

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 7 August 2012

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr David Stallan

Subject: Housing Strategy 2009-2012:

(a) 12-Month Progress Report on Key Action Plan 2011/12; and

(b) New Key Action Plan 2012/13



Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall – Director of Housing (01992 564004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the 12-Month Progress Report on the Housing Strategy’s Key Action Plan 2011/12 – attached as Appendix 1 – be considered, with any comments passed to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing accordingly; and**
- (2) That the proposed new Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2012/13 – attached as Appendix 2 – be recommended to the Cabinet for adoption.**

Report:

1. At its meeting in September 2009, the Council’s Cabinet adopted the Housing Strategy 2009-2012. This followed the Housing Scrutiny Panel considering in detail, and approving for consultation, an earlier “Consultation Draft” Housing Strategy, and a major Consultation Exercise being undertaken with the Council’s partners, key stakeholders and the public over a three-month period. The Consultation Exercise included a one-day Housing Strategy Conference, to which all the consultees were invited.

2. The Housing Strategy assesses the District’s current and future housing needs - having particular regard to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment produced by six local authorities in the eastern part of the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region - and sets out the Council’s approach to meeting those needs. As well as taking account of national priorities, it also links with other Council and non-Council strategies that both influence, and are influenced by, the Housing Strategy.

3. 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 3 years of the Housing Strategy. When adopting the Housing Strategy, the Cabinet agreed that Key Action Plans should be produced and updated on an annual basis for approval by the Cabinet, and 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.

12-Month Progress Report on Key Action Plan 2011-2012

4. Last year, the Cabinet adopted the third Key Action Plan for the Housing Strategy, on the recommendation of the Housing Scrutiny Panel. The first 6-Month Progress Report on this Key Action Plan was considered by the Scrutiny Panel in March 2012, and the 12-Month Progress Report is attached as Appendix 1, which the Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider, and to provide any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing.

Deferral of new Housing Strategy and Adoption of Key Action Plan 2012-2013

5. Although there is no legal or policy requirement, it was originally anticipated that the Housing Strategy would be updated during 2012, to cover the following three years. However, following a recommendation from the Housing Scrutiny Panel, in May 2012 the former Housing Portfolio Holder agreed that the production of the next Housing Strategy should be deferred for one year, and produced in 2013/14.

6. This was because it was identified and acknowledged that there are a number of important issues that were expected to be concluded by the Council over the following year, which would have a significant impact on the Housing Strategy, and that it would not be 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. These issues included:

- A refresh of the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA);
- The production of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Assessment (SHLA), which would 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 would 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 possible Local 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.

7. The Housing Scrutiny Panel also recommended that, in the meantime, an updated Housing Strategy Key Action Plan for 2012/13 should be considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel at this meeting - for recommendation to the Cabinet for adoption - and that progress with the updated Action Plan should be monitored on a six-monthly basis by the Scrutiny Panel in the normal way. This recommendation was also agreed by the Housing Portfolio Holder.

8. Therefore, it is now necessary for the Cabinet to adopt a Key Action Plan for the forthcoming year. Accordingly, an updated Key Action Plan is attached at Appendix 2, which the Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and recommend to the Cabinet for adoption at its meeting in September 2012.