

Committee: COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item

Date: September 14, 2006

6

Title: HOUSING POLICY

Author: Rod Chamberlain, Executive Manager
(Housing Services), 01799 510508

Item for decision

Summary

1. This report outlines a number of housing issues that need to be addressed by the Council over the next few years.

Recommendations

2. That the Committee:
 - (a) Notes the report.
 - (b) Agrees that feasibility studies be carried out about future requirements at Mead Court, Stansted and Reynolds Court, Newport as part of a sheltered housing strategy.
 - (c) Endorses the action taken regarding the possible use of Holloway Crescent, Leaden Roding for the provision of extra care housing.
 - (d) Agrees that officers carry out a feasibility study about the provision of a Managed Short Stay Accommodation Unit.
 - (e) Agrees with using the 4 sites as identified in the report for affordable housing.
 - (f) Reviews the need to sell or develop the remaining sites referred to in the report subject to progress on the initiatives.
 - (g) That further more detailed reports on the initiatives are submitted to future meetings of the Committee.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Reports and Minutes of reports to:

- Health and Housing Committee 2005
- Community Committee 2006

- Homelessness Task Group 2005/6
- Housing Strategy Workshop 2005/06
- Housing Strategy Group Statement 2004/07

Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	Has taken place in some cases but generally thought essential with all interested parties.
Community Safety	Not significant
Equalities	Equalities and diversity are key issues for the Council with regard to housing provision.
Finance	Unclear but could impact on future capital programme
Human Rights	N/A
Legal Implications	Will require significant impact with complex transactions.
Ward-specific impacts	Specifically Stansted, Newport, The Rodings plus other wards.
Workforce/Workplace	Significant work to be managed as routine where possible.

Situation

5. The Council, over the last few years, has addressed a number of key issues within the local Housing agenda which includes:
- Working with Housing Associations – a programme of social/affordable housing geared to differing housing needs.
 - The refurbishment of the hard to let sheltered housing scheme at Oakroyd House, Great Dunmow which has resulted in it now being very sought after.
 - The current refurbishment of Vicarage Mead, Thaxted which is also expected to become a very sought after sheltered housing site like Oakroyd House.
 - Reviewed the sheltered housing service to provide an improved and uniform standard of service.

- Targeted resources on achieving the Decent Homes Standard by 2007 for the stock 3 years ahead of the Government target.
 - Carried out a stock options appraisal to ensure the Council can remain a viable landlord for a number of years. (This is to be kept under review).
 - Carried out a review of the way housing services are delivered.
6. More recently the Committee and appropriate task groups have been actively addressing issues relating to Extra Care housing, more suitable accommodation for people who have lost their homes and some specific opportunities for development within the District on Council owned land.
 7. I feel this would now be a suitable time to review the main issues now facing the Council and for a way forward to be agreed.

Sheltered Housing

8. The work undertaken at Oakroyd House and Vicarage Mead has shown that there is a need for the Council to review, over the next few years, the quality and need of its sheltered housing provision. It is generally accepted that the needs and aspirations of elderly people are changing.
9. Accordingly as part of the next Housing Strategy Statement, to be formally drafted in 2007, it is intended that this whole issue will be addressed in detail and form a key part of the strategy.
10. However, over the last few months, Officers have been looking at the sheltered stock to ascertain those sites that need to be reviewed urgently as the first tranche of a new emerging strategy.
11. Accordingly, Mead Court, Stansted, Reynolds Court, Newport and Holloway Crescent, Leaden Roding have been identified as the sites that now require review and policy decisions over their future. Comments on each scheme are as follows:

Mead Court, Stansted

This is a scheme which consists of small unpopular bed-sit accommodation. There is a void problem. Within Stansted there is a more modern sheltered housing scheme at Norman Court which fulfils the local needs for this type of accommodation.

Reynolds Court, Newport

This scheme has a void problem. There is little demand for this scheme (mostly bed-sits), however, the building is fairly modern and existing residents appear to be content.

It is felt therefore that the Committee authorise officers to consider the future requirements for Mead Court and Reynolds Court and to submit a further report to the Committee on a way forward to maximise the use of these existing schemes for the community.

Holloway Crescent, Leaden Roding

As the Committee will be aware, there have been reports on the future of this scheme submitted to previous meetings. There has been initial consultation with residents on this matter. Officers, as approved by the Committee, have discussed the provision of extra care housing with appropriate Housing Associations. There is one Housing Association that feels that an extra care housing scheme is possible with funding from 'Supporting People' and the Housing Corporation. Any proposal will need to include some land (currently used as a parking area) by the side of the scheme to make it viable.

