

HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY - PROGRESS REPORT

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 14 June 2016

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of the Community Plan and emerging housing and health strategy.

Portfolio Holder Cllr Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer(s) Gavin Missons (x7332)

Recommendation to the Housing and Health Advisory Committee: that Members note the report.

Reason for recommendation: To keep Members up to date with progress on this particular project and as part of the District Council's emerging housing and health strategy.

Introduction and Background

1 The District Council's current Housing Strategy Action Plan was adopted back in 2012. With a subsequent shift in national housing policy and wider socio-economic factors, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health has agreed to review this document and for the Housing Policy Manager to develop an updated version.

Evidencing need

2 As part of the District Council's current review of its Local Plan, an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has been completed and this provides high-level statistical data to help with strategic planning. In order to develop more detailed housing strategy, however, additional evidence is required (both in geographical terms and at client group level).

3 In recent years, and with the advent of the SHMA, local authorities have typically resorted to the use of secondary data when developing lower level housing strategies, policies and plans. Although a good deal of secondary data is reliable and robust, some can be patchy, cover geographical areas which don't correspond with District Council boundaries and/or services, apply to varying timescales, and/or simply not be considered adequate for effective planning in an ever-reducing financial environment.

- 4 With that in mind, and to ensure that the District Council's new housing strategy prioritises those most in need of support and assistance, the District Council has agreed to commission a new Housing Needs Study (HNS) - the first of its kind in almost a decade (Housing Market and Needs Assessment, 2006).

Process and timescale

- 5 In order to ensure best value for money, the District Council has selected particular client groups and elements of work programmes where primary data is required and to supplement any existing intelligence. In doing so, this will help to avoid any unnecessary assessment of need where reliable data already exists. Officers will also provide the successful contractor with (or references to) a wide-range of existing data to aid the process and avoid any repetition of assessment. The end result should be a HNA which is much less general in its assessment of need and more bespoke to the District Council's specific intelligence requirements.
- 6 A project brief has been prepared and this will be publicised through the District Council's formal tendering process. The project steering group will then work to evaluate submissions with a view to appointing a contractor. An inception meeting will follow and this will allow the steering group to agree the more detailed study requirements and day-to-day arrangements through the intelligence gathering period.
- 7 The anticipated timescale for completion is the end of December 2016, though this may need to be reviewed dependent on contractor availability etc. The study period will allow for the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and Welfare and Work Act 2016 to properly take effect and give the District Council some additional time to better understand the initial (and likely future) impacts of both. This, in turn, will enable the District Council to develop a more responsive housing strategy for the future, it having a complete evidence base by that time and a much better understanding of the future policy environment and its likely effects across the remit of housing, health, economic and wider community strategy.
- 8 Once complete, the finalised study will be brought back to the HHAC for information and discussion ahead of it being published and made more widely available. This is currently anticipated to be in early 2017, though fixed timescales will need to be confirmed at the next HHAC meeting.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

Continuation of the use of secondary data was considered as part of an options appraisal. In order to produce an effective housing strategy and to make best use of limited resources, however, it was agreed that the District Council needs to better understand the housing requirements of its residents in the District (both existing and newly-arising) and current intelligence limits that understanding. With that in mind, a HNS was considered essential as part of the strategy development process.

Key Implications

Financial

The HHAC has given in-principle agreement to fund the HNS from S106 affordable housing planning gains and there will be no consequent impact on District Council budgets, therefore. The HNS will enable the development of more efficient housing strategy and could potentially create future efficiency savings - and those efficiencies potentially extending to partners.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The HNS will support the District Council in meeting its statutory duties and to effectively respond to other related legislation as it is introduced. The data gathered through the HNS will enable the District Council to more effectively plan its services and mitigate any associated business risks in the process.

Equality Assessment

This project aims to advance equality of opportunity for vulnerable, minority and low-income groups (and their families and carers) and foster good relations between people from different groups. The decision recommended through this paper would directly impact end-users in a positive way and help to equalise opportunities by overcoming typical housing barriers with a wide-range of solutions, as will be developed and set out in the new housing strategy.

Community Impact and Outcomes

This project and the subsequent housing strategy will support the District Council's new community plan across several themes - including housing, health, economic development and the environment.

Resource (non financial)

The HNS project and development of the District Council's new housing strategy will be led and developed by the Housing Policy Manager with some input from other colleagues and teams, as required.

Value for Money and Asset Maintenance

HNS evidence requirements/limitations will ensure that the District Council achieves best value for money and the subsequent housing strategy will be based on priorities as identified through statistical data from the study itself - and this, in turn, will enable limited resources to be directed to where they are most needed.

Sustainability Checklist

A sustainability checklist will be produced as part of the housing strategy development process and any negative impacts will be dealt as part of the key housing strategy objective to equalise life opportunities for all.

Appendices

None

Background Papers:

Housing Strategy Action Plan (2012)

Richard Morris
Chief Planning Officer