

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010 - 2014

5 January 2010

Report of Head of Housing Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the current status of the project to produce the Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy, which links to the Cherwell Housing Strategy 2005 – 2011.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) note the contents of the report.

Details

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In April 2009 it was agreed to develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy in order to recognise the importance of good quality private sector housing to residents in the district, and to highlight the contribution the private sector housing team can make towards meeting the Council's corporate priorities.
- 1.2 A stock condition surveys was underway and a fuel poverty survey had recently been completed, as well as a recent Government review of the private rented sector. As a result a plan was needed to address the issues raised.
- 1.3 The project to develop the strategy has been overseen by a Steering Group chaired by Councillor Michael Gibbard and including representatives from Adult Social Care, Age Concern, Oxfordshire PCT and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.4 In April 2009 in response to a request from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

established a Task and Finish Group to contribute to the production of the Private Sector Housing Strategy. The Task and Finish Group has met on two occasions and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of that Group have attended meetings of the Steering Group. Members of the Group also attended the public consultation events. Given the strategic importance of this topic the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be appropriate to discuss the draft document at a full Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting prior to its consideration at Executive.

2.0 Current position

- 2.1 Following engagement with our stakeholders and partners we developed a strategy identifying four priorities for action over the next four years. These are:
 - a. Ensure existing privately rented homes are accessible and affordable;
 - b. Ensure existing stock is in good condition;
 - c. Support vulnerable people to remain living in their own homes and improve their health outcomes;
 - d. Improve energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty.
- 2.2 An action plan has been developed to accompany the strategy which includes a number of SMART actions which will ensure the strategy is implemented and monitored effectively.
- 2.3 The strategy has been subject to a six week formal consultation period from 20 November to 31 December 2009 which included a 'coffee morning' event, a press release, a direct postal mail shot to 114 stakeholders and interested parties, and the inclusion of a survey on the Council's website consultation portal.
- 2.4 Responses are currently being compiled and a report will be taken to a final steering group meeting on 12 January 2010 and agreement on the final strategy, as amended in light of the consultation feedback, will be sought.

3.0 Next steps

- 3.1 The final Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010 - 2014 will be taken to Executive in March 2010 for formal adoption.

Implications

Financial: The Strategy has no additional financial implications and will be resourced within existing resources, and using new Recession Impact funding, Homelessness Grant and other funding streams as identified within the strategy.

Comments checked by Eric Meadows, Service Accountant PH&E, 01295 221552

Legal: There are no legal implications resulting from the adoption of this strategy. The Private Sector Housing team works within a tight legal framework relating to enforcement of property condition and provision of grants. The strategy does not detract from that framework.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Solicitor, 01295 221687

Risk Management: The Council's annual survey of residents' views indicates that housing issues are of increasing importance to the public. Having in place an effective Private Sector Strategy is a key means of demonstrating the Council's recognition of, and resolve to address, pressing housing issues. The content and delivery of the Strategy's action plan are likely to be subject to audit and a significant factor in any future assessments made of the Council's performance.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

- Theme 2 - improve health - including health prevention and access to services for older people. It makes the link between housing and health issues for older people.
- Theme 5 - Secure more affordable housing. This will include increased provision of new specialist extra care housing for older people.
- Theme 8 - Access to rural affordable housing and relevant services for all groups and specifically younger and older people.

- Theme 10 - Focus on Cherwell's people including increasing involvement, improving advice and support and promoting independent living with older people.

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Michael Gibbard
Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Private Sector Housing Strategy Scrutiny Scoping Document
Appendix 2	Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy
Background Papers	
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Report Author	Tim Mills, Private Sector Housing Manager
Contact Information	01295 221655 tim.mills@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk