

INTERIM HOUSING STRATEGY MEASURES

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 14 June 2016

Report of: Chief Planning Officer

Status: For Decision

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer(s) Gavin Missons (x7332)

Recommendation to the Housing and Health Advisory Committee: that Members agree to support Officers to further explore and/or implement related objectives as agreed by the housing strategy workshop working group and set out in Appendix A.

Reason for recommendation: To seek to mitigate any potentially negative effects of the changing housing policy environment whilst also seeking to maximise any new opportunities as an interim approach and ahead of a fuller review of housing 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 policy, however, and one which has created a very different policy and legislative environment, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health has agreed to review this document and for the Housing Policy Manager to develop an updated version.
- 2 As part of the process, and as set out in the accompanying report 'Housing Needs Survey' (HNS), there is a consequent need to re-evaluate the District Council's approach to its services to ensure it remains an effective community leader in respect of housing, health and wider community strategy.
- 3 With the HNS set to take several months to complete, it was agreed to develop interim measures which could be implemented or at least progressed in the short-term and until such time as a full review has taken place. This is to ensure that housing strategy is as responsive as possible.

Joint Member/Officer workshop

- 4 In December 2015, the District Council held its first joint Member/Officer housing strategy workshop to carry out an initial options appraisal. Through

this process, Members and Officers considered a long-list of ideas/options and worked together to agree a short-list of measures to be further pursued and/or adopted.

- 5 These were transferred on to four separate action plans - each covering a separate area of housing strategy. That said, several objectives spanned (or part-spanned) working group subjects and this helped us to compare group recommendations and work towards a wider cross-group consensus.
- 6 The Group A action sheet (Maximising Affordable Housing Output) was supported by the HHAC at its last meeting and Group D (Tying in Housing, Health and Leisure) is appended to this report for similar consideration. The remaining groups (B: Making Best Use of the Existing Housing Stock / C: Managing Housing Needs) will be developed further and presented to the next HHAC for the same consideration.
- 7 The plan is to then develop any agreed options and to either introduce as interim measures (in developing planning policy, for instance) or to have prepared and ready for inclusion in the new housing strategy, which is due for completion in early 2017. Any delayed (but previously agreed and prepared options) will be adjusted, where required, to take account of any subsequent developments in national policy and updated evidence, as will be provided through the upcoming HNS. With such a wide and varied range of options, and several having very different considerations and consequences, there will likely be a number of different approaches to the taking forward of approved actions/objectives.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

The District Council had intended to develop a new housing strategy in the first part of 2016, but it was subsequently agreed to develop a fuller evidence base and await the outcome of developing national policy and legislation (which is significant across the remit of strategy). Therefore, it was thought more sensible to hold back and to develop a new document when the District Council is better equipped with the facts. For this reason, the project plan has evolved into what is now being proposed in this report.

Key Implications

Financial

The majority of proposed measures could be delivered through existing budgets and/or contributions from S106 affordable housing planning gains, where required. Where this is not the case, each measure would be assessed for value for money etc., and, where necessary, separate approvals would be sought. With recent case law (CLG-v-West Berks) and the subsequent effects on S106 affordable housing financial contributions, further consideration will need to be given to several objectives - the funding of some potentially becoming an issue.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The new housing strategy will support the District Council in meeting its statutory duties and to also effectively respond to other related legislation as it is introduced.

Equality Assessment

A key aim of the new housing strategy will be to equalise life opportunities for all groups through a wide-range of housing interventions/solutions. The strategy will be subject to a full and detailed EQIA, it potentially impacting on several vulnerable client groups - but, as above, the strategy will seek to positively contribute to equality of opportunity.

Community Impact and Outcomes

The housing strategy will be developed to support the District Council's new community plan across several themes - including housing, health, economic development and the environment.

Resource (non financial)

The new housing strategy will be developed by the Housing Policy Manager with some input from other colleagues and teams, as required.

Value for Money and Asset Maintenance

The new housing strategy will be developed in a way to ensure resources are 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 housing strategy objective of equalising life opportunities for all.

Appendices

Appendix A - Group D action sheet

Background Papers:

Housing Strategy Action Plan (2012)

Richard Morris

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