

SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL CPA SELF-ASSESSMENT

BALANCING HOUSING MARKETS

1. How well does the Council understand its housing market, and from its' understanding has the Council developed the right proposals to help balance its housing markets?
- 1.1 Does the Council have the right research base to understand its housing market?

The Council has taken action to obtain up to date data and research into its housing market needs. A Housing Market and Needs Study was carried out by consultants in 2002. The study highlighted that the greatest need for affordable housing was in the Derby fringe area. This has been identified in both the draft Regional Housing Strategy and the Local Housing Strategy as a priority action area. The Council is committed to working with Derby City to address this need. The Council has recently commissioned research into Sheltered Housing and accommodation in the district. This has confirmed the need to address accommodation to meet current and future tenants' aspirations. The Council is working towards setting a vision for its Sheltered Housing and setting minimum standards.

The Land Registry is used for house price movements as well as various other data sources to inform its understanding. High rural house prices make it increasingly difficult for the young to find suitable housing within their own community. To address this Council is exploring ways to meet the rural housing needs and taking opportunities to develop its own land in partnership with Registered Social Landlords e.g. land at Coton in the Elms. A district profile is compiled which collates information on population, employment and other related factors.

The Council shares its information with its partners/stakeholders, such as RSLs, to enable them to better drive their plans. A House Condition Survey was carried out in 1999 and examined the private sector housing stock and RSLs. As a result funds were targeted at pre 1919 properties and elderly households. The survey included information on the stock profile, social and economic factors, and condition. Energy Efficiency Funds have been secured for an updated survey in 2003/04.

Grant activity is held on a database and used with the House Condition Survey information to inform Strategy/Policy.

A list of empty homes is obtained annually from Council Tax records and an inspection programme carried out with a view to bringing properties back into use. Grants are targeted at landlords who bring empty properties back in use. The Council has housing nomination rights.

Cross border meetings with neighbouring districts to share information and explore opportunities for cross working have recently been established. A range of other partnership groups are attended - Derbyshire Housing Policy Officer Group, 3 Cities Regional Housing Strategy Group and RSL Liaison Group etc. are used to develop regional and sub-regional housing information and strategies.

Travel to Work area information is used to form the basis of the structure plan sub-areas.

A Supporting People mapping exercise has been used to examine supported housing needs. This has highlighted a need for more very sheltered housing schemes and less ordinary sheltered housing. The Council has decommissioned two of its sheltered housing schemes and is working with Social Services to address the extra care needs for the elderly.

Further research is required and planned on BME needs for the current financial year. The Council is in dialogue with the Government Office of the East Midlands on the most suitable use of available funds. Market needs analysis needs to be driven down to Parish level to make the best use of Section 106 Agreement and other funding opportunities. Further work with partners is being developed to assess other needs, e.g. mental health, drug abuse residents etc.

1.2 How well does the Council develop and evolve its strategies and plans?

The Housing Strategy is prepared in consultation with stakeholders and partner organisations, culminating in a Housing Strategy planning day. A forum was held in May 03 to consult with stakeholders and to give feedback on the delivery of the current Strategy. The Citizens Panel has been used to ask key housing need questions. The Housing Strategy is annually updated, setting out achievements and future plans.

Changes to the Strategy are highlighted, e.g. the needs study around the Derby City fringe was given a high priority in the action plan. Links to regional and national priorities are referred to and cross-linked to the Strategy, e.g. affordable housing requirements. The Strategy was revised in 2002 to reflect the new 'fit for purpose' standards, latest housing needs and regional issues. The strategy function has been split from the Landlord duties and a dedicated Housing Strategy Manager utilised. Supporting People information has been used to decommission two Sheltered Housing schemes where there was over-provision.

The Homeless Strategy has been published following widespread consultation. For the first time in the district a recently established partnership with the Good Shepherd Trust will provide 24 hour supported accommodation for the homeless. A cross-departmental partnership resulted in the appointment of Tamworth mediation services. Partnerships have been established to support residents with mental health issues.

The Local Plan has been produced to fully meet PPG12 requirements for consultation and included a focus group for one of the most controversial key allocations. It refers to and draws on other Strategies and sets revisions in the context of an evolving Development Plan framework. Supplementary Planning Guidance is produced to a similar scope of consultation as the Local Plan and in future will be even more inclusive by reference to Area Committees.

The Local Plan complies with PPGs, RPG and the Structure Plan, prioritising sustainable development and hence private housing development in urban areas, particularly on brown field land and not in villages.

Supplementary Planning Guidance needs a focussed programme of review to bring it up to date with the Local Plan.

1.3 Does the Council have the right strategies and plans to help it balance the housing market?

The Council's Homelessness, Private Sector Housing and Crime and Disorder Strategies have clear links to the Housing Strategy. Key partners are consulted with the aim of delivering a 3 year plan. The Local Plan is keyed into the Corporate Plan and is key to its delivery. It is clearly documented as a policy document for the delivery of new general and affordable housing.

The Local Plan and Housing Strategy updates in 2003 will ensure that current policy and strategy, at both regional and national level, are incorporated.

Supplementary strategies on empty homes and HECA support the Housing Strategy aims and delivery.

