

Cambridge City Council

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Housing Portfolio Plan 2012-13

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Introduction

Despite the national context, the local economy centred on Cambridge remains relatively resilient and the number of new homes planned and needed is anticipated to remain high. We will make sure that the expansion of Cambridge creates new homes and communities that people want to live in. Market house prices and rents remain high in Cambridge and we will continue to make the case for investment in a range of sizes, types and tenures of housing for local residents, including affordable housing. We will also continue to invest in, and make best use of, the existing homes within the City, taking account of the need to tackle climate change and ensuring the existing communities can benefit from the planned growth.

A number of housing reforms will be introduced in the Localism Act and others have already been introduced, or are planned to be introduced, through regulation. The new funding regime for Council housing will commence in April 2012 and the Council will have greater freedom to control our own finances and how we spend money on our own housing stock. By June 2012 we will have produced a revised Housing Strategy that reflects these national housing policy changes; how they interact with changes to planning and welfare benefit and other social policy reforms; and the potential impact in Cambridge.

We will continue to work with partner local authorities, housing associations and others across the sub-region around Cambridge to demonstrate the need for investment in local housing and how this is critical to the success of other local policy requirements such as social care; health; and local economic growth.

Virtually all of the Council's service divisions contribute to the achievement of this Plan's Objectives but the main Teams involved are Housing Strategy; Private Sector Housing; Housing Development; Housing Options and Homelessness; Home Aid; City Homes; Repairs and Maintenance and Safer Communities.

Vision Statements applicable to this portfolio

The ruling group has amended the vision statements that were adopted alongside the annual statement at Full Council in May. The revised first and fifth statements emphasise the Council's commitment to protecting the disadvantaged and recognise the wide base of Cambridge's economic growth.

So, "A city which is diverse and tolerant, values activities which bring people together and where everyone feels they have a stake in the community" becomes "**A city which celebrates its diversity, unites in its priority for the disadvantaged and strives for shared community wellbeing**"; and "a city with a thriving knowledge-based economy that benefits the whole community and builds on its reputation as a global hub of ideas and learning" becomes "**A city with a thriving local economy that benefits the whole community and builds on its global pre-eminence in learning and discovery**".

The vision statements most pertinent to this portfolio are:

- A city which recognises and meets needs for housing of all kinds - close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities
- A city in the forefront of low carbon living and minimising its impact on the environment from waste and pollution.

Strategic Objectives 2011-2012

Vision Statement:	A city which recognises and meets needs for housing of all kinds - close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities
Strategic Objective HSO1:	Maximise the delivery of new housing in a range of sizes, types and tenures ensuring that current standards are at least maintained.
By March 2013 we will have:	<p>HS01.1 Worked with developers, Registered Providers (housing associations) and planners to ensure that the city's social and market housing (including private rented housing) stock continues to grow, including 40% Affordable Housing in most new developments and the delivery of the Council's own new build programme.</p> <p>HS01.2 Worked with Registered Providers to ensure the current standard of new build housing is sustained in terms of size, construction and layout.</p> <p>HS01.3 Reviewed our approach to ensure new specialist housing is provided including carrying out an assessment of potential Gypsy and Traveller sites, as part of the local plan development</p>
Lead Officer:	Alan Carter
Performance Measures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Affordable Homes on the strategic growth sites. Completions – 160 2. New Affordable Homes on other sites. Completions - 83

<p>Delivery Risks:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New national policy drivers could impact on the ability to deliver policy aspirations for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the introduction of Affordable Rents changes the tenure mix of housing on new housing sites resulting in a reduction in social rented housing and restricted choice of housing options for some lower income groups. • changes to the benefit system could adversely impact on access to the private rented sector for low income households and the ability of the Council to plan under-letting of some new homes in the Growth areas to foster mixed and sustainable communities 2. The availability of development finance and mortgage finance slows up the delivery of new housing.
<p>Strategic Objective HSO2:</p>	<p>Make the best use of existing homes.</p>
<p>By March 2013 we will have:</p>	<p>HSO2.1 Introduced a Tenancy Strategy that sets out the Council’s view on rent levels that are ‘affordable’ and that states our view on the role of fixed term tenancies in the local housing market.</p> <p>HSO2.2 Completed a review of the Council’s Letting Policy to ensure that priority for re-housing continues to be given to those who have least opportunity to access market housing.</p> <p>HSO2.3 Maintained and promoted services to take action effectively against private</p>

