



To: Executive Councillor for Housing (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Catherine Smart  
Report by: Liz Bisset, Director of Customer & Community Services  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community 28/6/2012 Services Scrutiny Committee  
Wards affected: All Wards

## **HOUSING STRATEGY 2012-2015 Key Decision**

### **1. Executive summary**

1.1 This report seeks approval for a Housing Strategy to run from 2012 to 2015, to replace the existing Housing Strategy 2009-2012.

1.2 The strategy sets out eleven objectives, and a number of priorities under those objectives. A more detailed action plan is being developed to implement the strategy in conjunction with partners.

1.3 The proposed Strategy is at Appendix A to this report.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended:

2.1.1 To approve the Council's Housing Strategy for 2012-15.

### **3. Background**

#### **Context**

3.1 Cambridge is recognised as one of the fastest growing and dynamic areas in the UK, with high demand for housing, and high house prices and private rental costs.

3.2 With major growth planned over the coming years, it is important that the planned new housing includes appropriate provision of Affordable

Housing to meet the needs of people living and/or working locally. New communities need to be delivered in a way that minimises any negative impact on the environment, benefits existing communities, and contributes to the Council's priorities around tackling and responding to climate change.

3.3 It is also important to invest in existing homes within the City to ensure that people can live in safe, decent, energy efficient homes, and that best use is made of existing housing. The Council has a key role in helping to prevent people from becoming homeless, and in ensuring that there is a range of housing options available to meet a wide range of housing needs.

3.4 Having good quality housing of different sizes and types, in sustainable communities, and which people can afford to live in, is critical to the economy and to achieving positive health and well-being outcomes for residents.

### **Housing Strategy 2012-15**

3.5 The new Housing Strategy is a review of the existing Housing Strategy 2009-12. The revised Strategy has been developed during a period of economic uncertainty, and at a time of significant national policy change.

3.6 It draws on a range of housing market information, including the Cambridge Sub-regional Housing Market Assessment which keeps a watching brief on the state of the housing market in Cambridge and surrounding areas.

3.7 The Strategy is based around five main themes:

- 3.7.1 Understanding the housing market;
- 3.7.2 Increasing housing supply;
- 3.7.3 Existing homes and communities;
- 3.7.4 Housing advice, homelessness and housing options;
- 3.7.5 Specialist housing, supported housing and specialist needs.

3.8 Under these themes, the Strategy includes the following objectives:

- 3.8.1 Increase the supply of good quality, energy efficient Affordable Housing in a range of sizes, types and tenures;
- 3.8.2 Create green, mixed and sustainable new communities, which benefit existing communities;
- 3.8.3 Ensure homes are Healthy, Safe and Energy Efficient ;
- 3.8.4 Make the best use of existing homes;
- 3.8.5 Promote community cohesion;
- 3.8.6 Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping;

3.8.7 Minimise use of temporary accommodation and maximise use of longer-term housing solutions;

3.8.8 Enable people to make informed choices about their housing;

3.8.9 Promote sustained and settled lifestyles and minimise social exclusion;

3.8.10 Ensure that housing and related services meet a range of specialist needs;

3.8.11 Understand the dynamics of the housing market in Cambridge and the surrounding area, and use that information to influence the delivery of new homes and housing related services.

3.9 Under these objectives are a number of priorities, and a more detailed action plan is being developed to implement the strategy in conjunction with other partners.

3.10 Details of the consultation carried out are shown in paragraph 4(e) below

## **4. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

The Housing Strategy will form part of the framework within which decisions are made on the allocation of Council resources through the Medium Term Strategy and annual budget rounds.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications.

### **(c) Equal Opportunities Implications**

The Strategy is aimed at meeting the housing and housing-related service needs of a wide range of people with differing needs. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out, and the Strategy has been amended to reflect some of the issues raised.

### **(d) Environmental Implications**

Improving energy efficiency and the creation of green, sustainable communities are included in the objectives to this strategy, and although the planned growth in the number of homes means some negative impact on the environment is inevitable, there will also be positive impacts. The Strategy seeks to maximise the positive and minimise any negative effects.

The Strategy includes continuing to use planning policies to help minimise carbon emissions and pursue the use of sources of renewable energy, as well as implementing measures to improve surface water drainage. The Council's sustainability requirements for new housing will be rationalised as part of the work on reviewing the Local Plan, and the Council will continue to seek high levels of energy efficiency in the new Affordable Homes being built.

Promoting and supporting home energy improvements across all tenures is a key priority, including improvements to the Council's own housing stock and actively supporting home-owners in accessing home energy improvement funding.

#### (e) **Consultation**

An internet survey questionnaire was run, asking questions about various elements of the existing strategy to gauge whether they were the right ones, and what residents themselves felt was important.

A separate questionnaire was included in the Council's Tenant and Leaseholder magazine 'Open Door', and a telephone survey was carried out with some Housing Advice service customers as part of the standards satisfaction survey.

Results of this consultation and how it has influenced the Strategy are at Appendix 2 of the Strategy.

Staff from a range of services across the Council have also been asked for their views.

Partners and stakeholders were consulted on the draft Strategy, which was also made available for comment on the Council's website, and amendments have been made to the Strategy as a result.

#### (f) **Community Safety**

Community Safety is being taken into account in the design of new developments.

A number of the objectives in the strategy will contribute to promoting community safety, in particular the objectives to:

- Create green, mixed and sustainable new communities
- Promote community cohesion,
- Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping,
- Promote sustained and settled lifestyles, and minimise social exclusion

## **5. Background papers**

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Cambridge Sub-Regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- A number of national, regional, county-wide and local strategies, policies and research documents (referred to in the Strategy)
- Equality Impact Assessment

## **6. Appendices**

Appendix A – Housing Strategy 2012-2015

## **7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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