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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING &amp; COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 8</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>	<b>OPEN PARAGRAPH NO:</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>Denise Blyde Private Sector Housing Manager</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING POLICY 2010</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS02</b>

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## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 That Members approve the draft Private Sector Housing Policy 2010 as a basis for wider consultation.
- 1.2 That authority is given for the Head of Environmental Services in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to agree any minor amendments to the draft policy arising from wider consultation prior to implementation on 1st April 2010.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To seek Members approval of the proposed Private Sector Housing Policy 2010 (attached at Annex 1), which has been revised to take account of the results of the Private Sector House Condition & Energy Efficiency Survey undertaken in 2009 and current corporate priorities.

## **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 Private Sector House Condition Surveys (HCS) are conducted on a regular basis by local authorities as a means of maintaining a detailed picture of housing conditions in the private sector. Such a picture forms a useful evidence base on which to build strategies, inform investment decisions and feed into statistical returns and other internal reports. The survey also provides evidence that the authority is committed to meeting its obligations under current housing legislation, to keep local housing conditions under review.
- 3.2 The Private Sector Housing Policy forms part of the Council's wider Housing Strategy and guides our actions and interventions in relation to some 35,000 private sector households in the district. The Council is required by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England & Wales) Order 2002 to publish the policy, which sets out how we intend to provide assistance for housing renewal and it follows that this must remain relevant and up to date.

3.3 The existing Private Sector Housing Policy 2008 was approved by the Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and requires revision in order to address the new priorities identified by the recent Survey and tailor a prudent programme of housing assistance within the capital programme available for 2010/11 and beyond.

3.4 The House Condition Survey reports the following key findings:

- Of the 38,000 properties in the district, approximately 35,000 (92%) are privately owned. Private sector dwellings are divided between 31,700 (82%) owner occupied, 3,300 (8%) private rented and 590 (2%) RSL. The remaining 8% of stock represents council owned social housing which was not included in this survey.
- The stock has higher proportions of detached houses, semi-detached houses and bungalows.
- The age profile of heads of household is very similar to the national average other than slightly elevated heads of household under 24 years and over 85 years, and slightly lower proportions where the head is aged between 50 – 59 years.
- Average incomes for owner occupied sector and RSL tenants are lower than those reported nationally and the proportion of households with incomes between £10,000 and £30,000 is higher than nationally.
- Benefit receipt at 20% is just above the national average although is particularly high at 49% in the privately rented sector.
- Non decency, at 32.4%, is well below the national average of 35.3% for equivalent tenures.
- Failure of the Decent Homes standard is mainly due to the presence Category 1 hazards especially 'excess cold', risk of 'Falling on level surfaces' and poor energy efficiency standards.
- Category 1 hazards are strongly associated with dwellings built before 1919, in the interwar period and in terraced houses and semi-detached houses. There is an association between Category 1 hazards and households in receipt of benefit and to a lesser degree with older households.
- Proportionately, Category 1 hazards are more prevalent in the private rented sector.
- Approximately 12.3% (3800) of private sector households are in fuel poverty (i.e. spending more than 10% of income on heating) the cost to remedy this would be just under £4.3 million.
- The mean SAP (energy rating on a scale of 0 (poor) to 100 (good)) is 53 in South Derbyshire, which is higher than that found nationally (49).

- The less energy efficient dwellings are older dwellings (pre 1919), converted flats and privately rented dwellings.
- Improving energy efficiency will contribute towards a range of South Derbyshire's corporate priorities.
- The level of excess cold hazards and the proportion of thermal comfort failures is an issue for South Derbyshire.

3.5 In response the proposed Private Sector Housing Policy identifies three key priorities where we will focus our actions;

**1. Improving the Private Rented Sector**

**2. Assisting older, disabled & vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes**

**3. Promoting and Achieving Low Carbon Communities**

3.6 Initiatives to support these priorities are largely low cost and rely upon enabling, regulating and partnership working in order to maximise limited resources. However, there are some proposed initiatives; Home Repair Plus Grant, Relocation Grant and a number of energy conservation schemes which will be entirely dependant on external funding in order to operate. Early indications from EMRA (Regional Housing Group) are that £370K will be made available to South Derbyshire for 2010/11 to support them. It is anticipated that funding levels will be confirmed in early 2010.

3.7 The Policy document also details services standards and arrangements for performance monitoring, consultation and review.

**4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 The initiatives proposed in the policy will utilise existing staff resources. Funding for the disabled adaptation service is already allocated in the capital programme.

4.2 Further capital of approximately £370K from EMRA (Regional Housing Group) will be used to fund the Home Repair Plus Grant, and a range of schemes to deliver energy efficiency measures. Funding of £33K has already been secured from Defra to operate the Domestic Flood Defence Scheme.

**5.0 Community Implications**

5.1 Responsibility to maintain private property clearly rests with the owner, however it is recognised that the quality of the housing stock has an impact on health and requires a level of protective investment for the longer term public benefit.

5.2 It is recognised that available funds are inadequate to meet all the needs of the private sector and careful targeting of assistance must be undertaken.

**6.0 Conclusions**

6.1 The proposed Private Sector Housing Policy 2010 has been drafted using best available stock condition and housing need information together with a review of current national, regional and local policy. The Policy defines a new set of priorities to guide the work of the Private Sector Housing Team ensuring our assistance is relevant and proportionate to the needs of the district and within the scope of the resources available.

**7.0 Background Papers**  
Private Sector Housing Policy 2010