

**DECENT & AFFORDABLE HOMES PDG  
6 OCTOBER 2015**

**DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY 2015-2020**

**Cabinet Member** Cllr Ray Stanley  
**Responsible Officer** Housing Services Manager

**Reason for Report:** The existing housing strategy requires review

**RECOMMENDATION(S):** That the Cabinet agrees the revised housing strategy prior to it being sent out for consultation.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Although the Corporate Plan is currently under review, the existing plan contains a pledge relating to decent and affordable homes. This is to ensure that the housing needs of residents in the District are recognised through the provision of affordable homes and good quality housing in the public and private sector. In addition, the pledge entitled: "Empowering our Communities" states that the Council will work with our partners to maximise the potential of all our citizens by tackling social disadvantage and deprivation. It also states that the Council will plan for the future in relation to both older people and young people.

**Financial Implications:** All actions arising from this strategy will be met, if possible, by existing and future budgets informed by service plans.

**Legal Implications:** The Local Government Act 2003 imposes a duty on the Council to publish a housing strategy which sets out the vision and priorities for housing in the District.

**Risk Assessment:** Having a housing strategy in place which references other strategies and plans should help to mitigate the impact of welfare reform and the reducing availability of public sector finance. It should also help towards managing the expectations of local people and other stakeholders.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council is required to publish a housing strategy which sets out our vision and priorities for housing in the District. This strategy must contain the objectives, targets and policies on how we intend to manage and deliver our strategic housing role. It also needs to provide an overarching framework against which we consider and formulate other policies on more specific housing issues.
- 1.2 The existing housing strategy 2010-2015 now needs updating.
- 1.3 The revised strategy should address all relevant issues, including homelessness and the energy efficiency of housing stock.
- 1.4 In addition, it should contain information about the current position and the context. This should include reference to wider priorities including both national and local ones.

- 1.5 The strategy also includes information about how the Council manages its housing stock and performs its role as a landlord.
- 1.6 The purpose of the strategy is to provide a framework for achieving the outcomes and priorities for housing in Mid Devon. To inform this, the strategy should include information on the current and future position of all significant aspects of housing need in all tenures and on service performance.
- 1.7 The strategy should reflect the Council's role in discharging a number of statutory duties including those relating to public sector housing, homelessness and safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults.
- 1.8 The strategy is based on information obtained through the Census 2011 and on the findings of the recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was published by the authorities located in the Exeter Housing Market Area.
- 1.9 Consultation on priorities to be included in the strategy was commenced in May 2013 and was publicised in a press release, in Mid Devon Talk, on our website, at a meeting of the Mid Devon Equality Forum and at two "Make Your Money Go Further" events for tenants. Stakeholders including other local authorities surrounding the District and others within Devon were consulted, as were all the other Registered Providers within Mid Devon and partner agencies. The Citizen's Panel was also asked to respond to the consultation. Due to delays in the publication of the tenant newsletter, Housing News 4U, the consultation was extended to the end of August 2013.

## **2.0 The Draft Housing Strategy**

2.1 Since the existing housing strategy was adopted, there have been many changes to housing policy, and many reforms to the welfare system. These are reflected in the new draft housing strategy.

2.2 The Housing Service is committed to providing homes for our community. In order to achieve this vision, a number of key priorities have been identified:

### **2.2.1 One: Delivering affordable housing**

In accordance with this priority, we will work in partnership with other providers to develop new homes to meet the need established in the SHMA. We will also try to develop more Council housing and to work with landlords in the private sector to bring empty homes back into use. The need for additional pitches for gypsies and travellers has been recognised within the new draft strategy and the Devon Partnership Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment has been referenced.

### **2.2.2 Two: Making better use of existing housing stock**

The work of the Private Sector Housing team aligns with this priority because overall housing supply is affected by property condition and investment in maintenance. The provision of aids and adaptations in both private and public sector accommodation is also important enabling people to remain independent in their own homes.

We use Devon Home Choice to award priority for rehousing and Members of the PDG are about to review the operation of the scheme in Mid Devon. Even if changes are made to the scheme, it will still offer a consistent approach to the allocation of social housing enabling us to make best use of the housing stock in the District.

In accordance with this priority, we have made it clear within our tenancy strategy that we expect registered providers of social housing (RPs) to use fixed term tenancies. The management of our own housing stock also supports this priority.

### **2.2.3 Three: Preventing homelessness**

The homelessness strategy which was adopted in 2014 contains three specific priorities and these are confirmed in the housing strategy.

### **2.2.4 Four: Managing the impact of an aging population**

The housing strategy acknowledges that a huge increase in the number of elderly living in Mid Devon is projected over the next two decades. The population over 65 is likely to increase by over 54% and the population aged 75 or over is likely to go up by nearly 82% in the period until 2033. We have already started to explore new ways of delivering services to older people in both public and private sector housing and to expanding existing services in support of this priority.

### **2.2.5 Five: Reducing the impact of welfare reform**

Work to reduce fuel poverty in our strategy will reduce the impact of welfare reform. In addition, partnership working with other agencies such as Wiser£Money also enables us to support those who are vulnerable.

## **3.0 Next Steps**

3.1 If the PDG agrees the draft strategy, the Housing Service will undertake consultation on it. This will involve consulting with a range of stakeholders, including neighbouring local authorities, other registered providers of social housing which work in the District, and other agencies including Wiser£Money, CHAT and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, with which we work in partnership.

3.2 The appendices will be revised periodically to reflect changing government policy and the outcome of new spending reviews.

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**Circulation of the Report:** Councillor Ray Stanley, Cabinet Member for Housing

**List of Background Papers:** None