

	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23 rd November 2010	Agenda Item No. 8
Title:	Housing Strategy Themes	
For further information about this report please contact	Satnam Kaur – Interim Housing Strategy Manager - 01926 456422	
Service Area	Housing and Property Services	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A	
Background Papers	None	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No

Officer/Councillor Approval

With regard to officer approval all reports *must* be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director		
Chief Executive		
CMT		
Section 151 Officer		
Legal		
Finance		
Portfolio Holder(s)		

Consultation Undertaken

Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report.

Final Decision?	Yes/No
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)	

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report is intended to advise Members of the direction and themes to be included within the revised Housing Strategy.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the intended themes for the new Housing Strategy.
- 2.2 Members are asked to provide their observations on the intended themes.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 Members have requested details on the themes likely to be included in the Strategy.

4. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 This report provides information on the intended content of the Housing Strategy, therefore no alternatives need to be considered.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 At this stage there are no financial implications.

6. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 6.1 The Local Government White Paper 2006 (entitled Strong and Prosperous Communities) recognised the importance of housing as being “at the heart of achieving the social, economic and environmental objectives that shape a community and create a sense of place”. The Housing Green Paper Homes for the Future: More Affordable, More Sustainable further emphasised the importance of the strategic housing in the place shaping role, in terms of delivering new market and affordable housing, making the best use of existing stock, and responding to the needs of all residents across all housing tenures.
- 6.2 Local Authorities are expected to periodically refresh their Housing Strategies and have discretion about how, when, and in what format they document their refreshed. Housing Strategies should: fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners; reflect a clear and evidenced approach and provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments.
- 6.3 Recognising the importance of ensuring that the strategic vision for the area takes full and proper account of housing, local authorities are expected to link their Housing Strategy with their Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 6.4 The Council’s Housing Strategy needs to be refreshed as the previous Strategy was approved in 2002 and ran until 2005. Plus, other Strategies

which have links with the Housing Strategy have recently been developed or are emerging, for example the Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015, and the emerging new Local Plan formerly known as the Core Strategy.

- 6.5 The Housing and Property Service Improvement Plan sets a timescale for the new Strategy to be completed by March 2012. This aligns it with the timescales for the Local Plan as there is a strong strategic link and cross cutting issues between the two documents. The Local Plan will provide the framework for shaping all land use in the District including identifying a number of strategic sites which will represent key areas of economic and housing growth over the next 20 years. It will play a critical role in informing the Housing Strategy and supporting its delivery.
- 6.6 The new Strategy will be an overarching Strategy reflecting the Council's medium to long term housing goals across all tenures. Key actions will be delivered through sub action plans and existing strategies such as the Homeless Strategy Action Plan; Local Plan, Private Sector Housing Plan.
- 6.7 The Strategy will be focussed on delivering the right housing mix to meet the housing needs and aspirations of all our residents and achieving the wider goals set out in the Sustainable Community.
- 6.8 The Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026
- Everyone's housing needs are met
 - Meet the Decent Homes Standard
 - Reduce and prevent homelessness
 - Make homes sustainable
 - Support independent living
 - Everyone is able to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and sense of well being
 - Citizens are actively engaged in decision making and participate fully in community life
- 6.9 Work has already begun to inform the priorities in the Strategy in the form of commissioning a new Housing Needs Assessment. This will go out to tender at the end of November, with an indicative completion date of June 2011. Once this piece of work has been completed a formal timetable for the production of the strategy and the consultation process will be agreed. The methods of consultation that may be used are set out in 8.1. The timescales for the delivery of the Strategy are being monitored by the Tenants Services Authority through the Service Improvement Plan.

7. **Housing Strategy Themes**

- 7.1 The priorities expected to feature in the next Housing Strategy are listed below. However, Members should note these are indicative themes and maybe subject to change following consultation with residents and other stakeholders and as a result of any new policy, proposals or changes in

legislation that the Government may introduce between now and the production of the Strategy.

7.2 Improve the standard of new and existing housing in order to build healthy, safe and strong communities

7.2.1 Good quality homes are important for the health and well-being of those living in them. Poor quality housing can have an adverse impact on an area's reputation and ultimately result in the breakdown of communities. It is important for the Council and landlords to understand the condition of the housing stock so resources can be targeted effectively.

7.2.2 For new developments, we need to ensure that housing (both public and private) is well designed to address climate change, lifetime homes and be secure by design. This will enable a proactive approach to tackling fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions

7.2.3 Strong housing management is essential in delivering efficient and effective services for tenants and helping to sustain tenancies.

7.2.4 Some of the key aims will be to:

- Maintain a regular update of the condition of the private housing stock
- Use stock condition information to identify areas of poor quality housing
- Continue to meet Decent Homes Standard in the Council housing stock
- Monitor the Decent Homes Standard in Registered Providers Stock
- Develop mechanisms to provide advice, information and, where appropriate financial assistance to allow home owners and landlords to improve their homes
- Where necessary, use statutory powers to enforce housing standards in the private sector
- Engage with private sector landlords (e.g. Landlords Forum) to provide advice and assistance that will promote good practice in housing management
- All new affordable housing developments to built to a minimum of Sustainable Code level 3
- Improving energy efficiency of current stock through retrofit programmes

7.3 Increase the supply of housing to meet housing need

7.3.1 The main aim is to balance the housing market and provide a range of tenures and types of housing that will meet differing needs and support economic growth. As well as increasing new supply this will entail making better of existing stock. Given the constraints within which we are working we cannot solely rely on building new homes to meet housing need. With this in mind if utilised effectively existing stock can help address housing

need and prevent properties from falling into disrepair or becoming empty.

