

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-015-2012/13  
**Date of meeting:** 10 September 2012



**Committee:** Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel (Chair – Cllr Stephen Murray)

**Subject:** Housing Strategy - Key Action Plan 2012-2013

**Responsible Officer:** Alan Hall (01992 564004)

**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

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### **Recommendations:**

**(1) That the proposed Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2012/13, attached as an Appendix to this report, be adopted.**

### **Executive Summary:**

In accordance with our Terms of Reference, and following a detailed report from the Director of Housing, we have considered - and recommend for adoption - a Housing Strategy Key Action Plan for 2012/13, which is attached as an Appendix. This follows the former Housing Portfolio Holder's decision, on our recommendation, that the production of the next Housing Strategy should be deferred for one year, and produced in 2013/14.

We have also considered in detail a 12-Month Progress Report on last year's Key Action Plan, on which we have provided feedback to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing and which has informed the new Key Action Plan for 2012/13 that we are recommending to the Cabinet.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

The former Housing Portfolio Holder agreed our previous recommendation that the production of the next Housing Strategy should be deferred for one year. The Housing Strategy 2009-2012 includes a Key Action Plan, which the Cabinet has agreed should be updated each year, for the duration of the Housing Strategy.

### **Other Options for Action:**

- (a) To not agree the latest Key Action Plan.
- (b) To propose different actions.

### **Report:**

1. At our meeting on 7 August 2012, we considered a detailed report from the Director of Housing providing both a 12-Month Progress Report on the current Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2011/12 (agreed by the Cabinet in September 2011) and a proposed new Key Action Plan for the forthcoming year 2012/13. This report to the Cabinet sets out our deliberations and recommendations.

2. At its meeting in September 2009, the Cabinet adopted the Housing Strategy 2009-2012. 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 (on the recommendation of the Housing Scrutiny Panel) and that progress with the Key Action Plans should be monitored on a 6-monthly basis by the Housing Scrutiny Panel, all in accordance with our Terms of Reference.

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

4. 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 our recommendation, in May 2012 the former Housing Portfolio Holder agreed our recommendation that the production of the next Housing Strategy should be deferred for one year, and produced in 2013/14.

5. This was because the Director of Housing had advised us that there were a number of important issues 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 before 2015 - until these issues had 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.

6. We also recommended that, in the meantime, we should consider an updated Housing Strategy Key Action Plan for 2012/13 at our meeting on 7 August 2012, for recommendation to the Cabinet for adoption. This recommendation was also agreed by the former Housing Portfolio Holder.

7. Therefore, it is now necessary for us to recommend to the Cabinet a Key Action Plan

for adoption for the forthcoming year. Accordingly, a new Key Action Plan is attached as an Appendix to this report, which the Cabinet is asked to consider and adopt.

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

8. Last year, on our recommendation, the Cabinet adopted the Housing Strategy's Key Action Plan for the current year. We considered the first 6-Month Progress Report produced by the Director of Housing on this Key Action Plan in March 2012, and the 12-Month Progress Report at our most recent meeting. On both occasions, we provided comments and feedback to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing. The latest Progress Report was able to inform the new Key Action Plan for 2012/13 that we are now recommending to the Cabinet.

#### **Resource Implications:**

There are various resource implications, but these have been, or will be, reported to the Cabinet and/or Housing Portfolio Holder as appropriate and when required.

#### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

All proposals comply with the relevant legislations.

#### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

A number of the proposals will result in safer and/or greener outcomes.

#### **Consultation Undertaken:**

There was extensive consultation undertaken prior to the Housing Strategy 2009-2012 being adopted.

#### **Background Papers:**

None.

#### **Impact Assessments:**

##### Risk Management

Any risks associated with the proposed actions will be assessed as part of the individual project proposals.

##### Equality and Diversity

*Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications?* Yes

*Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?* Yes

*What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?*  
A Customer (Equality) Impact Assessment has previously been undertaken on the Council's approach to its Housing Strategy generally, which will be updated later this year. Any Impact Assessments required for individual actions will be undertaken when necessary.

