to addressing the problem of anti-social behaviour and respond to what is one of the most pressing concerns in neighbourhoods where we work. In 2009 we carried out a Respect Standard self assessment and have developed an action plan from the outcomes.

Salix Homes will make a visible commitment to the communities it serves in central Salford so that everyone is clear that we take issues of anti-social behaviour and Respect seriously and will deliver what we say we will. Regular ‘Face the People’ sessions will be conducted throughout central Salford with all our key agency partners. We will work with local communities to set their own ‘tolerance threshold’

within neighbourhoods by developing neighbourhood charters and acceptable behaviour agreements.

We will work with our partners and local communities and put their needs at the forefront of our decision making. Salix Homes will ensure that local communities have opportunities to influence the wider neighbourhood management agenda and that their needs are reflected in Salford's Local Area Agreement with central government.

We have established a Safer Neighbourhoods Service Specific Customer Panel which will work with us to identify service improvements and monitor performance

A more strategic approach to youth inclusion and developing and funding alternative activities for young people is needed to complete the ASB strategy objective of develop a programme of diversionary youth initiatives for 2009/10.

We will be pro-active and utilise a series of early intervention methods, such as Acceptable Behaviour Agreements linked to support. In 2009 we will complete a full review of our Tenancy Agreement to reinforce our approach to tenancy breaches and to ensure that tenants are clear about their rights and responsibilities.

We have developed and brought in a more robust approach to managing introductory and demoted tenancies and will work within our neighbourhoods to review local allocations policies to ensure that Respect is embedded into our approach to building safer, stronger communities.

In addition, we will focus on working with community based groups to offer young people the opportunity to engage in positive diversionary activities that will enable them to realise their full potential and become active citizens. We will realise this aim, through the development, in 2009, of our Youth Inclusion Strategy and framework.

Our own staff have been trained in mediation and are able to intervene early on behalf of case managers to prevent neighbour disputes developing into ASB cases. This will ensure greater efficiencies, both in monetary terms and customer satisfaction, as problems will be dealt with promptly to avoid escalation.

We are working to engender confidence in local communities to encourage the reporting of anti-social behaviour. Every case and every person deserves a robust, tailored and sensitive response and we will ensure that all complainants are provided with an appropriate bespoke support plan, including direct line contacts for officers.

We have the tools required to tackle a wide range of anti-social behaviour. We will ensure that our Safer Neighbourhoods Officers fully understand how these tools work and will use them quickly to protect individuals and communities.

In 2008, we introduced the REACT Anti-Social Behaviour case management system to enable us to improve the way we manage Anti-Social Behaviour case

files. The REACT system enables Salix Homes to adopt an electronic workflow system which standardises stages, generates customer letters, prompts the next stage in the process, and advises officers when to contact victims and witnesses to update and reassure them and avoid unnecessary delays in progressing cases.

In 2009 we will implement the outcomes of the review of our security services to ensure that customers have access to an out of hours ASB telephone number; a mobile response to out of hours ASB is available and there is an improvement in the efficiency of evidencing and information sharing by linking in with the caretaking service.

We are committed to break the cycle of failed tenancies. We will work with vulnerable families and ensure that opportunities to implement Family Intervention Projects will be taken. Every Child Matters and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) are key themes for Salix Homes and the LAA. This will be the cornerstone of the Agreement that all partners sign up to deliver. By focusing our energies on the needs of children and their families we aim to improve the life chances for all residents in central Salford.

Salix Homes recognises the damaging effects of **domestic abuse** and prioritises support for complainants wherever possible. We work with our partners to provide housing and housing support for survivors of domestic abuse or for those families who are at risk. This involves a one stop shop approach to issues of domestic abuse, involving the council's Domestic Abuse coordinator, Police, Social Services, Homelessness, the CPS and Health and Women's Aid.

Where complainants come to us for assistance, we adopt a zero tolerance approach to perpetrators including emergency legal action and where appropriate possession proceedings. The safety of the complainants in such cases is paramount and where appropriate we will prioritise any rehousing needs, in line with homelessness legislation. We recognise that survivors of domestic abuse require sensitive support and that the issues are often complex and challenging.

We tailor robust support packages in consultation with survivors and where possible, support them to pursue criminal prosecutions.

We provide an accessible, supportive and sympathetic service to victims of **hate behaviour**. We aim to create a climate where complainants are able to report instances of hate behaviour and feel confident that something will be done about it. Perpetrators of hate behaviour will be rigorously pursued using a broad range of legal sanctions.