7.3.2 High house prices and affordability issues mean we need to provide access to alternative tenure options such as low cost home ownership and flexible tenure that enable households to get a foot on the property ladder.

7.3.3 Measures are likely to include:

- Tackling under occupation
- Tackling long term empty properties – earlier on this year we were successful in attracting funding to tackle Empty Homes in the District. The funding has enabled a dedicated proactive approach to Empty Homes and a Strategy is currently being developed which will detail how we will deal with long-term empty homes, in partnership with key-stakeholders including private landlords and owner occupiers and what incentives and enforcement action will be used to bring empty homes back into use.
- Increase the role of the private rented sector in meeting housing need
- Reduce void periods in Council housing stock
- Formulate a Disabled Properties Register
- Work with developers and local communities to negotiate the delivery of new affordable homes both urban and rural
- Work with Registered Providers and developers to bring forward Council-owned sites that can be used to deliver new affordable homes both urban and rural
- Work with other public sector partners to identify and increase land that is available for the development of housing
- Establish robust and well evidenced planning policies to ensure the right mix of high quality affordable housing of the right type and size to address local needs

7.4 **Increase the range of housing options available to maintain independent living and prevent homelessness**

7.4.1 One of the key aims of the Strategy will be the provision of information to residents to promote the range of housing options that are available to them. For example, this would include support for residents in the private sector to remain living independently in their own home by promoting the awareness of adaptations, alarms and other assistive technology.

7.4.2 Homelessness does not only impact on the quality of life of those households experiencing it but can also undermine work in other areas such as education and training, health care and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

7.4.3 Without settled homes people are much less likely to succeed in improving their lives. The current recession, rising unemployment and increased debt mean that even more households are currently at risk of losing their homes. It is therefore important to do everything that we can to prevent

homelessness as it will help to build stronger, more stable communities and this in turn will help reduce the strain on public and private resources.

7.4.4 There is a specific District Homelessness Strategy (2010-2015) and action plan for reacting to and preventing Homelessness. The priorities addressed through the Strategy are:

- Ensuring accessible and effective homelessness and housing advice services
- Preventing Homelessness
- Provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households
- Increasing the provision of affordable housing
- Provide appropriate support for vulnerable people

7.4.5 Included within this are measures in relation to an Enhanced Housing Options approach that link housing advice and information to help with employment and training, household debt and financial exclusion.

7.5 **Meet the housing and support needs of vulnerable people**

7.5.1 Most people are able to access housing and support without any assistance to enable them to live independently. There are however, households who need assistance to access housing, and those who need assistance in moving to independent living or to maintain independent living. It is important that the housing services which are on offer are appropriate and accessible for all communities, and that we work together with our partners to co-ordinate service provision to meet needs

7.5.2 The growth in the number of older people is one of the most significant demographic changes affecting the District. We are keen to continue our work with Warwickshire County Council and the Supporting People Team to meet the needs of older people in relation to housing, care and support.

7.5.3 Action is likely to focus on:

- The provision of information and advice to help people make the right housing choices at the right time for them, (e.g. different tenure options, financial advice, moving house)
- Access to services to help people live independently, e.g. small repairs, adaptations; technological solutions; gardening services; affordable warmth; equity release.
- Review of the existing sheltered schemes
- Continuation of the Council's Resettlement Incentive Grant Scheme

7.5.4 The needs of other vulnerable groups such as Gypsy and Travellers, Young People and victims of Domestic Abuse will also need to be considered.

7.5.5 Thought also needs to be given to how we will support those households that will require additional support as a result of the proposed Welfare Reforms.

8. Community and Stakeholder Consultation

8.1 Consultation with the community and key stakeholders will be essential and we are committed to involving customers as the Strategy will directly affect their well being and quality of life. There are a variety of methods which we can use, including:

- Written consultation
- Web based consultation
- Tenants, Residents and Leaseholder Groups
- Registered Providers Residents Groups'
- Focus Groups
- Workshops
- Landlord Forums
- Elected Members
- Partnership Boards
- Local Strategic Partnership
- Joint Commissioning Partnership
- Housing Sounding Board

9. Evidence Base

9.1 The Housing Strategy will be informed by evidence drawn from a number of sources, some of which are listed below:

- 2011 Census
- 2011 Housing Needs Assessment (invitation to tender will be issued by end of November 2010)
- 2011 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey (invitation to tender will be issued by end of November 2010)
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
- Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015
- Warwick District Council Stock Condition Survey 2010
- Land Registry
- Local Plan
- Housing Register data
- Homelessness data
- Supporting People Strategic Reviews