

Meeting of the Council – 16th July, 2007

Report of the Cabinet

Housing Strategy 2007 - 2010

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Council endorsement of the adoption of the Housing Strategy 2007-2010 and its associated Action Plan.

Background

2. The previous Housing Strategy produced in 2003/2004 was rated as 'Fit For Purpose' by Government Office West Midlands. Many of the action plan targets have been completed and there is also a need to produce a new strategy as a result of the updated housing needs information that we have from the Dudley Borough Housing Needs and Demand Study 2005.

3. **Key Findings and how we will meet the housing needs:**

The Housing Needs and Demand Study indicated that 88% of households in the Borough were living in accommodation that was suitable for their housing needs.

These are some of the key housing needs and actions that we will be taking. Further details can be found in the Housing Strategy Action Plan.

- Affordability of housing is a major issue for newly forming households as 31% cannot afford to rent privately and 43% of households cannot afford to buy a property.

Our Response:

We will work with planners, economic regeneration agencies and local housing associations to provide as many affordable homes to rent, or low cost homeownership/shared ownership schemes as possible. This will include using Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to increase the provision of affordable housing on new housing development sites.

- There is a need to develop a more balanced housing market as Dudley has less social housing stock than all other Black Country authorities. It has the smallest private rented market and it has the highest number of owner/occupiers.

Our Response:

We will work with the owners of empty properties to encourage them to consider renting out their properties and we will continue to encourage local housing associations to build more social rented housing within the Borough.

- Dudley's supply of small units, flats and terraced houses is extremely low compared to national averages.

Our Response:

We will encourage the provision of a wide range of housing types and tenures in order to encourage sustainable communities and increase people's housing options. This will include catering for smaller concealed households but also encouraging the provision of some high value/prestige housing to attract and retain higher income households within the Borough.

- We need to plan for a number of population changes including:
 - A predicted increase in Dudley's population of 1,500 people by 2021.

Our Response:

We do not appear to be suffering from significant outward migration, unlike some neighbouring authorities, we will, however, monitor this situation and work with our neighbours to develop a sub-regional housing strategy.

- An increase in the elderly population within the Borough.

Our Response:

We will be developing five extra care housing schemes by 2015. We will also be providing telecare/preventative assistive technology equipment and adapting properties to enable older people to live independently, in homes of their choice.

- There will be an estimated 5,789 concealed households by 2007 (households who live with another household as they cannot access housing in their own right). 80% of these concealed households are grown up children (aged 16+) of the householder. There are also a number of smaller households that have formed as a result of relationship breakdowns.

Our Response:

We will be introducing a pilot Choice Based Lettings Scheme to improve the transparency of our council house waiting list, and carrying out a fundamental review of how we assess housing needs (reviewing the housing waiting list points scheme). We will be encouraging developers to build a mixture of housing types including properties that are suitable for smaller household types or people wishing to access the housing market in their own right for the first time. We will also be working with local housing associations to promote low cost home ownership/ shared ownership schemes as a housing option.

- We have also set ourselves targets in relation to producing a Supporting People and accommodation strategy that will address the needs of specific client groups who need accommodation with support in order to help them to

live independently. Client groups include people who have been homeless, people with drug and alcohol issues, gypsies and travellers and refugees.

4. The Housing Strategy helps to meet the objectives and aspirations of Dudley's Community Strategy, primarily in relation to 'promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone' and 'safeguarding and improving the environment.'
5. The Strategy will also be key to stating Dudley's housing needs and aspirations in relation to a sub-regional housing strategy that is proposed. By having an up to date strategy for the Borough we will be in the driving seat to influence the type of approaches and activities that will be included in the emerging sub-regional strategy.
6. The Strategy has been developed in conjunction with the corporate Housing Strategy Steering Group. It has also been widely consulted on using a range of consultation methods.
7. The strategy includes actions that will contribute to promoting Community Safety (Chapter 10 Increasing Community Respect), and highlights how investment in housing is contributing to creating sustainable environments (Chapter 3 Promoting Environmental Sustainability) and it has an overall emphasis on building sustainable communities through improving housing conditions and providing a wider range of housing options for people who wish to live in the Borough.
8. On consideration of the above information, the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 13th June 2007, resolved to recommend the Council to approve the Housing Strategy for 2007 – 2010, and to authorise the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services to carry out any actions related to the implementation of the Housing Strategy Action Plan. The Action Plan is set out in the report to the Cabinet, a copy of which is available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) as item no 12 on the agenda for the Cabinet Meeting held on 13th June 2007. A hard copy can be obtained from Richard Sanders in the Directorate of Law and Property on (01384) 815236 or email richard.sanders@dudley.gov.uk.
9. Consideration was also given in the report to the Cabinet to a Housing Market Renewal Partnership Prospectus for the four Black Country authorities and Telford. The Prospectus, and authority for the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services to carry out actions related to its development were approved by the Cabinet under delegated powers.

Finance

10. The strategy objectives will be delivered through a range of funding streams as outlined within the 'Resources' section of the strategy. Funding opportunities will also be sought to meet un-met needs. This will include considering funding bids to the Housing Corporation for the development of affordable social housing, and encouraging the use of Section 106 obligations (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) to ensure that housing developers are contributing to providing affordable housing within the Borough.

Law

- 11. The Council may do anything incidental to, conducive to or which facilitates the discharge of its functions under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972. This would include anything incidental to the Council's housing powers and duties under the various Housing Acts.

Equality Impact

- 12. A well developed and formulated Housing Strategy will have a positive impact on equality by enabling all people, regardless of race, disability or gender, to lead fulfilled and independent lives in homes of their choice in safe and active communities.

Recommendation

- 13. That the Council endorse the adoption of the Housing Strategy 2007 – 2010 and authorise the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services to carry out any actions related to the implementation of the Housing Strategy Action Plan.

David Caunt

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LEADER OF THE COUNCIL