All our offices are third party reporting centres for hate incidents. We will improve the way that we promote this service in the communities where we work. We have dedicated officers who act as a point of contact for customers and partners.

Our response to Hate Incidents is led by the Safer Neighbourhoods Team with support from the Police, in particular neighbourhood policing teams with their access to community intelligence, Victim Support and focused residents groups set

up in the communities where the behaviour occurs to provide reassurance and mutual support.

An information sharing protocol exists between the council, Greater Manchester Police and other relevant partners such as Urban Vision, the probation service, Salford PCT and housing providers. The protocol allows the sharing of information between agencies in relation to anti social behaviour cases in Salford. Any information shared will comply with the protocol that has been authorised and signed at chief officer level across the various partner agencies.

Key priorities for Safer Neighbourhoods:

2009/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement recommendations of phase 1 of security review ● Review ASB SLA with the council and implement outcomes ● Deliver the Respect Standard action plan ● Develop the ReAct case management system ● Implement an out of hours ASB service ● Improve arrangements to support victims of Domestic Abuse and Hate Crime ● Review tenancy agreement ● Develop our approach to witness support ● Inspection preparation
2010/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement recommendations from Audit Commission Inspection ● Commence second phase of the Security Service Review ● Review of Better Neighbourhoods Strategy

Objective 4: Effectively managing empty properties to promote more settled and sustainable neighbourhoods

In an effort to improve our management of empty council homes, we undertook a comprehensive review void property management processes and structures during 2008. The changes have resulted in gradual improvement and further findings from the review will be implemented in 2009/10 to ensure we achieve upper quartile status in relation to void management performance by the year end.

The Empty Property team has been established to give a stronger focus to void property performance as well as ensuring the whole process, from empty property management to supporting a new household in their new home, becomes a 'joined up' and consistent service.

We have developed a standard for empty properties in consultation with customers to ensure that the condition of available empty homes is attractive to applicants. Our contractors are now signed up to the Lettable Standard that will continue to be

reviewed by measuring customer satisfaction and performance reported to the Service Specific Panel.

We aim to reduce transience and build stability within the housing stock through early and effective tenancy support. This will lead to more settled communities and greater sustainability with the benefit of lower void property turnover leading to a more effective and efficient service.

We undertake pre-tenancy work to ensure that new customers know what is involved and how to manage their tenancy through our welfare advisory service. We also provide an 'aftercare tenancy service'; this consists of a telephone call each week for 4 weeks, and visits at 6 weeks, 4 months and 9 months. This allows us to ensure that our customers are settling well into their new home and also to identify any vulnerable customers.

It has been noted that there was a particularly high failure rate amongst young people. We are currently piloting a scheme designed with Pendleton College aimed at young people and supporting them to manage their tenancy.

The average cost to repair an empty property in the first half of 2009/10 was approximately £1,500. This has reduced significantly from an average of approximately £2,000 in 2008/09. Void repair times have also reduced over this period from 54 days for 2007/08 to 47 days for 2008/09 and it is expected to reduce further in 2009/10 with current performance running at 26 days.

We will review current local lettings schemes during 2009 to ensure impacts on vulnerable customers are understood and that any actions are identified as appropriate

Salix Homes has made a commitment to work closely with customers and partner agencies to support vulnerable adults and families in central Salford to live independent healthy lives by sign-posting to the appropriate services and agencies. Partnerships include:

- Salford Assisted Families Project (Assfam)
- Drug and Alcohol Addiction Team (DAAT)
- Salford Domestic Abuse Forum
- The council's supported and furnished tenancy services

Key priorities for Managing Empty Properties

2009/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to prioritise empty property management to achieve upper quartile performance ● Review allocations policy with the council and implement outcome ● Review Choice Based Lettings process, with the council and implement outcomes ● Evaluate initiatives aimed at letting properties to vulnerable people ● Review local lettings policies ● Develop the 'Welcome to Your Home Your Neighbourhood' project ● Develop and introduce a customer focused lettable standard ● Introduce a programme of annual tenancy 'health checks' ● Inspection preparation
2010/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement recommendations from Audit Commission Inspection ● Review of Better Neighbourhoods Strategy ● Pendleton PFI re-housing programme

Objective 5: Supporting customers in their home and neighbourhood

How we support our more vulnerable customers to live independently in their home, and support customers and partners such as leaseholders and Tenant Management Organisation's (TMOs) is a key objective of the Strategy. Our supporting neighbourhoods role includes leaseholder management, the support function that we provide to the two Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), management of nine sheltered accommodation schemes, a first point of contact for customer enquiries regarding equipment and adaptations and the monitoring of all introductory tenancies.

