

Meeting: COUNCIL

Agenda Item:

Portfolio Area: Housing

11

Date: 9 December 2009

HOUSING STRATEGY 2009-12

(Strategic Housing)

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the revised draft of the Stevenage Borough Council Housing Strategy 2009-12 for recommendation to Council.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council be recommended to adopt the Housing Strategy 2009-12 as shown at Appendix B appended to this report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Housing Strategy forms part of the Council's Policy Framework, as set out at Article 4 of Part 2 of the Constitution. In accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules, the Executive gave initial consideration to the Strategy (21 October 2009). The Strategy was approved subject to a number of specific comments. The report and the comments of the Executive were then considered by the Scrutiny Overview Committee on 26 October 2009.
- 3.2 By way of further background, the covering report (excluding the first draft of the Strategy), that was considered by the Executive and Scrutiny Overview Committee in October, is attached at Appendix A.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Comments made by the Executive in October on the first draft of the Strategy concerned the following matters:

- the monitoring of progress on the Action Plan should be undertaken by an existing body (i.e. the Affordable Housing Working Group), rather than establish an additional forum;
- greater emphasis should be made in the Strategy on reducing carbon emissions;
- further consideration should be given to dealing more effectively with under occupation, particularly in terms of older residents;
- further consideration also needed to be given to the proposals to investigate establishing a Local Housing Company to attract private sector investment without the Council having to give away assets;
- the strategic objectives in the Delivery Plan quoted for Stevenage Homes Limited (SHL) should emphasise working in partnership;
- engagement activity undertaken by SBC and SHL could be better co-ordinated.

4.2 The view was also expressed that a specific amendment be made on page 22 of the draft Strategy. The first bullet point under the heading 'Key Strategic Response' should read only 'The Council will undertake an annual review of the Allocations Policy' (the latter section of that sentence to be deleted). It was considered that this amendment would broaden the remit of any review to take into account local factors.

4.3 In the light of comments made by Members, the following changes to the Strategy have now been made on the following pages/sections. (Note: The page numbers quoted are those pages on the Strategy document, not the handwritten agenda page numbers):

- SHL Delivery Plan – Page 16
- Under Occupation and Allocations – Page 22
- Reducing Carbon Emissions – Page 24
- Local Housing Companies – Page 26
- Carbon Emissions – Page 27
- Engagement Activity with SHL – Page 30
- Governance – Page 37.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 Detailed financial implications are set out in the report to Executive dated 21 October 2009 (see Appendix A).

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 There is no longer a statutory requirement on Councils to produce a Housing Strategy, but it is considered good practice and a Housing Strategy is a useful means of demonstrating how the Council is seeking to fulfil Central Government

objectives with regard to housing and sustainability.

5.2.2 The Housing Strategy forms part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework and following final consideration by the Executive must be submitted to Council for adoption.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (E.I.A.) has been undertaken for the Housing Strategy 2009-12 and will be subject to annual review, together with the progress on the general Action Plan. The E.I.A. is attached at Appendix C.

APPENDICES

[Appendix A – Covering Report to Executive – 21 October 2009](#)

[Appendix B – Revised Draft Housing Strategy 2009-12](#)

[Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment](#)