

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

6th APRIL 2011

COUNTYWIDE HOUSING STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Peter Whittaker
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Community Services
Key Decision - Yes	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report brings before Members a Draft Countywide Housing Strategy for approval (Appendix 1). The document is currently in the process of being circulated to partners and stakeholders for final consultation.
- 1.2 The report explains why a countywide housing strategy has been developed to replace the former district housing strategies, who it is aimed at and who and what helped shape the strategy.
- 1.3 The report also brings forward a local Housing Strategy Action Plan for the Bromsgrove District for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Members note the content of the report**
- 2.2 **That the Draft Countywide Housing Strategy and action plan attached at Appendix 1 be approved and delegated authority be given to the Head of Communities and the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to agree any final minor changes that may be forthcoming from the consultation process.**
- 2.3 **That the local Housing Strategy action plan for the Bromsgrove District attached at Appendix 2 be approved.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Strategic housing functions, which include Enabling Affordable housing, homelessness prevention, affordable housing, supported housing services and private sector housing conditions and enforcement, are predominantly operated through District Councils with a very wide range of partnerships and statutory and voluntary sector agencies. Strategic arrangements and revenue funding for supported housing provision is administered through the Worcestershire Supporting People programme and has a major impact on strategic housing.

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- 3.2 Increasingly there has been more co-operation and joint development between the six District Councils, Worcestershire County Council, its partners and other local Authorities outside Worcestershire. Significant examples include the South Housing Market Area Partnership, the development of a sub-regional choice based lettings scheme and the creation of a Countywide Home Improvement Agency.
- 3.3 District Councils are required to produce comprehensive, needs led, Housing Strategies and Homelessness Strategies which focus primarily on an area's needs. Increasingly these strategies are required to take a much wider geographical overview and respond to increasingly complex policy and strategic policy requirements of Government, key partners and stakeholders.
- 3.4 Each of the Worcestershire District Councils have had individual housing strategies. The Bromsgrove District Council Housing Strategy – *Unlocking the door to meeting Housing needs in the Bromsgrove District 2006 – 2011* expires this year.

4.0 A COUNTYWIDE HOUSING STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE

- 4.1 As stated above, up until now, the six strategic housing authorities have developed individual district housing strategies which have led to improved services for our local communities. These strategies have also improved our approach to working together and this has led to an increase in the number of countywide initiatives.
- 4.2 The new Worcestershire Housing Strategy (Attached at Appendix 1) which comes before Members for approval takes the next step; a concerted and more integrated countywide approach for the development and delivery of our housing services. We are corporately and jointly committed to this approach as the Chief Executives and Leaders for the district councils, gave approval for the development of a County Housing Strategy in 2009.
- 4.2 In practice, the Worcestershire Local Authorities have been working in close and effective partnership on housing matters for many years through the Worcestershire Chief Housing Officers Group (CHOG) and Worcestershire Supporting People Commissioning Body (SPCB). Government guidance issued by the CLG broadened the approach for the development of Housing Strategies, enabling these to be developed at Local strategic Partnership or sub regional level as well as locally.

- 4.3 It is intended that the new Countywide Housing Strategy will sit alongside the existing Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy and the Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy, which are closely aligned.
- 4.4 The partnership working between Local Authorities, Housing Associations, the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) and the Government Office for the West Midlands will be the investment route and delivery vehicle for affordable housing, which is a top priority for the Worcestershire Partnership and is reflected in current LAA targets. The Countywide Housing Strategy also sits comfortably with the recent dialogue that has been developed by the district councils, County Councils, RSLs and PCT with the HCA on the approach to the “Single Conversation” and the development of the Local Investment Plan (LIP) to guide the Homes and Communities Agency’s investment in affordable housing across Worcestershire.

5.0 WHO IS THE STRATEGY AIMED AT?

- 5.1 The strategy is aimed at anyone with an interest in the commissioning and delivery of housing related services within the county. Its objective is to influence thinking, policy making and action at a county and local level to meet the housing aspirations of individuals and communities and to support Local Housing Authorities in attracting resources into Worcestershire.
- 5.2 Central to the strategy is the promotion of partnership working with customers, other agencies and across boundaries to create sustainable places to live. The strategy identifies the importance of working with all housing providers, including those in the private sector, to achieve a balanced housing market and we will promote the document and its priorities to developers and landlords.

6.0 WHO AND WHAT HELPED TO SHAPE THE STRATEGY?

- 6.1 The strategy responds to the national focus on the importance of the strategic housing role of local authorities, the implications of the Regional Housing Strategy and the outcome of the recent Comprehensive Area Assessment of the County. In addition, national and regional economic, housing and planning policy requirements are considered in the context of locally prioritised demographic and economic needs.