The headline results from the **leaseholders** survey when compared with the results of the satisfaction carried out for tenants in November 2008 are less favourable in some areas. Throughout the life of this strategy, we will work in partnership with our leasehold customers to increase overall satisfaction. The target for 2009/10 is 60%, 2010/11 is 70% and for 2011/12 80%. We recognise the specific need for improvement in areas relating to overall satisfaction with Salix Homes; satisfaction that we take leaseholders views into account and keep them informed and satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service.

Following the survey we wrote to all of our leaseholders asking them how they wanted to be kept informed and inviting them to get involved through the Salix Homes Leaseholder Forum. The Forum was launched in March 2009 and to date has met three times to discuss the quality of cleaning services, service charge

regime, caretaking cleaning/security reviews, major works and communication. The Forum has agreed areas to review and develop improvements to services leaseholders receive: the repairs service protocol; the consultation framework for involvement in service reviews; leaseholder information leaflets, pack, web site and newsletter and a car parking audit in high and low rise accommodation.

The Respect Standard for Housing Management Self-assessment carried out in spring 2009 highlighted a number of strategic issues to implement during the life of this Strategy to improve **safeguarding for vulnerable customers**:

- Improve engagement with social services
- Sign up to the common assessment framework and/or link into the council's policies and procedures for safeguarding children and adults
- Make specialist knowledge available to all by developing, with our partners, an intranet directory of services
- Ensure the council's policies and procedures adequately reflects what Salix Homes wants to achieve on vulnerability and support
- Ensure staff are trained to look for and identify support needs.
- Incorporate a low level needs assessment into appropriate stages in procedures and ensure prompts are included in ReACT case management system.
- Domestic abuse support needs to be publicised and has been based stay put and support rather than on leaving and re-housing
- Staff training to improve engagement with mental health services
- Encourage the PCT to participate in local delivery groups (e.g., neighbourhood or community health workers)

Salix Homes is supporting the council in a Strategic Review of **Sheltered Housing**. This review will identify the key strategic priorities for sheltered housing and related services and how they should be developed to be able to continue to meet the needs of older people both now and in the future.

The findings will guide us in prioritising our development activities and resources along with their decisions about the future of individual schemes and services.

We work to the council's Sheltered Standards set in 2006 for the future of sheltered housing in the City and based on good practice and national guidance. Part of the Strategic Review will assess how well our schemes meet the standards.

The Strategic Review will also summarise the investment needs and strengths and weaknesses, of individual sheltered schemes. This will then be reflected in our Investment and Asset Management Strategy.

Salix Homes also supports the Council's Promoting Independence: Our housing strategy for people as they age in Salford 2008-2018. It promotes a broader approach and concentrates on all older people with housing and housing related support needs. The vision of Salford citizens is to be able to remain independent

in their own home, or as close as possible as they grow older. Salix Homes is committed to maintaining and improving the quality of life for its older residents by working with partners to ensure that services are made available that enable them to engage and participate.

Salix Homes manages nine sheltered housing schemes with a warden service provided by Housing Connections. Wardens provide support services for the residents funded by Supporting People. And housing management services through an SLA with Housing Connections and funded by Salix Homes.

This service is critical for elderly or vulnerable customers providing not only support but opportunities for interaction and involvement within a safe environment. The service has received national accreditation from the Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies and is therefore able to display the CSHS kite mark highlighting quality service provision. The service is also regulated under Supporting People and is required to demonstrate abidance by the Quality Assessment Framework.

As a result of customer feedback we recognise the need to engage and involve our sheltered housing tenants with consultative mechanisms to enable them to contribute to service deliver and improvements.

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) in central Salford contribute to better neighbourhoods by enabling tenants and leaseholders to collectively take responsibility for managing the homes they live in through a legal management agreement and annual management and maintenance allowances. There are two TMOs within the Salix Homes management area; New Barracks Co-Operative and Windsor Albion Co-Operative. We are also supporting a group of local residents at Thorn Court through the TMO development process.