	<p>sector landlords that do not comply with housing health and safety matters as well as landlord and tenant issues</p> <p>HS02.4 Undertaken a review of empty homes policy in the light of national policy change, and take effective action to get vacant homes back into use.</p> <p>HS02.2.5 Actively promoted the re-launched Cambridge Property Accreditation Scheme, marketing its benefits and seeking a 10% increase in the numbers accredited.</p>
Lead Officer:	Alan Carter (HS02.1 and HS02.2;) Jas Lally (HS02.3; HS02.4 and HS02.5)
Performance Measures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whether the Revised Lettings Policy has been approved by the Council. 2. Whether the Tenancy Strategy has been approved by the Council. 3. At least 18 long term vacant properties returned to residential use 4. 10% increase in the numbers accredited under the Cambridge Property Accreditation Scheme
Delivery Risks:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes to the benefit system discourage private landlords from providing good standard housing.

Strategic Objective HSO3:	Implement the first year of the City Homes Business Plan following the introduction of greater financial freedom for the Council to manage the financing of its housing.
By March 2013 we will have:	<p>HS03.1 Begun to implement the action plan to make our day-to-day repair and void repair service as efficient as possible.</p> <p>HS03.2 Delivered against Year 1 of our Asset Management Plan for investment in our City Homes housing, including the delivery of our new Council House building programme.</p> <p>HS03.3 Reviewed our role in the provision of housing support and enhanced housing management services in order to deliver the best outcome for the tenants and a service that is viable for the Council.</p> <p>HS03.4 Acted on the recommendation of the report on Resident Involvement to ensure ongoing and effective resident engagement.</p>
Lead Officer:	Bob Hadfield (HS03.1; HS03.2). Alan Carter (HS03.2) Robert Hollingsworth (HS03.3; HS04.4)
Performance Measures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All City Homes stock sustained to Decent Homes standard. 2. New Council Build Completions – 21
Delivery Risks:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conditions that apply to the new 'self-financing' system are so restrictive that there is little real local control over the management of the system.

	<p>2. Changes to the Housing Revenue Subsidy System restrict the ability of the Council to deliver high standards of management and maintenance.</p>
Strategic Objective HSO4:	Foster good quality housing and housing related advice.
By March 2013 we will have:	<p>HS04.1 Increased our focus on services that help prevent homelessness. As better and more information on housing options is provided, more people will be able to make decisions themselves over where they want to live. As more people take earlier and direct control over their housing options, homelessness will be minimised.</p> <p>HS04.2 Improved support to rough sleepers, including the completion of the Jimmy's Assessment Centre project, thereby reducing the incidence of rough sleeping and use of temporary accommodation as households move more effectively to secure permanent housing.</p> <p>HS04.3 Completed the first year of the shared Home Improvement Agency with Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council as the best approach to sustain the service in the short to medium term.</p>
Lead Officer:	Alan Carter
Performance Measures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of Rough Sleeping estimates average no more than 6 2. Combined number of households in and waiting for temporary accommodation no more than 85 (measured through quarterly snapshot)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Homelessness preventions to be above average for region ie 290 per annum 4. Verify all Home-Link applications within 28 working days of receipt of all information required 5. Deliver Year 1 of shared Home Improvement Agency Business Plan. (Outcome measures not yet finalised).
Delivery Risks:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Benefit levels restrict access for some households to housing that meets their needs within the city. 2. New national policy initiatives such as the new 'Affordable Rents will restrict access to new housing provided by housing associations (Registered Providers).

Vision Statement:	A city in the forefront of low carbon living and minimising its impact on the environment from waste and pollution.
Strategic Objective HSO5:	Increase energy efficiency of existing homes; promote sustainable design and construction methods; promote high standards of environmental sustainability of new homes and communities, including water management.
By March 2013 we will have:	HSO5.1 Worked with Registered Providers to ensure that New Affordable Housing is built to at least Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

	HS05.2 Undertaken a survey of winter night-time thermal imaging, seeking homes that could most benefit from improved insulation, visiting such properties and offering free or grant-assisted insulation to address fuel poverty.
Lead Officer:	Alan Carter (HS05.1) Jas Lally (HS05.2)
Performance Measures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased percentage of new Affordable Homes built to at least Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes – it is estimated that 17% will be completed to Level 4 of the Code in 2011-12. 2. Target improved insulation - 500 installations
Delivery Risks:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low take up by residents and landlords on energy initiatives

Background Information:

Housing Strategy 2009-12
 Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
 Developing Affordable Housing Policy Guide
 Charter for New Affordable Housing
 Private Housing Stock Condition Survey
 Strategic Housing Market Assessment
 Draft Cambridge Local Investment Plan