
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 18 May 2010

Subject: Housing Strategy

Report of: Director of Sustainable Communities

Summary: The report advises Members on the development of the Housing Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and invites Members to comment on the draft Housing Strategy prior to consideration by the Executive.

Contact Officer: John Lucas, Housing Strategy Team Leader
John Goody, Housing Development Officer

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Meeting housing need is a key element in meeting the Council's top level priorities

Financial:

There are a number financial implications as a result of the Housing Strategy. These include: - the capital programme for affordable housing, the house renovation grants programme including Disabled Facilities Grants, funding from external sources such as the Homes and Communities Agency- National Affordable Homes Programme, low carbon buildings programme, and growth area funding. In addition certain programmes have received funding as a result of specific bids, for example energy efficiency works, and funding through the East of England Regional Assembly.

Legal:

There is no legal requirement to produce a Housing Strategy, however most local authorities take the view that a document setting out the key strategic housing objectives is necessary.

Risk Management:

There are no significant risk management issues known to officers. Failure to produce a full Housing Strategy would result in the Sustainable Communities Strategy not having a suitable and justified source of evidence. Having a Housing Strategy has also proved useful in attracting funding, often in ad hoc initiative oriented bidding rounds.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Current staff resources will be used to deliver the action plan.

Equalities/Human Rights:

There are no specific issues relating to equalities except those of diversity covered in the Strategy and supporting equalities impact assessment.

Community Safety:

Good housing and housing management contributes to community safety. The Housing Strategy highlights working with key stakeholders and partners on a number of community safety issues.

Sustainability:

All new and regeneration schemes concerned with housing will aim to meet the highest levels of sustainability compatible with best value and technical feasibility.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee support the use of the Summary document as a basis for insertion into the Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy.**
- 2. That in light of the recommendations of the Development Strategy Task Force the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the Housing Strategy for consideration by the Executive subject to any comments it may wish to make.**

Background

1. While many local authorities have over recent years divested themselves of the landlord function to provide social housing, all district and unitary authorities have a residual role in providing a Strategic Housing function that plans, resources and coordinates the activity of all those with a role in delivering and improving housing and living conditions in its area.
2. While no direct statutory duty to develop an overarching Housing Strategy exists, it has been agreed that such a document provides a useful tool for a number of audiences;
 - a) It provides a point of reference for all external stakeholders, including the health service, Government Office, Homes and Communities Agency, housing associations, developers and local community groups and associations.
 - b) The Housing Strategy forms part of a suite of plans that describe all the Council's activities around delivering housing services and forms the basis for engagement with all external partners and communities.
 - c) The Homeless Strategy and Private sector renewal Strategy are statutory documents that are linked to and support the overall Housing Strategy in describing and taking forward all Housing related services.

3. Appendix A is a summary of the Strategy which will be incorporated into the Central Bedfordshire Council Sustainable Community Strategy. A copy of the full Strategy is available on request.

Conclusion and Next Steps

4. The timetable for the Housing Strategy is as follows:-

18 May: 2010: The Strategy will be reported to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8 June 2010: Executive Approval will be sought.
5. Wide consultation has already taken place with a range of partner organisations such as Registered Social Landlords and vulnerable adult user groups.
6. A much wider public consultation to include tenants and residents groups is now planned for mid to late summer followed by publication of the final Strategy and adoption as the main policy document for the Council.

Appendices:

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| Appendix A | Central Bedfordshire Housing Strategy – Summary for insertion in Sustainable Communities Strategy |
| Appendix B | Response to comments by Members from the Development Task Force 07/04/2010 |