

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

12th April 2011

WORCESTERSHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY 2011 - 2016.

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Brandon Clayton, Housing, Local Environment & Health
Relevant Head of Service	Angie Heighway, Head of Community Services
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The report brings before Members a Countywide Housing Strategy for approval (Appendix 1). 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.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that the Countywide Housing Strategy and action plan attached at Appendix 1 be approved.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Strategic housing functions, which include enabling affordable housing, homelessness prevention, supported housing services and private sector housing conditions and enforcement, are predominantly operated through District/Borough Councils with a very wide range of partnerships with 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.
- 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 Countywide Homelessness Strategy and the creation of a Countywide Home Improvement Agency.
- 3.3 District Councils are required to produce a 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

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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 has had individual housing strategies. The Redditch Borough Council Housing Strategy expired at the end of 2010. These strategies have also improved our approach to working together and this has led to an increase in the number of countywide initiatives.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The new Worcestershire Housing Strategy (Attached at Appendix 1) 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/Borough 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, and the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) will be the investment route and delivery vehicle for affordable housing, which is a top priority for the Worcestershire Partnership and was reflected in previous LAA targets. The Countywide Housing Strategy also sits comfortably with the recent dialogue that has been developed by the District/Borough Councils, County Councils, RSLs and with the HCA on the approach to the 'Single Conversation' and the development of the Local Investment Plan (LIP) to guide the HCA's investment in affordable housing across Worcestershire.

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- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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/Borough Council websites to maximise the number of people who could contribute their views.
- 4.10 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**:
- a) **To make better use of existing homes.**
 - b) **Deliver more new affordable homes.**
 - c) **Improve the condition of existing homes.**
 - d) **Provide housing related support.**

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4.11 To underpin these goals, the strategy aims:

- i) To ensure that our plans contribute to the development of sustainable communities and economic success for Worcestershire.
- ii) 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.
- iii) To embrace the diversity that exists within Worcestershire and ensure that we plan to meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- iv) To ensure that services are delivered efficiently balancing performance, customer satisfaction and cost.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications to the Council 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.

5.2 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.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 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.

6.2 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.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policies relating to Homelessness, Allocation of housing stock and Private Sector Housing come before members as separate documents.

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8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 Enterprising Communities – The strategies goal is to ensure the housing in Redditch is affordable, decent, varied and suitable for the community.
- 8.2 Safe – Ensuring housing is decent and suitable for the community will assist in improving people’s perception of their area. New developments will ensure Secure by Design is incorporated in the planning process. Supported housing projects will assist in the reduction and fear of crime.
- 8.3 Clean & Green – Projects will reduce fuel poverty and increase the efficiency of homes.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:
- a) The ability to maintain continued commitment and support from partners in addressing the actions identified.
- 9.2 These risks are being managed as follows:
- b) Regular partnership meetings to ensure a shared common goal is maintained.

10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

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.

11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

The strategy and consultation process has been carried out in accordance with corporate equality and diversity policy and where appropriate, housing services undergone an 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.

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12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

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 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.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

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

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

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

None identified.

17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

18. LESSONS LEARNT

Feedback from Audit Commission updated Key Lines of Enquiry have fed into the development of the strategy and action plans.

19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

19.1 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.

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- 19.2 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.

20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

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

21. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

22. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Housing Strategy Document and Action Plan

23. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Matthew Bough
E Mail: matthew.bough@redditchbc.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 64252 ext: 3120