Salix Homes is working with our TMOs and the council to introduce a new, more relevant TMO Agreement. This will be based upon the recently issued National Federation of ALMOs recommended model agreement, and will help to properly define roles and responsibilities between the TMO, the council and Salix Homes.

We use **Introductory Tenancies** to highlight the need for assessment and support for new tenants; to promote sustainability; to minimise tenancy failure and to measure and ensure tenant satisfaction with our services, their home and their neighbourhood.

Our recent Respect Standard self assessment confirmed the need to improve the support for and contact with tenants during their introductory tenancy with a view to eliminating tenancy failure. Specifically we are completing the implementation of pre-tenancy programme; putting in place arrangements to monitor tenancy failure rates and reasons; reviewing the ASB elements of sign-up checklist to ensure standards of behaviour are being communicated; developing a new tenants' DVD to reinforce messages after the sign-up; introducing three, six and nine month tenancy sustainment reviews; providing support and assistance needed to make tenancies a success and extending the introductory period for a further six months where sustainability due to anti social behaviour is an issue.

Equipment and adaptation services are essential to disabled customers in ensuring that they live in suitable, safe housing. Salix Homes is committed to addressing all customers' needs particularly with regard to improving accessibility standards and removing barriers for disabled people. Enabling residents to remain in their own home will promote community stability and sustainability. The service is part of Salford's integrated Disability Service and delivered by Housing Connections or Community Health and Social Care depending on the value of the adaptation.

Salix Homes is working with the council to develop a comprehensive database of all properties containing equipment and adaptations to help identify recycling opportunities and opportunities where equipment and adaptations can be installed as part of the Capital Works programme. Salix homes is developing processes to be the first point of contact for customers wishing to access the equipment and adaptations service and are looking to deliver low cost adaptations through their own repairs contractor.

Salix Homes will also explore ways to influence waiting list times for assessment and adaptation works through closer partnership working with Housing Connections and Community Health and Social Care.

Key Priorities for Supporting Neighbourhoods:

2009/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop involvement mechanisms for leaseholders to influence service delivery improvement ● Improve methods of communicating with leasehold customers ● Improve leaseholder satisfaction ● Review our leaseholder handbook ● Develop involvement mechanisms for Salix Homes sheltered homes customers ● Develop formal governance structures with TMOs ● Implement processes to improve performance around the delivery of equipment and adaptations ● Develop systems to monitor introductory tenancies ● Inspection preparation ● Develop formal protocols with Support Services
2010/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement recommendations from AC Inspection ● Review introductory tenancy procedures and impact on tenancy sustainment ● Implement the outcome of the council's Strategic Sheltered Housing Review ● Develop a Salix Homes Older Persons Strategy ● Review Better Neighbourhoods Strategy

How we know the Strategy is working

Salix Homes is committed to providing excellent services. It is important therefore that we monitor our performance at the neighbourhood level and regularly monitor our impact on the health of neighbourhoods.

Improving the 'performance' of our neighbourhoods will impact positively on our service Key Performance Indicator's such as rent income, void and repairs performance. It will improve levels of satisfaction with the neighbourhood. It will also help us to achieve our target of improving customer satisfaction with their neighbourhood

We have adopted a balanced scorecard approach to performance management to ensure that all aspects of our business are managed well. Our performance monitoring is linked to four distinct aspects of our business:

Customers: To be excellent, what do our customers want us to be like?

Process: To be excellent, what do we need to be good at?

Learning and Growth: To be excellent, what do we need to know about others and ourselves?

Financial: To be excellent, how do we obtain, and make the best use of, money?

All performance targets are reviewed annually. We review comparative data with the top performing ALMOs. Salix Homes has an objective to be in the top 25% of best performing organisations.

Service Standards have been reviewed and a comprehensive Customer Handbook issued to all customers in 2008, so that all our customers are aware of the standard of service they can expect from Salix Homes. A framework of service specific customer panels and a customer senate have been established, to ensure customer representatives are involved throughout the process of service reviews. Along with scrutinising Salix Homes' performance, the Panels agree outcomes and review Action Plans, ensuring that customer care standards and practices remain customer led.

Regular reports are submitted to the Performance Committee to identify general trends by number and type of comment, and to ensure that action is taken to improve services.

The importance of this Strategy requires its review within the next 2 years. The review itself will involve customers, partners and staff. Critical will be its effectiveness in achieving decent neighbourhoods in central Salford. The role of the Performance and Neighbourhoods committees in monitoring neighbourhood health will also feed into the review.