

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Date of meeting: 15 September 2005

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr M. Heavens

**Subject: Six-month Progress Report on Key Action Plans
- Housing Strategy 2004-2007**

Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall, Head of Housing Services

Committee Secretary:

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Panel considers the latest Six-month Progress Report for the Key Action Plans contained within the Housing Strategy 2004-2007 and provides any feedback to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Head of Housing Services accordingly.

Report:

1. In September 2004, the full Council approved the Council's (current) Housing Strategy 2004-2007. It is good practice, and a requirement of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), that every local housing authority should produce a Housing Strategy that is "fit for purpose", setting out the housing needs of its district and their plans to meet those needs. The Council's Housing Strategy has previously been assessed as "fit for purpose" by the Government Office, and includes details of how the Council works with housing associations to provide more homes for rent in the District, what assistance is given to private occupiers to improve their housing, the way the Council deals with homelessness and let properties, and how the Council works with other organisations to improve the housing situation in the District.
2. Important sections of the Housing Strategy are the "Key Action Plans", which set out the proposed actions that the Council will take over the following 1-3 years. Having included the Key Action Plans within the Strategy, it is considered good practice that the progress made with the stated actions are monitored by members. Therefore, in the past, progress reports have been routinely presented to the former Overview and Scrutiny Committee (1) on a six monthly basis. Under its Terms of Reference, responsibility for monitoring progress has now been passed to the Housing Scrutiny Panel.
3. The Six-month Progress Report for the Key Action Plans contained within the Housing Strategy 2004-2007 (as at 1 September 2005) is attached as an appendix to this report. The Committee is asked to consider the Progress Report and to feedback to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Head of Housing Services any comments it considers appropriate.
4. The expectation of the ODPM is that local authorities should revised their housing strategies around every three years. However, unlike most other local authorities, this Council's officers and members have always been of the view that the Housing Strategy should be updated on an annual basis, to ensure that it is always up to date and current. Although the Housing Strategy is in the progress of being reviewed and revised, due to other workload and the need to undertake an extensive consultation exercise on the Housing Strategy this year (which the Council undertakes every three years), it will not be ready for consideration by the Housing Scrutiny Panel (in the first instance) until, at the earliest, its next meeting.