

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 29th November 2012.

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Title: Housing Strategy 2012-15

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Recommendation

1. That the Housing Board agree the Housing Strategy 2012-15 and recommend its adoption by the Cabinet.

Financial Implications

2. Financial implications of the Housing Strategy have been included in the Housing Business Plan

Background Papers

3. None

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	A consultation event was held in July to set priorities. The strategy has been published on the website and sent to partners. Consultation ran for 6 weeks and all comments have been considered.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	Equality impact assessment completed
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	The Council's energy officer has been involved in the drafting of the document
Ward-specific impacts	Whole District
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

5. The last Housing Strategy was written and published in 2009 and set priorities for a three year period. During that time, many of the key priorities have been achieved. These include the following:
 - Gained HCA funding and built 5 new bungalows in Leaden Roding
 - Progressed a further Local Authority new build scheme which will deliver 8 houses during 2012.
 - Restructured the Planning and Housing departments to deliver a joined up service.
 - Continued to exceed the affordable housing target of 100 homes per year.
 - Provided a young parents scheme in partnership with Epping Forest and Brentwood Council's.
 - Provided temporary accommodation at Molehill Green and Stansted
 - Continued development of Bromfield House in Saffron Walden.
 - New Housing Options team set up which has been providing advice and assistance to those at risk of homelessness.
 - Successful Homeless Partnership set up, working on joint initiatives and sharing best practise.
 - Worked with Hastoe to deliver a Passivhaus scheme in Wimbish.
 - Introduced a full responder service for those with our Careline service.
 - Successful Tenant Forum who actively take part in key housing decisions.
 - First internet café opened in one of our sheltered schemes.
 - Programme of Council new build planned for next 5 years.
 - 98.5% of properties meet decent homes standard.
6. It was agreed that a new Housing Strategy needed to be written and published in 2012 and a conference was held in July to scope our future priorities for the next 3 years. This was well attended by Councillors, tenant forum members, key partners and organisations. A second event was held for tenants but this was poorly attended.
7. A draft document was published for a 6 week consultation period on the Council's website, emailed to key partners, members of the Housing Board and Tenant Forum and to those who attended the Conference. Comments have been looked at and changes made to the document.
8. The following comments were made
 - Registered providers
 - Requirement for lifts in flats over 2 storey causes cost implications for residents who will have to pay a service charge for maintenance.
 - Greater emphasis on reducing energy costs for tenants in our stock
 - Analysis of how need translates into affordable housing requirements

Parish Councils

- Supportive of rural exception housing and will be providing a scheme in the future.

Citizens Advice Bureau

- Limited planning of the needs of those having to downsize due to changes in benefits
- Shortage of 2 bedroom properties
- New domestic violence scheme needs to be done discreetly and location not revealed.
- Do not agree that affordable housing should be provided at 80% of market rent
- Provision of very useful statistics to be included in final document

Agents representing developers

- More emphasis needed on NPPF and requirement to provide market housing in Uttlesford
- Greater emphasis that the Housing Strategy is consistent with the Local Plan
- Acknowledge the need for extra care units
- Scheme viability should be deciding factor in determining affordable housing provision
- Clusters of no more than 10 units is prohibitive, 20 is suggested
- Lifts in blocks over 2 storey are prohibitive should be 3 as in HCA guidance
- Flexible affordable housing policy that responds to market conditions
- Objection to the strategy proposed in draft Local Plan
- Does not address wider market needs for housing
- Urgent action to build new private homes

Many of these issues have been addressed in the final strategy, Members will have the opportunity to discuss them at the meeting.

9. This report is asking the Board to approve the final Housing Strategy and recommend its adoption by Cabinet.

Conclusion

9. The Housing Strategy is considered to be a robust document which will provide a coherent plan for housing policy within the District. The Strategy is aligned with the Housing Business Plan and the Strategy recommendations have informed the development of the Draft Local Plan.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Document is not approved	1 – little risk, partners and members have involved in scoping the document	3 – a future plan is needed and could cause delays to key projects	Ensure that all views are taken into account during the consultation process

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.