*How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?*  
N/A.

### Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2012-13

No	Category	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress Report (to be reported after 6 and 12 months)
1	General	Review the Housing Strategy 2009-2012 and produce an updated Housing Strategy for 2013-2016, following a consultation exercise on a Draft Housing Strategy	Director of Housing	Sept 2013	
2	Housing Market	Undertake an extensive Public Consultation Exercise on the Issues and Options Paper for the Council's Local Plan, to assist with the production of the new Local Plan	Asst. Director of Planning (Policy & Conservation)	October 2012	
3	Housing Market	Undertake a review and refresh of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), to inform the Draft Local Plan and the target number of new homes required for the District to 2031	Principal Planning Officer (Forward Planning)	Sept 2012	
4	Housing Market	Produce a Draft Local Plan, taking account of the responses to the Issues and Options Paper, including a proposed target for the delivery of new homes to 2031.	Asst. Director of Planning (Policy & Conservation)	May 2013	
5	Housing Market	Undertake a Consultation Exercise on the Draft Local Plan and process the responses	Asst. Director of Planning (Policy & Conservation)	August 2013	
6	Housing Market	Submit the final version of the Local Plan for an Examination in Public	Asst. Director of Planning (Policy & Conservation)	March 2014	

7	Regeneration	Adopt a Design and Development Brief for the St Johns Area of Epping, including the provision of market and affordable housing, following analysis of the results of the public consultation exercise completed in July 2012	Director of Corporate Support Services	Sept 2012	
8	Regeneration	Produce and agree an Action Plan for the regeneration of the Council's assets at The Broadway, Loughton, in accordance with the approved Development and Design Brief, including the provision of significant levels of affordable housing	Director of Housing	Sept 2012	
9	Affordable Housing	<p>Work with housing associations and developers to provide 76 new affordable homes for rent and shared ownership in 2013/14 and around a further 69 new affordable homes by March 2015, at the following sites with planning permission:</p> <p>(a) Sewardstone Road, Waltham Abbey – 67 new homes  (b) 12-30 Church Hill, Loughton – 5 new homes  (c) Millfield, High Ongar – 4 new homes  (d) Jennikings Nursery, Chigwell – 52 new homes  (e) Manor Road Garden Centre, Chigwell – 17 new homes</p>	Director of Housing	<p>March 2013</p> <p>March 2014</p>	

10	Affordable Housing	Review the possible re-introduction of the Home Ownership Grant Scheme (enabling existing Council tenants to purchase in the private sector) in 2013/14.	Housing Resources Manager	Sept 2012	
11	Affordable Housing	Complete Phase 1 of the Open Market Home Ownership Scheme with Broxbourne Housing Association (BHA) - to enable first time buyers in the District to purchase a property of their choice from the open market through shared ownership, funded jointly by the Council, BHA and the applicant – and consider whether to undertake Phase 2	Director of Housing	Sept 2012	
12	Affordable Housing	Seek and obtain planning permission for residential development at the Council's Pyrles Lane Nursery site, Loughton, including the provision of at least 40% affordable housing	Chief Estates Officer	Nov 2012	
13	Affordable Housing	Ensure commencement of the residential housing element of the development of the St Johns School site, Epping, in accordance with the signed Section 106 (Planning) Agreement, including the provision of affordable housing	Director of Housing	Jan 2013	
14	Council Housebuilding Programme	Appoint a Development Agent to manage and deliver the Council's Housebuilding Programme, including the provision of all building consultants and the procurement of works contractors	Director of Housing	Jan 2013	

