

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

29TH APRIL 2009

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL- PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Cllr P.J. Whittaker
Responsible Head of Service	David Hammond
Key Decision YES	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Bromsgrove's full Housing Strategy 2006–2011 which was developed back in 2006 included a section relating to Private Sector Housing under Priority 2 'Improving the Quality and Availability of Private Sector Housing'
- 1.2 When the Strategic Housing Service was re inspected by the Audit Commission in February 2008 it was recommended that a separate Private Sector Housing Strategy be developed to guide all activities in the private sector, setting out the expected combined benefits of work in this area supported by performance targets and monitoring.
- 1.3 This report brings forward a separate Private Sector Housing Strategy Document (Appendix 1) for the approval (Appendix 1) of Members.
- 1.4 It is proposed that the document be reviewed in 12 months time after the results of an update of the House Condition Survey, the Thermal Imaging flyover and a review of under occupancy have been analysed.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Private Sector Housing Strategy Document (Appendix 1) be approved.
- 2.2 That the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and Action Plan set out within Appendix 1 and 2 of the Private Sector Housing Strategy be noted and approved.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members will recall that the Council's full Housing Strategy (2005 – 2011) that was approved in 2006 and recently underwent a mid term review, set out a comprehensive strategy for the Council to focus its strategic role upon to meet a broad range of housing objectives. The document set out our four key Housing Priorities:
- PRIORITY 1 – Addressing The Shortage Of Affordable Housing
 - PRIORITY 2 – Improving The Quality And Availability Of Private Sector Housing
 - PRIORITY 3 – Addressing Homelessness
 - PRIORITY 4 - Assisting Vulnerable Groups To Live Independently
- 3.2 When the Strategic Housing Service was re inspected by the Audit Commission in February 2008 they recommended that a separate Private Sector Housing Strategy be developed to guide all activities in the private sector, setting out the expected combined benefits of work in this area supported by performance targets and monitoring.
- 3.3 This report therefore brings forward a separate Private Sector Housing Strategy covering the period 2009 – 2014 for Member approval.
- 3.4 This separate Private Sector Housing Strategy has been written to set out the role, aspirations and priorities that the Council has for improving the quality, accessibility and availability of private sector housing in Bromsgrove District over the period 2009 - 2014.
- 3.5 The document has been developed in close relationship with partner agencies, taking into account recent housing and demographic data with priorities and objectives having been reviewed with stakeholders at two Strategic Housing Consultation Events held in November 2008 and based upon ongoing feedback from landlords and through the Landlords' Forum.
- 3.6 This document comes forward for Member approval in accordance with the Audit Commission's recommendation that this separate strategy be delivered by April 2009. However, It is proposed that the strategy will be reviewed in 12 months time because there are three pieces of research work being undertaken this year that are fundamental to the Private Sector Housing Strategy. An update of the House Condition Survey is to be carried out this summer with neighbouring authorities in Worcestershire and a Thermal Imaging Flyover is due for completion by June 2009. On a more local level, research into levels of under occupancy is to be carried out over the next 12 months. The results of this research may impact upon the strategic priorities and actions developed and will therefore feed into the 12 month review.

4. THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY DOCUMENT (APPENDIX 1)

4.1 Improving the standard of private sector housing and increasing the availability and accessibility of privately owned and rented housing, especially to the vulnerable and those on lower incomes, together with the important role of administering Disabled Facilities and Home Improvement grants is identified as the Council's second housing priority within its wider housing strategy.

4.2 **Section 1** of the document details the local context of the District with its increasingly ageing population and identifies the needs of the District and the role of the local authority when dealing with private sector housing with particular regard to advice, assistance and enforcement.

Section 2- identifies how the Strategy takes into consideration the National, Regional and Local priorities, and how this has helped shape our vision for Housing in the District.

Section 3- identifies the housing profile of the Bromsgrove District by providing an overview of the last Stock Condition Survey and its key findings.

Section 4- identifies current issues influencing Private Sector Housing in the District and explores the emerging and potential impact of the current economic downturn upon the local housing market.

Section 5- identifies the Council's priorities for private sector housing that were identified during the recent consultation event with partners and stakeholders.

Section 6- details how the Local Authority currently meets these priorities and sets out further future initiatives

Section 7- provides information on resources and funding streams available in provide a range of grant assistance.

Section 8 – sets out the Key Outcomes and key performance targets relating to:

- Sustained long term 'Decent' housing conditions, improved quality of privately rented accommodation (including HMOs), higher standards for healthier and safer homes.
- Improved energy efficiency of homes.
- Better support and assistance to older and vulnerable people in making home improvements and adaptations, healthier and safer homes.

- Increased access to private rented accommodation for the homeless, increased choice and increased support and assistance to landlords.

4.3 The Private Sector Assistance Policy is attached at Appendix 1 of the Strategy document. This policy remains unchanged from when it was originally approved by the Executive Cabinet on the 13th October 2004 with the exception of the following alterations:

4.3.1 The inclusion of a policy relating to the more recently introduced Renewable Energy Grant that is designed to assist the funding of the installation of Renewable Energy technology within a residential or non profitable organisation property.

4.3.2 The inclusion of a policy relating to the more recently introduced Discretionary Landlord Grant to assist the funding of Fire Installation Works within Houses in Multiple Occupation (non-licensable).

4.3.3 The increased capped limit to the Disabled Facilities Grant from 25k to 30k to bring it in line with current legislation.

4.4 An action plan setting out actions that are proposed relating to each of the Key Outcomes is set out at Appendix 2 of the Strategy document.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications associated with the approval of the Private Sector Housing Strategy as the implementation of the actions will be carried out within existing Strategic Housing staff resources.

5.1 In the event of any action indicating or recommending the implementation of a new service, then a bid would have to be submitted for consideration under the Council's corporate annual budget process.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

6.1 The Housing priorities and actions within the document link with all four Corporate Objectives:

Council Objective One - Regeneration – CO1 Priority Housing and Town Centre.

Council Objective Two – Improvement.

Council Objective Three – Sense of Community and Wellbeing.

Council Objective Four – Environment – CO4 Priority Climate Change.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 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.

7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

Risk Register: Environment and Planning

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

Key Objective: 4.1 - Monitor, manage and implement the recommendations from the Audit Commission Housing Inspection Report and Housing Strategy Action Plan.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 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.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The review and consultation process has been carried out in accordance with corporate equality and diversity policy and where appropriate, housing services undergo impact assessment.

9.2 The strategy has been developed following the consultation events carried out with partners and stakeholders in November 2008. It is proposed that the document be reviewed in 12 months time after the results of an update of the House Condition Survey, the Thermal Imaging flyover and a review of under occupancy have been analysed.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Housing Strategy is based upon bringing together partners and resources to maximise the benefit to the community. The vision that we have since developed; ***“Making best use of existing accommodation by improving the quality and accessibility and addressing the imbalance in the housing market through the provision of more affordable housing”***, has helped us to focus our efforts to achieve the greatest impact by making better use of existing stock across all tenures.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues None
Personnel Implications None
Governance/Performance Management All PI's and targets set out in the action plan accord with those detailed in service business plans and the corporate performance monitoring process.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 None
Policy None
Environmental None

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects	Yes
Executive Director - Services	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes

Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	No

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards.

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Private Sector Housing Strategy (including Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and Action Plan)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing Strategy Document 2006 – 2011
Bromsgrove Housing Market Assessment 2008

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