

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 5th March 2012

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr M. McEwen

**Subject: Housing Strategy: 6-Month Progress
Report on Key Action Plan 2011/12 &
production of new Strategy**



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Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the 6-Month Progress Report on the Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2011/12, attached as an Appendix, be considered, with any comments passed to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing accordingly; and**
- (2) That a recommendation be made to the Housing Portfolio Holder that;
 - (a) The production of the next Housing Strategy be deferred for one year, and produced in 2013/14, due to the number of important issues that are expected to be concluded over the next year that will have a significant impact on the Housing Strategy; and**
 - (b) That, in the meantime, a further Housing Strategy Key Action Plan for 2012/13 be considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel in July 2012 for recommendation to the Cabinet, with progress subsequently monitored on a six-monthly basis by the Scrutiny Panel in the normal way.****

Report:

1. At its meeting in September 2009, the Council's Cabinet adopted the Housing Strategy 2009-2012. The Housing Strategy assesses the District's current and future housing needs and sets out the Council's approach to meeting those needs.
2. The Strategy also included a Key Action Plan, which set out the proposed actions that would be taken by the Council to contribute towards the achievement of the housing objectives over the first year of the Housing Strategy.
3. When adopting the Housing Strategy, the Cabinet also agreed that Key Action Plans for the Housing Strategy should be produced and updated on an annual basis for approval by the Cabinet. To date, therefore, three annual Key Action Plans have been produced, with the last one agreed by the Cabinet, on the recommendation of the Housing Scrutiny Panel, in September 2011.
4. The Cabinet has agreed that progress with the Key Action Plans should be monitored on a 6-monthly basis by the Housing Scrutiny Panel, in accordance with its Terms of Reference. Therefore, the 6-Month Progress Report for the Key Action Plan adopted in September 2011 is attached as an Appendix, which the Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider

and to provide any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing.

5. It was originally anticipated that the Housing Strategy would cover the three-year period 2009-2012, and would therefore be updated during 2012 to cover the following three years. However, there are a number of important issues that are expected to be concluded by the Council over the next year, which will have a significant impact on the Housing Strategy. These include:

- A refresh of the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA);
- The production of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Assessment (SHLA), which will evaluate all of the proposed development sites in the District put forward by landowners and developers, through the "Call for Sites" Exercise;
- The production of the Council's Draft Local Plan, which will set out the Council's proposed plans on the number and proposed location of new homes in the District; and
- The Council's decisions on housing issues relating to the Localism Act, including a revised eligibility criteria for the Council's Housing Register and the possibility of the introduction of fixed term flexible tenancies by the Council, instead of "lifetime" secure tenancies.

6. Under these circumstances, it is not considered possible to formulate a robust and sustainable Housing Strategy for the next three years – that would then not be updated again until 2015 - until these issues have been concluded.

7. Therefore, it is suggested that consideration be given to advising the Housing Portfolio Holder that the production of the next Housing Strategy be deferred for one year, and produced in 2013/14. In the meantime, it is further suggested that an updated Housing Strategy Key Action Plan for 2012/13 be considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel in July 2012, and that progress with the Action Plan is then monitored on a six-monthly basis by the Scrutiny Panel in the normal way.