

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-006-2017/18
Date of meeting: 11 July 2017



Portfolio: Housing
Subject: Housing Strategy 2017 – 22.
Responsible Officer: Alan Hall (01992 564004)
Committee Secretary: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations:

- (1) That, following the support and endorsement of the Communities Select Committee, the new Housing Strategy 2017-2022 (attached as Appendix 1) be adopted; and
- (2) That the Communities Select Committee be asked to continue to review future Annual Key Action Plans for the Housing Strategy prior to approval each year, and to review progress with Key Action Plans every 6 months, in accordance with its previous practice.

Executive Summary

The Council's current Housing Strategy is out of date, so a new Housing Strategy covering the period 2017-2022 has been produced by officers, and is attached as an Appendix.

The new Housing Strategy has been delayed, for the reasons set out in the report, but in the meantime an annual Housing Strategy Key Action Plan has continued to be produced, with progress monitored by the Communities Select Committee. However, now is a good time to update the Housing Strategy. The new Housing Strategy includes a Key Action Plan for the first year of the Strategy, which will be updated on an annual basis. It is proposed that progress with the Key Action Plan continues to be reviewed by the Communities Select Committee every 6 months.

The Communities Select Committee has been consulted on the Draft Housing Strategy, which they felt was a good quality and useful document, and therefore agreed to endorse and support its adoption.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The current Housing Strategy is in need of updating, since the current Housing Strategy was produced 8 years ago and it is accepted good housing and local government practice to have an up to date Housing Strategy.

Other Options for Action:

- (a) Not to produce an updated Housing Strategy;
- (b) To further defer production of an updated Housing Strategy; or
- (c) To have a different Housing Strategy to the one proposed.

Report:

1. In 2009, the Cabinet adopted the Council's current Housing Strategy. Although there is no longer any legal or policy requirement, it is accepted good housing and local government practice to have an up to date Housing Strategy. An updated Housing Strategy has therefore been produced by officers, which covers the period 2017-2022 and is attached as an Appendix.

2. The Housing Strategy has been produced with contributions from a number of senior officers in the Housing Service and the Planning Policy Team, which the Director of Communities has collated and edited to ensure a consistent approach, format and language throughout the document.

3. The update to the Housing Strategy has been delayed from when it was originally due to be produced, since the former Housing Portfolio Holder had previously agreed that it should not be updated until the Draft Local Plan had been published, because much of the Housing Strategy relates to the provisions within the Local Plan. However, it was also agreed that, in the meantime, an annual Housing Strategy Key Action Plan should continue to be produced, with progress monitored by the Communities Select Committee every 6 months until the new Housing Strategy is formulated and adopted, which the Select Committee (and predecessor bodies) has done.

4. However, now that: the Draft Local Plan has been published; the outcome of Stage 1 of the Council's HRA Financial Options Review has been determined by the Cabinet; and the contents of the last Government's Housing White Paper are known; the Council is now in a good position to update its Housing Strategy.

5. The purpose of the Housing Strategy is to assess the District's current and future housing needs, and to set out the Council's approach to meeting those needs. The Strategy sets out a suggested overall Vision for housing in the District (based on the District's former Community Strategy), the Council's key housing objectives and the aims and objectives relating to individual housing issues. It also provides a Key Action Plan for the first year of the Strategy, which will be updated on an annual basis. It is proposed that progress with the Key Action Plan continues to be reviewed by the Communities Select Committee every 6 months.

6. It should be noted that the Housing Strategy does not cover the aims, objectives and actions of the Council as landlord, except for those aspects that contribute to the Strategy (e.g. Council housebuilding).

Resource Implications

None of the proposals within the Draft Housing Strategy have budgetary implications that have not already been included within the Council's budgets or Capital Programme. However, any additional budgetary requirements that do flow from the Housing Strategy in the future will be considered and approved on their own merits by the Cabinet in the usual way.

Legal and Governance Implications

The contents of the Housing Strategy are covered by a number of statutes.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

A number of the actions will result in a safer and cleaner environment, particularly those actions relating to development, many of which include environmental and energy efficiency

measures to the new properties.

Consultation Undertaken

At the meeting of the Communities Select Committee on 20th June 2017, the Housing Portfolio Holder invited the Select Committee to consider, pre-scrutinise and provide her with any comments on the Draft Housing Strategy for her to consider, before it was presented to this meeting of the Cabinet for consideration and adoption.

The Select Committee suggested a couple of minor comments, which have been incorporated in the final version. The Select Committee also commented on the quality and comprehensiveness of the Housing Strategy, which they found to be a useful document, and therefore supported and endorsed its adoption.

Background Papers

None.

Risk Management

The risks of adopting the Housing Strategy are minimal. The risks of individual proposals will be managed in accordance with the Council's established Risk Management Framework.

Equality Analysis

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided as an Appendix to this report.