

## **Report to: Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date of Meeting: 8 January 2009**

**Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan**

**Subject: Housing Strategy 2009-2012 (Consultation Draft)**

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**Epping Forest  
District Council**

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### **Recommendations:**

- 1) That the Panel considers the attached Housing Strategy 2009-2012 (Consultation Draft) and endorses it for consultation with key partners, stakeholders and the public;**
- 2) That a Consultation Exercise be undertaken on the Consultation Draft, including a one-day Housing Strategy Conference;**
- 3) That appropriate comments received through the Consultation Exercise be incorporated within the final version of the Housing Strategy;**
- 4) That the final version of the Housing Strategy be submitted to the Cabinet, with a recommendation to the full Council that it be formally adopted;**
- 5) That subsequent annual Key Action Plans be submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet;**
- 6) That the Housing Scrutiny Panel considers progress with the Key Action Plan, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, six months after its adoption.**

### **Report:**

1. The Council's Housing Strategy was last produced in May 2003 and was assessed at that time as being fully "fit for purpose" by the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East). The Council was only the second local authority in the country to achieve the fit for purpose standard.

2. While there is now no requirement for local authorities to produce their own Housing Strategies, in July 2008, within its document "Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities" the Government made reference to the future of housing strategies and stated that, "Refreshed housing strategies should:

- fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners;
- reflect a clear and evidenced approach;
- provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments, including on the infrastructure needed to support housing growth".

3. A Housing Strategy should set out a district's housing plans for the medium term (i.e. the next 3-5 years). However, these plans can also be formulated with regard to the housing objectives for the long term which, in some cases, can span a period of 30 years.

4 The London Commuter Belt (LCB) Housing Sub-Region, within which the District sits, is one of the largest sub-regions in the country, comprising 5 local authorities in Essex and all 10 local authorities in Hertfordshire. The local authorities and RSLs within the Sub-Region have previously worked in partnership to produce a Sub-Regional Housing Strategy, which forms a part of the Regional Housing Strategy. Council officers have actively engaged with sub-regional working and have contributed towards the delivery of the Sub-Regional Housing Action Plan.

5. The latest Sub-Regional Housing Strategy was produced in October 2004 and the local authorities and RSLs are now working together to produce a new Sub-Regional Housing Strategy in 2009. In order to assist in this process, all the local authorities in the LCB Housing Sub-Region have agreed to produce their own housing strategies for their district and that they should now be produced to a common format. This Council's latest Housing Strategy (Consultation Draft) has been produced in this common format and is attached as an Appendix to this report.

6. The draft Housing Strategy complements the current Sub-Regional Housing Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and also meets national housing objectives. The main aspects of national housing policy and Regional and Sub-Regional Strategies are included in the appendices to the document. The appendices also include the London Commuter Belt Strategy Grid, which summarises the strategic approach and position at district level for each of the local authorities in the Sub Region.

7. The draft Housing Strategy assesses the District's current and future housing needs - having particular regard to a recently completed (draft) Strategic Housing Market Assessment produced by six local authorities in the eastern part of the LCB Sub-Region - and sets out the Council's approach to meeting those needs. As well as taking account of national, regional and sub-regional priorities, it also links with other Council and non-Council strategies that both influence, and are influenced by, the Housing Strategy.

8. The Consultation Draft also includes a Key Action Plan at Appendix 1, which sets out the proposed actions to be taken by the Council to contribute towards the achievement of the housing objectives over the next 12 months.

9. It is proposed that the final version of the Housing Strategy be adopted for a period of three years, with Key Action Plans produced and updated on an annual basis for approval by the Cabinet.

10. In view of the strategic importance of the Housing Strategy, the document has been produced as a "Consultation Draft". It is proposed that a major Consultation Exercise be undertaken with the Council's partners, key stakeholders and the public over a three-month period in early-2009. All responses received from the Consultation Exercise will then be considered, and changes considered appropriate by the Housing Portfolio Holder will then be made for the final version, which will be submitted to the Cabinet for recommendation to, and adoption by, the full Council, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

11. Having regard to best practice set out in the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for the inspection of local housing strategies, it is proposed that - during the consultation period - a one day conference be held on the proposals within the Consultation Draft, to which all the consultees will be invited. Presentations will be given on the key issues and proposals, in order to fully brief consultees and to help inform their responses. Details of the Consultation Draft will also be publicised in the local press, with an invitation for interested members of the public to obtain a copy of the Consultation Draft and to provide their comments. A copy of the document will also be published on the Council's website.

12. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the attached Housing Strategy 2009-2012 (Consultation Draft) and endorse it for consultation with key partners, stakeholders and the public. The Scrutiny Panel will then be asked to consider progress with the final version of the Key Action Plan, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, six months after the Housing Strategy's adoption.