

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 6th October 2016

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Title: Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy

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Item for information only

Summary

1. This report describes the Draft Private Sector Housing (PSH) Strategy. It details the key issues affecting the private sector stock and identifies key priorities for the work of the Council to improve housing conditions.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board considers the draft PSH Strategy and feedbacks any comments to the author by the end of November 2016

Financial Implications

3. None currently, however the needs and objectives identified in the PSH Strategy and Action Plan will need to take account of the resources allocated by the government for these purposes together with other funding opportunities from private and Council sources.

Background Papers

4. 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:
 - UDC's Housing Strategy 2016
 - Uttlesford District Council Housing Assistance Repairs Policy
 - BRE Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Uttlesford District Council – 2015
 - BRE A Quantitative Health Impact Assessment: The cost of private sector housing and prospective housing interventions in Uttlesford District Council -2015

Impact

5.

Communication/Consultation	The Strategy is now open for a period of consultation with members of the Housing Board and partners
Community Safety	No impact on Community Safety
Equalities	No impact on equalities

Health and Safety	No impact on employee health and safety
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	The proposal will aim to target those in greatest need and maintain the private sector housing stock & improve energy efficiency.
Ward-specific impacts	No specific impact
Workforce/Workplace	In house officer resource identified

Situation

6. In 2015 the Council commissioned the British Research Establishment (BRE) to provide two reports that provide an evidence base on the condition of the housing stock within Uttlesford. Information on the findings of these reports was presented to the Housing Board in June 2015. As part of this report, one of the recommendations was to deliver a private sector housing strategy to complement the wider strategic housing functions of the Council.
7. Uttlesford District Council's Housing Strategy, adopted in 2016, focused on 4 key objectives, namely;
 - Increasing Housing Supply across all tenures
 - Helping People to live independently
 - Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes
 - Creating sustainable communities
8. The proposed PSH Strategy has been designed to meet these key objectives focusing on the largest housing sector of the district, forming 86% of the total housing stock.
9. In line with these key objectives a number of key priorities and outcomes have been identified which seek to maintain and improve the condition of private homes (across the owner - occupier and the private rented sector). The key priorities are listed under the following headings:
 1. **Raise standards in the private sector by encouragement and support to owner occupiers to maintain safe homes, free from category 1 hazards**
 2. **Encourage, support and regulate private landlords and agents to provide safe and well managed properties, free from category 1 hazards**
 3. **Helping older and vulnerable people remain in their own homes**
 4. **Maximise use of the existing private sector housing stock**
 5. **Enable more sustainable homes by increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty**
10. The first key priority looks at ways to encourage those owner occupiers who may be on low income or limited means to invest in their homes, and

remove category 1 hazards. Prioritising the most vulnerable people in society, we will engage with these members of our community and support them through a range of grants offers and loans to improve their living conditions.

11. Key priority two looks at strengthening our relationships with private sector landlords, to encourage high standards of management and to deal with the small minority of poor landlords within the district.
12. With more people living longer and linked to the first key priority, the third priority is designed to improve housing conditions to support independence. We will update the current model to deliver DFGs, reduce timescales and look to increase the scope of the service with approval from Essex County Council.
13. Key priority four relates to the action of the Council to take action wherever possible to bring back into use empty dwellings in order to make best use of the existing private sector stock.
14. Finally, key priority five aims to work with our partners and UDCs Climate Change Officer to tackle cold homes and fuel poverty, a significant housing problem within the District.
15. Evidence supporting the priority aims of the strategy are based on UDCs Building Research Establishment (BRE) stock modelling report and Health Impact Assessment undertaken in 2015.
16. Accompanying the draft private sector housing strategy are a number of outcomes that we would like to achieve. These outcomes will be set against a timeframe and a number of actions (to be drafted). A key component for delivery will be our engagement with partner agencies on initiatives that will help deliver on the Council's health and wellbeing agenda.
17. Commentary on progress with the action plan will be presented to the Housing Board on an annual basis.
18. The draft PSH Strategy is now open for a period of consultation with members of the Housing Board and partners. The final document will be brought back to the Housing Board in December.

Risk Analysis

19.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions

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.