

Executive

Cherwell Housing Strategy 2012-17

2 April 2012

Report of Head of Regeneration and Housing

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to bring Cherwell's 2012 - 2017 Housing Strategy to the Executive for approval.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To approve the proposed Cherwell Housing Strategy for 2012 – 2017.
- (2) To delegate authority to the Head of Regeneration and Housing, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing to produce an annual delivery plan for each year of the strategy that will prioritise actions in line with resources and opportunities.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of Cherwell's 2012 – 2017 Housing Strategy.

Proposals

- 1.2 To agree Cherwell's 2012 – 2017 Housing Strategy.
- 1.3 To produce an annual delivery plan to implement the strategy, taking forward the high level strategic actions laid out in the strategy.

Conclusion

- 1.4 The proposed Cherwell Housing Strategy aims to take a holistic look at the housing market. It recognises that we are in times of unprecedented change with the dawn of localism, welfare benefit reform and strain on public finance. However, the strategy is optimistic, based on the fact that Cherwell has

consistently 'stepped up' in the face of challenge and has delivered excellent results through innovation and partnership. This Housing Strategy builds on the excellent work to date and sets out a range of actions to increase delivery of housing, improve housing conditions, protect our most vulnerable residents and prevent homelessness.

Background Information

- 2.1 As part of the Local Government Act 2003, Cherwell District Council, as a Statutory Local Housing Authority, is required to develop a Housing Strategy which reviews housing related issues across its local area, sets out its housing objectives and establishes priorities for action.
- 2.2 The Housing Strategy 2005-11 has been delivered with many key successes for Cherwell including delivery of the promises to tenant as part of the large scale voluntary stock transfer to (the then) Charter Community Housing, record delivery of affordable housing in the District, and a turnaround in the numbers of households in temporary accommodation helped by an innovative new preventative approach to homelessness.
- 2.3 Executive decided in January 2011 not to review the outgoing housing strategy immediately as so much change was emerging nationally that needed to be understood and considered. Instead, Executive approved a Housing and Economic Climate Action Plan that outlined how the Council would move forward up until March 2012.
- 2.4 This Housing Strategy consolidates a number of separate strategies, and builds on the excellent outcomes that they have delivered. Where strategies are not yet fully delivered, outstanding actions will be carried over into this strategy and therefore this Housing Strategy supersedes any existing or former strategies. This includes:
 - Cherwell Housing Strategy
 - Cherwell Homelessness Strategy
 - Cherwell Temporary Accommodation Strategy
 - Cherwell Older Person's Housing Strategy
 - Cherwell Private Sector Housing Strategy
- 2.5 This Housing Strategy covers six Strategic Housing Priorities:
 - Strategic Housing Priority One: Increase the supply and access to housing
 - Strategic Housing Priority Two: Develop financially inclusive, sustainable communities
 - Strategic Housing Priority Three: House our most vulnerable residents
 - Strategic Housing Priority Four: Ensure homes are safe, warm and well managed
 - Strategic Housing Priority Five: Prevent Homelessness
 - Strategic Housing Priority Six: Maximise resources and be an investment-ready district
- 2.6 For ease of printing, the attached version of the proposed Cherwell Housing Strategy is a 'Microsoft Word' Version. However, subject to approval, the final version would be a PDF version in colour with pictures of the key successes

of the last five years ~ i.e. examples of housing schemes and innovative projects. We anticipate that most people will access this via the internet to reduce print costs, but we will need to have a number of paper versions as well as these are useful for key stakeholders.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Cherwell's proposed Housing Strategy is ambitious. It clearly sets out the need to understand the business case for all new areas of development. In producing a business case we can look at rationale, resources, risk and outcomes to assess if this is a prudent way forward. An example of this is the emerging Build! ® self build housing programme. A business case was made, which identified the level of investment and the likely return. This is a good example of how innovation can provide leverage to secure significant inward investment. To date the HCA has committed (subject to contract) £2.45 million pounds towards the Build! ® programme for new build and refurbishment of empty homes.
- 3.2 As well as being a statutory requirement, the proposed Cherwell Housing Strategy is a tool to communicate our priorities to partners in the public, private and voluntary sector. We have taken into consideration feedback from a range of partners through one-to-one meetings and groups and tried to capture all the key challenges and opportunities ahead. Whilst no strategy can be 'all things to all people' we believe that the holistic approach to housing provides a balanced set of actions which if implemented will enable the District to be investment ready and for local people to be 'housing ready' ~ financially resilient and able to secure and manage a home.

