

**Meeting: EXECUTIVE**

Agenda Item:

Portfolio Area: Housing

**4**

**Date: 21 October 2009**

## **HOUSING STRATEGY 2009-12**

(Strategic Housing)

### **KEY DECISION**

Author - Ruth Edwards                      Ext No. 2714  
Contributors - Sukhvinder Rai              Ext No. 2714  
Lead Officer - Richard Protheroe        Ext No. 2938  
Contact Officer - Ruth Edwards        Ext No. 2714

### **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To consider and adopt the new Stevenage Borough Council Housing Strategy 2009-12.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Council be recommended to adopt the Housing Strategy 2009-12 as appended to this report.
- 2.2 That delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director with responsibility for housing to make any further minor changes to the strategy in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing.
- 2.3 Creation of a Stevenage Housing Partnership to which progress against the plan will be reported six monthly.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The strategic housing role of Local Authorities has become increasingly important both nationally and, more locally, in terms of improving performance and delivery for communities.
- 3.2 The Government's Housing Green Paper 'Homes for the Future' published in 2007 set out the role of Local Authorities as enablers for affordable housing and key influencers in decision making. Guidance on producing future housing strategies

followed in 2008 in 'Creating Strong and Prosperous Communities'. Emphasis was placed on Sustainable Community Strategies and local authorities were encouraged to set strategic housing priorities within them.

- 3.3 Separate housing strategies produced in line with the Government 'fit for purpose' criteria are no longer compulsory although the majority of local authorities have chosen to reflect the importance of housing by publishing a housing strategy.
- 3.4 The Housing Strategy must demonstrate how the Council is carrying out its strategic enabling role. It must identify the key priorities for the Council and include an action plan for delivering these priorities. The Strategy must also meet the guidance produced by the Communities and Local Government Department, and demonstrate to the Audit Commission that the Council is successfully meeting the requirements of the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) used to assess its strategic approach to housing. The Housing Strategy 2009-12 has set priorities, objectives and actions that will contribute to delivery of the SoStevenage Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Council Plan's vision and priorities, which include:

#### **SoStevenage Community Strategy Priority Themes -**

- Economy, Enterprise and Environment
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Children and Young People

#### **Council Plan Ambitions -**

- Regenerate Stevenage
- Create Sustainable Communities
- Shape Our Community
- Move Towards Excellence

- 3.4.1 The Strategic Approach to Housing KLOE is designed to assess how well a council works with its partners and other stakeholders to address the housing needs and challenges within its area. It looks at whether the council is making best use of its powers and influence to drive forward the housing vision for the locality, balancing its housing market and delivering better housing outcomes for the community, including disadvantaged groups. It recognises how important political leadership, joint working and spatial planning are in developing effective approaches and makes it clear that the housing vision must link with wider plans to create sustainable communities.

## **4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The current Housing Strategy is due to expire this year and was produced before the creation of Stevenage Homes.
- 4.2 An updated strategy is required to link with the London Commuter Belt Sub Regional Housing Strategy that has recently been renewed to reflect the significant changes in the housing market and the SoStevenage Sustainable Community

## Strategy.

- 4.3 A working group was established to produce the proposed Housing Strategy 2009-12, which consisted of staff from the Council, Stevenage Homes, a local Registered Social Landlord and the Sub Regional Housing Co-ordinator. A consultation event took place on 17th October 2008 that was attended by key stakeholders and partners. A summary of the feedback from that event is included in appendix two of the Housing Strategy 2009-12.
- 4.4 The proposed Housing Strategy 2009-12:
- Provides a position statement demonstrating that the Council understands its housing market.
  - Reflects the results of consultation with stakeholders about the priorities, objectives and actions for the Housing Strategy 2009-12.
  - Covers the Strategy's governance arrangements and reports key achievements for 2008/09.
  - Covers partnership working sets priorities, objectives and actions that will contribute to meeting the Council's and SoStevenage's vision and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy.
  - Provides a Strength Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis associated to the KLOEs including cross cutting themes:
    - Access, customer care and user focus
    - Diversity
    - Strategic approach to housing
    - Making the best use of existing housing
    - Enabling the provision of more housing to meet needs
    - Value for money
  - Identifies the key priority themes that were identified following the consultation event and are aligned with the KLOEs:
    1. Understanding our housing market.
    2. Future homes and sustainable development.
    3. Inclusive communities.
    4. Strengthening the private sector.
  - Links with other corporate strategic Council documents including the Council Plan, the Local Plan, the Affordable Housing Strategy, the Homelessness Strategy, the Private Sector Renewal Strategy, the Affordable Warmth Strategy and the Climate Change Strategy.
  - Links with Stevenage Homes' Delivery Plan and Asset Management Strategy.
- 4.5 The draft Housing Strategy 2009-12 was put out for consultation on 20 July 2009 with a deadline of 28 August 2009 for responses. All the key stakeholders invited to the event in October 2008 were invited to comment on it. The document was published on the Council's website with a direct link from the homepage. A number of responses were received and where appropriate the comments have been incorporated into the final document. A summary of the responses received is included in the appendix of the Housing Strategy 2009-12. Copies of all the feedback received will be placed in a folder available in the Members library for

information.

- 4.6 The action plan forms a vital part of monitoring the progress made against the strategic priorities of the strategy. The targets within the action plan will feed into the strategic housing service plan and individual team section plans. Many of the objectives can only be achieved by strong partnerships formed with Stevenage Homes, Registered Social Landlords, voluntary organisations and other key stakeholders.
- 4.7 The Housing Strategy 2009-12 and action plan will be monitored by a newly formed Stevenage Housing Partnership. It is envisaged that the strategic objectives will be in place for the period of the Strategy but be reviewed each year to ensure they remain consistent with the Councils purpose and vision.
- 4.8 Council officers are recommending that the Executive approves the proposed Housing Strategy 2009-12 and that a shorter summary document be produced highlighting the key priority themes and actions for strategic housing in Stevenage.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

- 5.1.1 There are a number of funding sources which underpin the achievement of the key targets set out in the Housing Strategy 2009-12. The Housing Revenue Account and the Housing Revenue Capital Programme are managed by Stevenage Homes on behalf of the Council. A comprehensive budget analysis of these accounts is provided in the Stevenage Homes Delivery Plan.
- 5.1.2 Chapter Five of the Housing Strategy 2009-12 gives a breakdown of the main resources (internal and external) that will be utilised to meet the targets. The work to be undertaken to complete the tasks within the action plan can be met from existing resources.

### **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.

### **5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.3.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Housing Strategy 2009-12 and Stevenage Housing Partnership will take an annual review of the EIA to inform future action plans.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Strong and Prosperous Communities (DCLG) 2006
- Housing Green Paper 'Homes for the Future' (DCLG) 2007

- Creating Strong and Prosperous Communities (DCLG) 2008
- Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England 2005
- London Commuter Belt Housing Strategy 2009
- Hertfordshire 2021: A Brighter Future
- Hertfordshire County Council Supporting People Strategy
- Stevenage 2021: Our Town, Our Future
- Corporate Plan 2008-13: Making a Difference
- Stevenage Homes Delivery Plan
- Local Development Framework

## **APPENDICES**

- Housing Strategy 2009-12