12. In view of the very tight timetable to make a bid for funding from the Housing Corporation, the Housing Association, with the Council's support, decided to proceed to bid and this was made by the end of July deadline. If funding is available this will be known by the autumn for a scheme to go ahead during 2007/09. Clearly very detailed further consultation with all the relevant parties will be necessary should the bid be approved.
13. The Committee needs to note that this will be a very complex venture and its success is not guaranteed. Should problems emerge which cannot be overcome the Council may need to consider alternative use for this site as it has a history of being very unpopular for new applicants requesting sheltered housing.

Provision of Short Term Accommodation

14. As previously outlined, Members have been recently involved in assessing temporary housing for those people who have lost their home and are vulnerable. The use of bed and breakfast accommodation is not now regarded as appropriate in such situations and every effort is made to use it only in acute emergencies where nothing else is suitable at the time.
15. Currently there are a few initiatives being pursued by officers aimed more at helping single young people who find themselves in this situation.
 - There are discussions ongoing regarding a possible revamping of the St Matthews Housing Scheme in Saffron Walden to improve service delivery for this Group. St Matthews require the support of the Council to progress any changes.
 - Discussions are taking place with the voluntary sector to see if a scheme can be developed where young people, who are in crisis, can be

provided with very short term help by a caring family while mediation is commenced or while more suitable accommodation is found.

- A partnership bid, which has accessed Housing Corporation funding, for a West Essex Young Parents Scheme for young teenage mothers is progressing. This temporary accommodation is to be situated in Ongar serving a few councils, to which Uttlesford will have nomination rights.
16. It was felt by the Task Group looking at this whole issue that there is also a need for 'Managed Short Stay Accommodation" provision within the district aimed at providing temporary emergency accommodation for all client groups. Clearly this is likely to be aimed more at families.
 17. To provide such a facility will be a long complex piece of work and funding will again be required from Supporting People and the Housing Corporation. It is possible that the Council may need to address some funding issues should a scheme go forward. However, the provision of a site would be a very significant contribution.
 18. It will be necessary to prepare for a bid to be made by a Housing Association in July 2007 for funding for the period 2008-10 or possibly earlier. Accordingly, a suitable site needs to be identified. There will then be a need for planning issues to be addressed, partnerships agreed, consultation undertaken and funding issues considered.
 19. Key to the provision will be the need for clients to have easy access to local facilities and support.
 20. Officers have identified what appears to be an appropriate site in Manor Road, Stansted. This empty site currently has management issues and is the subject of complaint by residents and is generally regarded as in need of attention. (See Appendix 1)
 21. Accordingly the Committee may feel this would be appropriate time for officers to carry out a feasibility study in consultation with other agencies and report back to a future meeting of the Committee with possible policy proposals to be then considered. At this stage it is thought appropriate that any use of the garages now ceases and the site cleared.

Opportunities for Development

22. As the Committee will be aware, work has been ongoing regarding Council owned sites that have been identified for development or possible sale. Appended to this report is a chart showing the sites and the progress regarding the outcome of discussions with the Housing Associations.
23. Of the 12 sites, (see Appendix 2), it is suggested that 2 small sites at the end of the list could be sold, as social housing is not viable on them.

24. It is felt that 4 other sites, because of their size and location, are appropriate for progressing at this stage for affordable housing for rent. These being at Hatfield Heath, Broadfield, High Roding and Great Dunmow and in addition, the use of the site at Manor Road has been referred to earlier in this report.
25. In view of possible Council capital costs relating to other proposals in this report, it is suggested that no immediate action is taken on the other sites on the list. Should funding be needed the committee can at a future date consider and recommend to the Council that some of the sites be sold to help finance the projects outlined.
26. If funding is not needed these sites can, in due course, go into a programme of building new rented accommodation.
27. In addition to the issues addressed in this report, it should be noted that officers are continuing to work with partners in the provision of a programme of affordable housing on sites across the District. This includes progress with the Stansted Area Partnership. For the Committee's information, this is a partnership agreement between:

- Uttlesford District Council
- Harlow District Council
- East Hertfordshire District Council
- Braintree District Council
- The Housing Corporation
- Anglia Housing Group
- Moat Housing Group

Set up to provide affordable housing across the Uttlesford and Harlow Districts and parts of Braintree and East Hertfordshire Districts. The scheme was funded by Stansted airport Limited through the planning obligations of the Section 106 agreement to provide a £2.2m fund for the provision of an affordable housing scheme to make available, through a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), social rented accommodation and assisted home ownership.

The scheme has already provided 122 homes and aims to provide a further 1500 properties between 2008/10.

Targets

28. What I am trying to achieve is that the Council addresses a number of new policies to maximise resources and provide new and more appropriate accommodation for specific client groups. The issues are medium to long term.

