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| Committee: | Scrutiny Committee | |
| Title: | Consultant's Brief for Housing Strategy and Allocations Policy Evidence | Date: 21 March 2019 |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Julie Redfern Portfolio Holder for Housing | |
| Report Author: | Simon Payne, Local Plan Project Manager 01799 510465 | Item for decision: Yes |

Summary

1. This report considers a draft Consultant's Brief for work on the future Uttlesford Housing Strategy and Allocations Policy.

Recommendation

2. That the Board endorses the attached brief so that work can commence on preparing the evidence for the refresh of the Uttlesford Housing Strategy and amendments to the Allocations Policy.

Financial Implications

3. The commissioning of this consultant's work will be subject to a competitive tender. The costs of the work will be funded from provision in the Council's 2019/20 approved budget in relation to the delivery of the proposed Garden Communities.

Background Papers

4. No additional papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report.

Impact

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| Communication/Consultation | No impact to date. Future work programme will address consultation and stakeholder programme. |
| Community Safety | No impact |
| Equalities | Positive impact given that the potential changes will support a mixed and balanced |

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| | community within each Garden Community. |
| Health and Safety | No impact |
| Human Rights/Legal Implications | No impact |
| Sustainability | Potential positive impact given that widening the allocations policy to include workers will reduce the need to travel and also support the local economy. |
| Ward-specific impacts | No direct impacts |
| Workforce/Workplace | Positive impact given that the potential changes could also apply to workers that comply with household income criteria. |

Situation

6. On 25th September 2018 the Scrutiny Committee received a detailed report about work to be done on the Council's affordable housing policy in the light of the proposed Garden Communities in the district. The Committee recommended that further work be done to allow the Uttlesford Housing Strategy to be refreshed. In particular the Committee noted the following interim ideas outlined in the report:
- changes to the affordable housing allocations policy to allow workers on permanent contracts within the district to be eligible subject to household income criteria;
 - adoption of the term 'truly affordable homes';
 - consideration of eligibility to include workers within the immediate vicinity of proposed Garden Communities that adjoin the district boundary;
 - consideration of allowing under-occupation of affordable housing for families with opposite sex children below the age of 10;
 - investigation of alternative intermediate home ownership products such as Community Land Trust homes not delivered by Housing Association Partners; and
 - adoption of strategies and policy that are adaptable over time.
7. These deliberations reflect the Council's key objectives which are set out in the Uttlesford Regulation 19 Local Plan and are derived from the Town and Country Planning Association Principles for Garden Cities and are as follows:

- to secure mixed and balanced communities from the start of the development linked with the timely delivery of social and physical infrastructure;
 - to ensure that affordable housing provision not only addresses people on Uttlesford housing waiting list, or those in Council or Housing Association properties, but also delivers housing at suitable prices for local workers, their families and older people wanting to stay near their existing community who cannot afford market housing; and
 - to bring forward homes that meet the needs of those who will have a long term need for affordable housing including for older people.
8. Officers have now prepared a brief for obtaining the evidence for a refresh of the Housing Strategy in line with the report considered by Scrutiny Committee last September. The draft brief has been written in consultation with officers at Braintree District Council (BDC) and Essex County Council to ensure consistency with emerging proposals for the whole of the West of Braintree Garden Community. BDC officers have commented on the importance of the future Housing Strategy being able to evolve to respond to changing needs over the full 25 year delivery phase of the new communities. It is recommended that consultants are commissioned given the amount of work involved and also the potential to bring in specialist expertise to these new areas of housing policy.
 9. It is expected that the work, and associated evidence base, will take three to four months to complete. The Garden Communities Master Developers will be consulted in analysing the evidence. It is recommended that the results of the work are reported back to the Housing Board and Scrutiny Committee prior to formal public and stakeholder consultation. This timing will allow the conclusions to inform the emerging Garden Community Development Plan Documents as well as considering the wider implications for the Council's Housing Strategy.

Conclusions

10. The attached brief covers the issues previously considered by the Scrutiny Committee and members are requested to support the brief in order to refresh the Council's Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing Allocations policy. This report is also being considered by the Housing Board on 14th March.
11. The next scheduled Cabinet meeting is on 13 June 2019. In the event that the Board and Scrutiny Committee endorse the brief, and in order to make progress on this work, then officers will approach the Leader to ask him to make an urgent decision to allow this work to be initiated promptly.

Risk Analysis

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| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigating actions |
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| The local housing needs of the district are not met | 3 | Continued and increasing inward and outbound commuting | Prepare and improve a new policy for the Housing Strategy |

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.