

Report to: Community Protection Panel

Date: 15 September 2008

Subject: The Development of the New Housing Strategy

Report of: Department of Environmental Services

Contact officer: Peter Layland 01942 828983 Ext:3983

Purpose / summary: To report on the process of developing the new Housing Strategy

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: The alternative would be to retain the current outdated housing policy

Recommendation / decision: To note progress on the development of the new Housing Strategy

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	None at present
Staffing:	None at present
Policy:	Seeks to develop a new Housing Strategy
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	The housing strategy review will include a diversity impact assessment and a full evaluation of Equal Opportunities
Wards affected:	All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?
No

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

Not at present

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

This report outlines progress on developing the new Housing Strategy

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?

N/A

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?

N/A*

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

No *

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	x		x
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
15 th September			

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to?	Date of meeting	Copy available from?
Housing Needs Survey	C/P	2 nd June 2008	Gateway 4

Proper Officer M Kimber

Date 1/9/08

1. **Introduction:**

- 1.1 In January 2008 an update on the progress of the Housing Strategy was agreed, which included proposals to develop a new Housing Strategy during the current year. This report seeks to provide progress on this task and set out in more detail the envisaged process.

2. **Background:**

- 2.1 The Council has prepared a Housing Strategy for a considerable period of time with the most recent being in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) "Fit for Purpose" criteria. Unfortunately this strategy is now outdated and is in need of being renewed. The problem is that the Government have signalled that current strategy layouts / guidance are no longer appropriate and that significant change is required. However they have yet to publish official guidance on the process.
- 2.2 The key reasons Government are looking to change the format of strategies is set out below.
- The Housing Green Paper outlines a new role for Local Authority Strategic housing which involves assessment of future needs, to make the best use of resources, plan / facilitate new supply, plan / commission housing support services and to work in partnership to secure effective housing and neighbourhood management. This signals a concern with place making and wider issues than has traditionally been the case in previous strategies, which concentrated on housing needs issues.
 - The new local operating environment and linkages to the wider Sustainable Communities Agenda / Local Area Agreement
 - The move to develop the Sub Regional basis for Housing investment decisions and to act more strategically within wider markets. This also links strongly with economic regeneration
 - Changes in government policy including the greater emphasis on affordable housing and the formation of the New Homes and Communities Agency.
- 2.3 In support of this DCLG have commissioned a Strategic Housing Programme and are currently revising Housing Strategy Advice. Ideally all these reviews / advice would be finalised and in place before embarking on a Housing Strategy review. Unfortunately time is marching on and we cannot now wait for this to be in place. This is because:
- Our Strategy is outdated and has already been extended 12 months
 - The Local Area Agreement has been agreed and action plans on how priorities are to be taken forward are now required (Part of CAA process)
 - Also our evidence base is now extensive with the publication of the local Housing Needs Survey, recent reviews of homelessness, SP needs etc and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

2.4 Therefore the recommendation is that the preparations for the new strategy should continue.

3. New Strategy Structure

3.1 Against this background the shape of the future Housing Strategy will be very different from past structures. It will need to be more widely based and integrated within a range of local and sub regional objectives. This emphasis on place making and outcomes is clearly welcomed but it means that considerable thought is needed in working through our approach.

3.2 Key features of the new strategy will be:

- Its prime role will be to outline how housing outcomes are to be delivered against the priorities within the LAA / Sustainable Communities
- It will include new housing provision and existing homes and thus it will become a joint housing / planning document
- It will concentrate on a 3 – 5 year horizon and will also need to link with Sub Regional aspirations
- It will need to be considered / consulted upon more widely than present
- Finally it will be relatively short, readable and understandable.

3.3 In terms of preparation, considerable progress has been made such as the development of the evidence base, the agreement of housing priorities within the LAA, the recent Housing Partnership meeting that scoped out issues and our participation in Sub Regional work.

3.4 The basis of the new strategy will be the various Sub Strategies that are in many cases already in place such as the Affordable Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Older Persons Strategy etc. The key role of the new document will be to integrate these together to develop a coherent outcome based strategy and which looks to develop these strategies and create new ones where necessary.

3.5 It is proposed to build on these foundations and an initial project plan has been developed which will look to develop a new strategy by April 2009. This involves the following deadlines.

Development of an Options Paper:- November 2008

Production of a Draft Strategy:- February 2009

Production of a Strategy April 2009

3.6 Each of these stages will be reported to Panel and will be subject to widespread consultation via the Housing Partnership / Special Events.

3.7 It is also proposed that the overall process will be led and overseen by the Executive of the Housing Partnership, thus maximising stakeholders influence.

3.8 Finally whilst the aim is to produce a strategy by April it needs to be understood that this completed document may need subsequent amendment in light of new government advice and policy developments. Thus the development of the strategy is envisaged to be a continuous process. Nevertheless the new strategy will provide strong leadership to the contribution of housing to the local Sustainable Communities Plan / LAA and this will be invaluable within the proposed CAA process.

4. Conclusions:

4.1 It is proposed to continue to develop the new Housing Strategy and it is expected that it will be completed by April 2009, with its development overseen by the Housing Partnership.