Options

29. In each case there is the option to continue with the status quo or to address new initiatives as they emerge.

Pay-Offs/Penalties

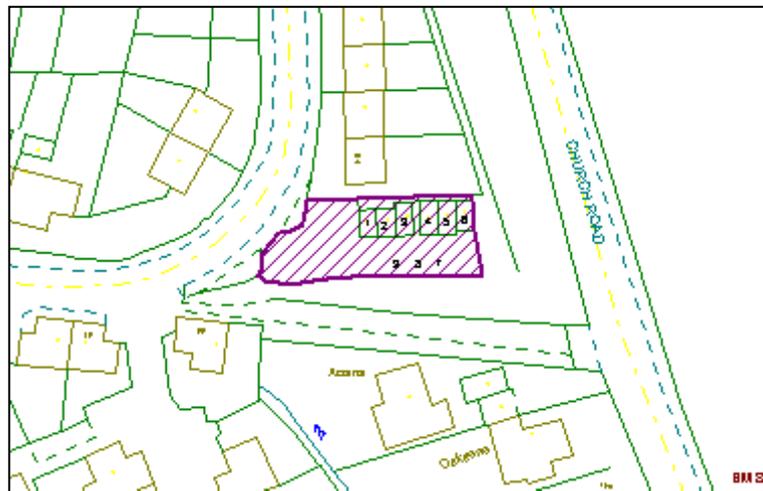
30. If the Committee decides not to address the issues then the Council could be thought not to be addressing the housing needs of the District within its own resources. Supporting People funding could also be lost for the sheltered sites referred to in the report.
31. If new initiatives are acted upon it will demonstrate that the Council is keen to address new ways of dealing with various housing need as outlined in the Housing Strategy Statement.

Risk Analysis

32. The following have been assessed as the potential risks associated with this issue.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
The Council may need to invest significant funds to achieve success on the issues outlined.	Low	High	Council owns the land and is therefore in control and can adjust programme accordingly.
Council may fail some or all of the initiatives	Medium	High	Council can review what it can/may achieve.
Could be public opposition to some/all of the initiative.	Medium	Medium	Council needs to address the wider housing needs of the community but can take note of consultation and try to address concerns.
Possible loss of Supporting People funding for hard to let sheltered sites.	High	High	Extra burden could be placed on General Fund.

Manor Road, Stansted



Description: Located on the south side of Stansted with good local amenities. The site has good access from Manor Road and has some mature trees sited within it.

Development: The site is 375 m2 and is more suited to a social development because of its location. The site could provide 3 no. bungalows or a flat block consisting of 6-8 flats subject to planning approval.



APPENDIX 2						
Site	Moat	Circle Anglia	Flagship	Swan	RHT	UDC Proposal
Waldgrooms, Great Dunmow	8 x 2 bed flats 1 x 1 bed flat	2x 3 bed duplex and 2 x 2 bed flats	3 x 1 bed flats and 3 x 2 bed flats	12 x 1 and 2 bed flats		1st phase of development
Broadfield, High Roding	4 x 1 bed flats	4 x 2 bed flats	2 x 1 bed flats and 2 x 2 bed flats		2/3 x 2 bed flats	1st phase of development, rural exception site
Broomfields, Hatfield Heath	2 x 3 bed houses, 2 x 2 bed flats	4 x 2 bed flats	4 x 1 bed flats, 2 x 2 bed flats	6 x 2 bed flats		1st phase of development
Manor Road, Stansted	2 x 3 bed houses	4 x 2 bed flats	2 x 2 bed houses	6 x 1 bed flats		1st phase of development, short stay managed accomodation
Newton Grove, Great Dunmow	2 x 3 bed houses	4 x 2 bed flats	2 x 3 bed houses			Could be 2nd phase of development
Coney Acre, Rickling	1 x 2 bed house, 2 x 1 bed houses	2 x 2 bed bungalows	3x2 bed bungalows			Could be 2nd phase of development
Birchwood 1, Birchanger	1 x 3 bed house	2 x 3 bed houses	2x 3 bed houses			Could be 2nd phase of development
Burnstie Road, Felsted						Investigate council gardens to make site larger (possible phase 3)
Pinkneys, Chrishall						Investigations ongoing with Parish Council and Housing Associations to look at feasibility of village shop and some affordable housing (Possible phase 3)
Birchwood 2, Birchanger	1x 2 bed house	2 x 2 bed bungalows	1x 2 bed bungalow			Possible for specialist supported housing or sell
Frambury Lane, Newport	2 x 1 bed flats	2 x 2 bed flats	1 x 3 bed house			Possible for specialist supported housing or sell
Woodview Road, Great Dunmow						Too small for development, keep as parking or sell to neighbouring household
Rosemary Crescent, Great Dunmow						Sell to neighbouring households
	1st phase of development					
	2nd phase of development					
	Possible 3rd phase					
	Specialist accommodation					