15	Council Housebuilding Programme	Formulate and adopt a Development Strategy for the Council Housebuilding Programme	Director of Housing	April 2013	
16	Council Housebuilding Programme	Undertake initial development assessments for a further list of small garage sites and garage sites with vacancies and no waiting list, and recommend to the Cabinet that detailed Development and Financial Appraisals be undertaken for those sites that have development potential	Director of Housing	Dec 2013	
17	Council Housebuilding Programme	Seek Development Partner status for the Council with the Homes and Communities Agency, to enable the Council to bid for HCA funding and charge affordable rents for its new developments, instead of social rents	Director of Housing	Sept 2013	
18	Council Housebuilding Programme	Complete the first batch of Development and Financial Appraisals for potential development sites, for consideration by the Cabinet	Director of Housing	June 2013	
19	Council Housebuilding Programme	Obtain planning permissions for the first sites under the Council Housebuilding Programme	Director of Housing	Nov 2013	
20	Affordable Housing	Work with Trust for London and Chigwell Parish Council to agree an appropriate way forward for the development or conversion of the 20 unpopular bedsits for older people at Marden Close, Chigwell Row to provide good quality, self-contained rented accommodation for Housing Register applicants	Director of Housing	Oct 2012	



21	Affordable Housing	Update the existing District-wide Nominations Agreements with each of the Council's Preferred Housing Association Partners for new rented housing developments - to take account of the new Affordable Rents Framework - and formulate new District-wide Nominations Agreements for shared ownership properties with the same partners.	Director of Housing	Dec 2012	
22	Affordable Housing	Adopt a West Essex Tenancy Strategy to meet the requirements of the Localism Act, setting out the Council's requirements for the forms of tenure offered to new tenants, to which the Council and housing associations must have regard.	Director of Housing	Oct 2012	
23	Affordable Housing	Formulate a Tenancy Policy, setting out the form(s) of tenure that the Council will provide in the future, including the possible use of flexible (fixed term) tenancies in appropriate cases, for detailed consideration by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and subsequent adoption by the Cabinet.	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	Dec 2012	
24	Affordable Housing	Undertake a major review of the Council's Allocations Scheme, in the light of the flexibilities offered by the Localism Act, and adopt a revised Allocations Scheme by the Council by the Cabinet – including a local Eligibility Criteria – following detailed consideration by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and consultation with stakeholders and housing applicants.	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	Jan 2013	

25	Affordable Housing	Undertake a review of the success of the Council's expanded Social Housing Fraud Scheme, around 1 year after the appointment to the new post of Senior Housing Officer (Social Housing Fraud)	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	July 2013	
26	Affordable Housing	Recruit to the new post of Housing Underoccupation Officer and formulate an action plan to reduce the amount of under-occupation within the Council's housing stock and to assist older people with practical support to move to smaller accommodation.	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	Oct 2012	
27	Affordable Housing	Produce and submit to the Housing Scrutiny Panel a progress report on the success of the new Housing Underoccupation Officer post, around 12 months after appointment	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	Oct 2013	
28	Affordable Housing	Consider the findings of the Chartered Institute of Housing's study (commissioned by the Council with full funding from Improvement East) on the implications of the welfare reforms - in relation to the introduction of universal credit, under-occupation, increased rent arrears and increased transaction costs - and identify and implement an appropriate package of measures to mitigate the effects	Director of Housing	Mar 2013	
29	Affordable Housing	Introduce an on-line housing registration system	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	April 2013	

30	Homelessness	Adopt a revised Homelessness Strategy for a further three-year period, following review by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and consultation exercise with stakeholders	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	Sept 2012	
31	Homelessness	Decide whether or not to use the flexibilities offered by the Localism Act to place homeless families in private rented accommodation without their agreement	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	Oct 2012	
32	Homelessness	Consider the findings of the Chartered Institute of Housing's study on the implications of the welfare reforms, in relation to homelessness, and implement an appropriate package of measures to mitigate the effects	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	March 2013	
33	Homelessness	Complete the programme of conversion works to provide designated bathrooms for each room at Norway House, the Council's Homeless Persons Hostel	Housing Options Manager	March 2013	
34	Diversity	Compare the ethnicity of applicants provided with Council accommodation with the ethnicity of Housing Register applicants	Housing Options Manager	July 2013	
35	Diversity	Review and update the Customer (Equality) Impact Assessments of the Housing Strategy & Development, HomeOption Scheme, Homelessness, and Private Sector Housing functions	Director of Housing	July 2013	