- 6.2 Within the county, two consultation events were held during autumn 2009 to consider housing from both a strategic and client based perspective. These events included partners from a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations (see appendices for a list of those attending).
- 6.3 There was also consultation with service users, both through the consultation events and a series of focus groups with specific client groups. A questionnaire was also made available through the district council websites to maximise the number of people who could contribute their views.

7. KEY ISSUES WITHIN THE NEW COUNTYWIDE HOUSING STRATEGY

- 7.1 The **Vision** set out in the new strategy is ***“The right home, at the right time, in the right place”*** with a view to every household in Worcestershire being able to access housing that suits their needs and circumstances when they need it. In order to achieve the vision, the strategy identifies four **Primary Goals**:

- **To make better use of existing homes**
- **Deliver more new affordable homes**
- **Improve the condition of existing homes**
- **Provide housing related support**

- 7.2 To underpin these goals, the strategy aims:

- To ensure that our plans contribute to the development of sustainable communities and economic success for Worcestershire.
- To adopt a strategic commissioning approach, including identification of needs; gap analysis; prioritisation; outcome based commissioning; monitoring and review, to ensure the right solutions are provided.
- To embrace the diversity that exists within Worcestershire and ensure that we plan to meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- To ensure that services are delivered efficiently balancing performance, customer satisfaction and cost.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no immediate financial implications to BDC associated with the approval of the Countywide Housing Strategy and Action Plan as the implementation of the actions will be carried out within existing Strategic Housing staff resources.
- 8.2 Where actions within the action plan are set to assess or investigate the potential implementation of certain new services and local funding would be required, a bid would have to be submitted for consideration under the Council's corporate annual budget process.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Section 87(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 provides that the Secretary of State may require a local housing authority to have a strategy in respect of such matters relating to housing as he may specify. The Secretary of State may impose requirements as to ends the strategy is designed to achieve, the formulation of policy or review of the strategy.
- 9.2 Subsection 2 permits the Secretary of State to require an authority, at a specified time, to supply a statement of their housing strategy and any other housing material that may be specified. Further, requirements as to the form, content and supply of the statement may also be imposed.

10. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Policies relating to Homelessness, Choice Based Lettings and Private Sector Housing come before members as separate documents.

11. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 11.1 The Housing priorities and actions within the document link with the following Corporate Objectives and Priorities:

Council Objective One - Regeneration – CO1 Priority Housing

Council Objective Three – Sense of Community and Wellbeing

Council Objective Four – Environment – CO4 Priority Climate Change

12. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

12.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

The ability to retain suitably qualified and experienced staff to implement the strategy and action plan.

The ability to maintain continued commitment and support from partners in addressing the actions identified.

12.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

Risk Register: Community Services

Key Objective Ref No: 4 - Effective, efficient and legally compliant Housing Service

13. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The actions set out within the document are designed to enhance the Council's response to the identified housing needs of the community and to improve the quality, standard and accessibility of housing services provided.

14. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The strategy and consultation process has been carried out in accordance with corporate equality and diversity policy and where appropriate, housing services undergo impact assessment. An underpinning goal of the strategy is to embrace the diversity that exists within Worcestershire and ensure that we plan to meet the diverse needs of our communities.

15. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

15.1 The Housing Strategy is based upon bringing together partners and resources to maximise the benefit to the community. The goals set within the new strategy include making best use of existing stock across all tenures dwellings by addressing under occupancy and empty homes and

adopt a strategic commissioning approach, including prioritisation and outcome based commissioning, to ensure the right solutions are provided.

16. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

16.1 Addressed within Goal 3 – Improving the condition of existing homes.

17. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

17.1 None.

18. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

18.1 None identified.

19. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

19.1 None identified.

20. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

20.1 None identified.

21. LESSONS LEARNT

21.1 Feedback from Audit Commission Inspection of Strategic Housing and consideration of the updated Key Lines of Enquiry have fed into the development of the strategy and action plans.

22. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

22.1 Within the county, two consultation events were held during autumn 2009 to consider housing from both a strategic and client based perspective. These events included partners from a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations (see appendices for a list of those attending).

22.2 There was also consultation with service users, both through the consultation events and a series of focus groups with specific client groups. A questionnaire was also made available through the district council websites to maximise the number of people who could contribute their views.

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23. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	Yes
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	Yes
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

24. WARDS AFFECTED

All

25. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Countywide Housing Strategy Document and Action Plan.

Appendix 2 - Local Housing Strategy Action Plan for the Bromsgrove District.

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26. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

27. KEY AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: A.M. Coel – Strategic Housing Manager
E Mail: a.coel@bromsgrove.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881270