
REPORT TO:	Housing and Community Services Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 8
DATE OF MEETING:	11th June 2009	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Beverly Wagstaffe (07976 081933)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Draft New Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members approve in draft form the proposed New Housing Strategy for the period 2009 – 2014.
- 1.2 The draft New Housing Strategy be subject to a further 4-weeks consultation.
- 1.3 That authority is given to the Director of Community Services to make minor amendments as a result of comments received following further consultation. Any proposed major amendments to be reported back through the Committee process.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To bring before Committee a new Housing Strategy for 2009-2014, (*see appendix A*).

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 In 2002 the Government took steps to reduce the burden on Councils having to annually submit an updated Housing Strategy in July of each year. Instead Authorities were required to submit a "Fit for Purpose" Strategy, which can be for up to a 5 year period. The Department of Communities and Local Government have recently commissioned the Chartered Institute of Housing to prepare guidance on preparing and delivering Housing Strategies. This guidance is currently not available. In the interim there is currently no requirement for SDDC to submit a new Housing Strategy for signing off as "Fit for Purpose" by the Government Office.
- 3.2 The Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" published in 2006 emphasises the need for Sustainable Community Strategies and other local plans, such as the Housing Strategy, to take account of each other, as they are prepared.
- 3.3 In developing this New Housing Strategy officers have been mindful of the prospect of having to review this Strategy again as a result of the Government publishing

further guidance in the near future. However, the current Strategy expires in 2009 and as other key Strategies/Plans such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Development Framework are currently being developed, officers believe that it is vital that a new Strategy is prepared now to provide the strategic housing direction for these and other relevant strategies. This is particularly important at the current time when the district is facing a shortfall of approximately 400 affordable homes per year and a potential increase in homelessness due to the slowdown of the economy.

3.4 In developing this Strategy the outcome of other consultation exercises and housing needs research has been considered. This includes consultation in relation to the development of the new Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Local Development Framework and the recently published Homelessness Strategy. Some initial consultation with partners was also undertaken at the January 2009 Strategic Housing Event to identify key priorities.

3.5 At the Strategic Housing Event held in January partners acknowledged that whilst there may be many issues, which we would wish to address that, with limited resources and capacity, it is important that we focus on the “big” issues which impact on the wider community. Hence, this Strategy focuses the following two key priorities: -

- To reduce the shortfall in affordable housing.
- To prevent loss of a home and promote independent living.

3.6 In addition, this Strategy proposes action to build upon the outcome of the recent Audit Commission inspection of the Strategic Housing Service (awarded 2 stars: excellent prospects for improvement) by maintaining up to date housing needs evidence and to regularly review the service against the Audit Commissions Key Lines of Enquiry standards.

3.7 The next stage in finalising this Strategy is to ask Members to approve this draft Strategy and that further consultation be carried out for a 4-week period. This consultation will primarily be with the wide range of groups and organisations working in the housing and related areas.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The Housing Strategy is an over-arching document that reviews housing-related issues in a local authority’s area and sets out its housing objectives. It is a key strategy delivering the housing elements of the Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 Housing has an important role to play in the place shaping of communities and impacts on the well being of the community.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Whilst it is acknowledged that forthcoming Government guidance on how to prepare and deliver Housing Strategies may lead to this Strategy being reviewed, it is important that the Council provides clear direction for the development of other relevant strategies and partners on the district's current housing priorities so that resources can be appropriately allocated.