36	Diversity	Implement the Council's new Equality Monitoring Policy and Guidance for appropriate housing services	Director of Housing	Mar 2013	
37	Diversity	Complete an Accommodation Assessment for Gypsy Roma and Travellers (GRT), in order to inform the Local Plan in respect of the accommodation requirements for the GRT community	Asst. Director of Planning (Policy & Conservation)	Nov 2012	
38	Diversity	Undertake an audit of the Council's compliance with the Human Right's Commission's Code of Practice in Rented Housing and undertake any required actions as a result	Assistant Director of Housing (Private Sector and Resources)	July 2013	
39	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Following the Issues and Options Exercise, include a requirement in the Draft Local Plan that all new housing developments in the District should meet the Lifetime Homes Standard	Principal Planning Officer (Forward Planning)	May 2013	
40	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Agree the Council's approach for the delivery of its Careline Service, following the County Council's proposed introduction of a new county-wide Telecare Contract from April 2013	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	June 2013	
41	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Introduce a new, in-house, free Handyperson Scheme for all the Council's sheltered housing schemes, and commission a similar free Handyperson Scheme for other older Council tenants from Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF)	Asst. Director of Housing (Property)	Oct 2012	

42	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Review the success of the in-house Handyperson Scheme and VAEF Handyperson Scheme around 12 months after their introduction	Asst. Director of Housing (Property)	Oct 2013	
43	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Provide a grant of £10,000 to the proposed Home2Home Furniture Recycling Scheme, provided that there is surety and evidence that the Scheme will become operational.	Director of Housing	Oct 2012	
44	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Install key safes outside all properties within the Council sheltered housing schemes, free of charge	Housing Manager (Older People's Services)	Dec 2012	
45	Empty Homes	Bring at least 20 long-term empty properties back into use by Council intervention, including the continued use of the PLACE Scheme	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	March 2013	
46	Rural Housing	Continue to work with Hastoe Housing Association and Parish Councils to investigate the development potential for rural housing schemes in villages, through the Council's Rural Planning Exceptions Policy	Director of Housing	July 2013	
47	Decent Homes – Public Sector	Undertake programmes of work to ensure that all the Council's homes continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard and also meet a (higher) full, modern maintenance standard, utilising the additional funding available as a result of HRA self financing	Housing Assets Manager	July 2013	

48	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Produce for the Housing Scrutiny Panel a Progress Report on the new Private Sector Housing Strategy, around 1 year after adoption, to identify if any refinements are required	Assistant Director of Housing (Private Sector and Resources)	July 2013	
49	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Introduce new licences for existing residential park home sites in the District	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	Dec 2012	
50	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Introduce new licence conditions for existing and new holiday park home sites in the District, following consultation with site owners, park home residents association and statutory agencies	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	Dec 2013	
51	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Prepare the Council's CARE Service for the retendering of the Essex Home Improvement Agency contract(s), due to be introduced in July 2013.	Private Housing Manager (Grants & CARE)	April 2013	
52	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Report to the Housing Portfolio Holder on a proposal to increase CARE's project management fees for non-Disabled Facilities Grant work to 15%, in line with the fees now charged for Disabled Facilities Grant work	Private Housing Manager (Grants & CARE)	Dec 2012	
53	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Review the charging policy for the CARE Handyperson Service, including a consultation exercise with service users	Private Housing Manager (Grants & CARE)	Dec 2012	
54	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Seek to introduce a Hospital to Home Scheme for West Essex, in partnership with the Papworth Housing Trust	Private Housing Manager (Grants & CARE)	Mar 2013	

55	Energy Efficiency	Work with Hastoe Housing Association to complete the first affordable housing development by a housing association in the country constructed from straw bales at Millfield, High Ongar, significantly improving energy efficiency	Director of Housing	Mar 2013	
56	Energy Efficiency	Identify and implement the role that the Council can play with the roll-out of the Green Deal, once the final arrangements have been confirmed by the Government	Environmental Co-ordinator	Mar 2013	