

**REPORT TO:** CABINET **DATE:** 13<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2016  
**HEADING:** APPROVAL OF THE HOUSING STRATEGY 2016 -2020  
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** HOUSING AND ASSET MANAGEMENT  
**KEY DECISION:** YES **SUBJECT TO CALL-IN:** YES

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To seek approval of the Housing Strategy 2016 – 20 to enable delivery of the four year action plan and wider publication and circulation of the final version to stakeholders

## **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. That Members grant final approval of the 4 year Housing Strategy including the delivery of the action plan
2. That Members note the content of the final version of the Housing Strategy and associated Executive Summary

## **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

To enable the delivery of and publication of the document to replace the previous 4 year Strategy.

The Council's previous Housing Strategy expired at the end of 2015 and although not a mandatory requirement, it is good practice to set out the Council's housing priorities for the next four years to enable better strategic planning and targeting of resources

This strategy emphasizes the links between housing and health in line with both national and local policy drivers with intention that this will strengthen the Council's existing partnership working arrangements thus improving health and housing for the residents of Ashfield.

## **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED (with reasons why not adopted)**

Not to approve the final version of the Housing Strategy 2016 – 2020 – this was not considered as the strategy document will provide a clear strategic steer on improving homes and access to housing across the district. It will also enable wider joint working partnerships to deliver the tasks outlined in the action plan

## **5. BACKGROUND**

The Housing Strategy for Ashfield 2016 – 20 replaces the Housing Strategy 2010 – 15. It details what has been achieved in the last four years and sets out the 6 priorities that were agreed by Members and key stakeholders at the end of 2015. It provides a steer and focus for housing

delivery over the next four years for the Council and its partners.

Although there is no longer a statutory requirement to produce a Housing Strategy it is an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved, what needs to be done, and how we need to work in future as national policy changes continue to impact on the way councils deliver housing and housing related services

The strategy is structured into 3 main areas, the first section sets the scene in terms of demographics, what has been achieved since the last strategy and outlines how recent major policy changes have impacted on councils and their ability to deliver housing services. The second section analyses the data and examines how existing partnerships are evolving to comply with the requirements of the joint housing and health agendas. The final section includes the homelessness priorities and states what Strategic Housing in conjunction with other service areas are doing to both mitigate the impacts of welfare reform whilst ensuring our statutory functions are carried out.

This Strategy incorporates a review of how the Council deals with homelessness and considers the conditions in the private sector to give a broader view of housing issues in the district in one document.

### **Developing the Strategy**

The strategy has been compiled over a 5 month period with input from both internal and external stakeholders. The actions have evolved around the 6 priority themes and the final version has direct input from partner agencies and organisations that will be involved in the delivery of the action plan. The stakeholder event held at the beginning of September provided the opportunity for feedback at the themed workshops. Individual opinions had a direct influence on the final content of the four year action plan. The Housing Strategy 2016 – 20 is now ready for final adoption by the Council to enable work on the actions to commence and allow wider distribution of the document and its associated Executive Summary.

### **The new housing agenda**

The strategy has been compiled during a period of considerable change at national policy level. Its contents reflects the new legislation and policy guidance contained in the recent Acts of Parliament;

- The Housing and Planning Act 2016
- The Welfare Reform & Work Act 2016

These Acts will have a significant impact on a wide range of service areas and also on the Council's medium to long term financial planning and investment as a result of the policy implications and new pressures on the Housing Revenue Account. Implications of these new Acts have been covered in the Housing Strategy.

### **Housing and Health – the requirement for a joint approach**

This strategy document provides an overview of housing in the district and details of our plans to deliver new housing and housing services over the next four years as in previous strategies. However, this strategy incorporates the wider issues around housing related health issues caused

by fuel poverty, excess cold, hazards in the home and suitability of accommodation.

There is an increasing requirement to involve and engage with our partners in Health when shaping our future housing services. Many of the targets and priorities set out in the action plan have direct links to health and have a primary focus on improving the wellbeing of residents to prevent or limit crisis intervention by health services at a later date.

### **The six priority themes**

The six themes chosen by Members back in 2015 form the basis of the 4 year action plan with tasks allocated under each of the following headings;

- Ensuring supply of suitable and available accommodation
- Energy and sustainability
- Regeneration
- Tackling disrepair
- Reducing and preventing homelessness due to violence
- Environment and planning

At the consultation event held on the 9<sup>th</sup> September, stakeholders were asked to vote on the most important actions and improvements that should be delivered or enabled by the Council over the next four years. Since the draft strategy was presented to Members back in July 2016, the actions contained in the plan have been amended to reflect these stakeholders' views.

### **Financial Implications - Delivery of the Action Plan**

The majority of the actions can be delivered within existing resources and through improved partnership working arrangements. A number of actions – such as the development of a letting agency incorporating private sector housing and a new Local Authority Scheme will require a separate Cabinet reports incorporating detailed financial information as well as other implications. The capital programme will be updated to reflect project proposals as the Housing Strategy is implemented and individual schemes are approved by Cabinet or Council as appropriate.

### **Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

Following the approval of the draft strategy at June Cabinet, the document was circulated to wider external stakeholders from Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July for 8 weeks with the consultation closing on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016. Stakeholders and residents were asked their opinions on the content of the draft and specifically the six priority themes that underpin the 4 year action plan. A consultation event was held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September and stakeholders and Members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the document. The event was well attended and following presentations that included an overview of the strategy and the research findings from the recent Health Impact Assessment report and stock modelling data, stakeholders were asked to choose and vote for the most important tasks to be included within each of the six priority themes contained in the action plan.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

### **Corporate Plan:**

The delivery of the Housing and Health Strategy for Ashfield 2016 – 20 is aligned to the following corporate priorities;

### **Housing**

- Increase overall supply of affordable homes in the district.
- Reduce levels of fuel poverty.
- Minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation to house families who are homeless.

### **Legal:**

There is no longer a statutory requirement to produce a Housing Strategy document. There may be specific tasks within the action plan that will require legal advice prior to delivery and this advice will be sought at the appropriate stages

### **Financial:**

Financial Implications are outlined within section 5 of this report

### **Environmental Management and Sustainability:**

Actions contained in the document will have a positive impact in terms of improving the thermal comfort of homes and ensuring new homes are built or adapted to lifetime standards to ensure they remain sustainable in the future

### **Health and Wellbeing**

The key focus of this Housing Strategy is improving the health and wellbeing of residents through better housing provision, improving supply and access to an affordable home, and improving homes to enable independence and sustainability in the longer term. Housing has a major and direct role in improving people's health and wellbeing and the strategy supports the Council's aims and objectives in helping to address health inequalities both through its own direct provision and in partnership.

### **Human Resources:**

There are no direct implications arising from the approval of the document relating to employees or terms and conditions of employment

**Diversity/Equality:**

Please see associated Equality Impact Assessment for the delivery of the Housing Strategy 2016 – 20

**Community Safety:**

Many of the actions and priorities will have a positive impact on community safety by improving our neighbourhoods and communities including private sector housing, the services available for victims of domestic abuse and designing out crime

**Other Implications:**

**Corporate Communications** – The New Housing Strategy 2016 – 20 will be available on line from End of October (following call in period). All stakeholders and respondents to the consultation will be sent a copy of the approved Housing Strategy via email

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