- Option One** To accept all the recommendations in this report and:
(1) To approve Cherwell's 2012 – 2017 Housing Strategy
(2) To delegate authority to the Head of Regeneration and Housing, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing to produce an annual delivery plan that prioritises actions in line with resources and opportunities.
- Option Two** To approve the proposed housing strategy, but not the recommendation for an annual action plan. The benefit of an annual action plan is that it allows the Council to maintain its flexibility and responsiveness during changing economic times.
- Option Three** To not accept any of the recommendations in this report. The implication of not accepting the proposed is the Council's strategic direction for housing including its role in supporting wider Council priorities is delayed.

Consultations

Externally, Regeneration and Housing Services have consulted and sought advice from a range of local and national partners which has helped shape Cherwell's Housing Strategy. These include:

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- Registered Providers on Cherwell's RP Development Group and RP Management Group
 - Department for Local Government and Communities
 - Homes and Communities Agency
 - Community Land Trust Network
 - Oxfordshire County Council
 - NHS Oxfordshire
 - Local Voluntary Agencies delivering housing related services. This includes:
 - BYHP
 - Beacon Centre
 - PACT
 - YMCA Training
 - Sanctuary Housing (Banbury Foyer and Rachel House)
 - Connection Floating Support
 - Stonham Housing ~ Home Group (Oxford House and Lucan House)
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - CAB
 - Response
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- National Association of Self Builders
 - National Community Self Build Agency
 - Buildstore
 - Crisis
 - National Housing Federation
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Implications

Financial:

As resources reduce there is a requirement to do more with less and take the opportunity to recycle funds and / or external investment. Therefore this strategy has a number of financial implications but the budget requirements are all subject to revenue and capital budget annual approval processes or through supplementary estimates. The budgets are monitored on a monthly basis and reported to the Executive quarterly.

Strategic Housing Priority Six in the Housing Strategy is dedicated to the management of resources and emphasises the theme of the strategy as a whole about making shrewd decisions in relation to the investment of resources. This includes staff resources, capital and other assets such as buildings and land.

The strategy also highlights opportunities to secure additional inward investment, based on the experience of Cherwell to date and the learning from other local authorities in the UK.

The strategy includes an action to review workforce development and recognises the need to develop areas of skill and expertise to be able to respond to the growing need for commercial skills and knowledge with an underpinning programme-project management approach to delivery.

Any key investment projects are reviewed by finance in detail and the Head of Finance and Procurement is a member of many of the project teams including the current Build initiative for self build.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance and Procurement 01295 221551

Legal:

The actions laid out in Cherwell's Housing Strategy are intended to fulfil the Council's statutory duties under section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 (Housing Strategies and Statements).

This requires each local authority in England and Wales to prepare a housing strategy for its local area that sets out objectives, targets and policies on how the authority intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role and provides an overarching framework against which the authority considers and formulates other policies on more specific housing issues, such as those referred to in this Report and included in the accompanying Strategy.

Officers must also seek to ensure the Strategy is consistent with the Council's community strategy prepared under section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Comments checked by Richard Hawtin, Team Leader, Property and Contracts 01295 221695

Risk Management:

Risks

The strategy has acknowledged the key housing risks facing the District going forward in terms of welfare reform, reduced funding and potential resulting impact in increased housing need and homelessness. The strategy sets out to mitigate these risks through a series of actions. Any actions which relate to new areas of work or untested/innovative approaches are within the framework of a business planning/business case approach to ensure new ventures are prudent.

Equality Impact issues:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the Housing Strategy. The strategy seeks to improve housing outcomes for the whole district and includes particular emphasis on people who may be excluded such as older people, people with disabilities and vulnerable people. Certain actions such as a review of Cherwell's Allocations Policy will require their own Equality Impact Assessment.

Comments checked by Claire Taylor, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager 01295 221563

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

Cherwell – A District of Opportunity

Cherwell – An Accessible Value for Money Council

Lead Member

Councillor Debbie Pickford
Lead Member for Housing

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Proposed Cherwell Housing Strategy 2012 - 2017
2	Glossary of Key Terms
Background Papers	
None	
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