Joint schemes across Council services, e.g. Crime & Reduction, Handyman Scheme provide joint finance and resources to deliver outcomes.

Improvements are required to risk manage Strategies. More work is required on delivering rural housing needs. Updating of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy is required and planned for 2003/04. Review the use of Section 106 agreements and explore preferred RSL partners to deliver social housing

2. What at the Council's actions and what outcomes has it achieved in helping to balance housing markets?

2.1 How well is the Council working corporately to help balance the housing market?

The Housing Strategy looks at resources over a 3-year period. A robust corporate scoring system approved by Members is used.

The Private Sector Housing section has been reorganised and expanded, and disabled adaptations in the public and private sector have been merged to form a one stop shop. As a result grants are now targeted to the most needy irrespective of tenure. The Council was awarded match funding for its partnership with Walbrook Housing Association to fund minor repair grants delivery. SRB funding was used for property regeneration and security with a firm exit strategy.

A dedicated Housing Strategy Manager seeks to deliver partnerships and joint outcomes. Environmental Health, Community and Leisure Development and the Council for Voluntary Services have seen the development of a home security project.

Partnerships have been developed to deliver a domestic violence refuge, floating support for mental health issues, enhanced homelessness services and security improvements to homes of vulnerable Council tenants.

The Local Plans Manager consults with the Housing Strategy Manager on affordable housing. Joint working with Economic Development, Housing and Planning have secured land for social housing in Coton in the Elms. Members participate on a number of groups including the Homelessness Steering Group and Vision for Sheltered Housing. Regular meetings with the Chair of Committee take place.

A developing web site is used to inform residents and stakeholders of Strategies and common questions.

Work needs to be carried out on information for ethnic minorities in the form of leaflets and available translations. Race equality policy is required

2.2 Is the Council pursuing the right actions and initiatives to help balance the housing market and are the outcomes for local residents and the housing market as a whole making the right kind of difference?

The Citizens Panel strongly favoured redevelopment on brownfield sites and the Local Plan focuses on this. Planners work closely with developers to smooth applications along. A one stop shop is available for development proposals involving input from a range of Council staff together with the Environment Agency and the Local Highways Authority. This has been used sparingly but effectively. Sustainable developments are a key focus of the revised Local Plan and supplementary planning guidance.

Affordable housing schemes have been successfully developed; for example 18 units in Repton. The Government Office of the East Midlands rated the Council average in 2002/03 improving from below average in previous years.

Private Sector Landlords are given grant aid conditional on nomination rights and reasonable rent levels set by the Rent Officer. A rent deposit scheme is being developed as part of the Homelessness Strategy and this will be used to start a private landlord accreditation scheme.

The Supporting People Strategy has been scored as good.

A Foyer Scheme has been developed to meet the needs of young people.

Difficult to let older people property has been re-designated and sheltered housing reviewed leading to the closure of 2 units.

Use of bed and breakfast accommodation has been reduced significantly. Additional staff have been recruited to deliver Homelessness Strategy outcomes.

Grant assistance has been targeted at areas identified as having highest levels of unfitness in the Housing Condition Survey.

Money from the Capital programme has been allocated to the Crime & Disorder Partnership for home security measures and a Handyman scheme. A joint Landlord forum with East Staffordshire Borough Council educates, informs and consults private Landlords. A partnership with Warmfront and the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Energy Partnership has lead to successful energy reduction initiatives in the district.

3. How well does the Council monitor its progress and impact in helping to balance housing markets and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?

3.1 How well does the Council monitor its progress and assess the impact of its work to help balance the housing market?

The Council has a variety of monitoring mechanisms to assess its impact.

Land availability monitoring on a countywide scheme accurately monitors starts and completions against permissions. Brownfield percentage build is monitored as a Government Performance Indicator. Densities are being monitored. The number of affordable units is also monitored.

The Private Sector Renewal Strategy has a work programme with indicators and targets reviewed annually. Satisfaction surveys are carried out for disabled facilities grants but need to be analysed and acted on where appropriate

A countywide group oversees and sets standards and procedures for monitoring progress in planning. Housing allocations in the Local Plan will be managed to help to ensure delivery of sufficient numbers of dwellings to meet Structure Plan targets. The Housing Investment programme is monitored and reported to Committee.

No risk management is undertaken for the Housing Strategy and this is being addressed. The Private Sector Renewal Strategy has a work programme with indicators and targets reviewed annually. Satisfaction surveys are carried out and suggestions/improvements acted on where appropriate. A plan, monitor and manage regime for delivering housing development will need to be implemented.

3.2 Has the Council learnt from what it is doing to help balance the housing market to develop and improve its future strategies and plans?

Stakeholders and partners are consulted to challenge the process. The Citizens Panel is also used. GOEM and the Housing Corporation are actively engaged to understand the priorities for the district and feedback welcomed.

The Council has learnt that engagement with stakeholders is essential and to ensure that it is part of the 'big picture', e.g. National and Regional agenda. Joined up thinking between the services is essential for corporate progress. The Best Value process has been used to improve service delivery by employing more staff and improved services. By setting individual staff targets and training (PDR), all staff are engaged on the delivery and improvement process. The Council has used best practise in other Councils to improve services.

