



AGENDA ITEM: 5(h)

CABINET: 18th MARCH 2014

Report of: Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs V. Hopley & Councillor A. Owens

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SUBJECT: HOUSING STRATEGY 2014-2019

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek Cabinet endorsement for Housing Strategy 2014 - 2019.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Housing Strategy 2014 – 2019 as shown at Appendix 5 be endorsed.

2.2 That the Housing Strategy 2014 – 2019 Action Plan as shown at Appendix 3 be endorsed.

2.3 That the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration be authorised, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to make any further minor amendments to the Housing Strategy 2014 – 2019 and Year 1 Action Plan.

2.4 That the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration be authorised, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to develop, on an annual basis a housing strategy action plan for years 2 to 5 inclusive.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 West Lancashire Council last published a full housing strategy in 2004. It covered the period 2004-2009 and was approved as Fit for Purpose by Government Office North West.
- 3.2 There is no longer a statutory requirement for the Council to produce a Housing Strategy; however it is acknowledged that such documents can be key to providing strategic direction on housing related matters and help to support broader economic objectives. They can also be considered as a contextual document to support Local Investment Plans.
- 3.3 Government no longer provides guidance for local authorities about producing housing strategies. This was also clarified by the publication of the statutory guidance 'Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities' in 2008 which gives local authorities the discretion about how, when, and in what format they document their housing strategy.
- 3.4 Housing strategies are intended to:
- Provide an overview of housing related issues in the area
 - Identify any mismatch between housing supply and demand and identify issues such as matters related to housing conditions, affordability, needs of vulnerable groups etc.
 - Set out the key housing objectives for the authority and its partners
 - Establish priorities for action and spending priorities
 - Provide an action plan and policy direction to address the housing challenges and problems in the borough.
- 3.5 The Housing Strategy is intended to work in harmony with the Local Plan and other key local strategies.
- 3.6 Essentially, a Housing Strategy brings together and builds on a number of strategies which deal with aspects of housing and any other related activity that leads to the creation of an appropriate sustainable local housing offer.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 A draft Housing Strategy 2014 – 2019 for West Lancashire as shown at Appendix 1, has been prepared and has been subject to an 8 week public consultation period which closed on 28 February 2014.
- 4.2 The consultation comments that have been received are summarised in Appendix 2.
- 4.3 Appendix 5 shows the Housing Strategy, as amended taking account the comments received. Amendments are shown as tracked changes.

4.4 Where appropriate Officers have provided commentary and suggestion on how the consultation comment has been addressed / included into the Housing Strategy.

5.0 HOUSING STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS & CONTENT

5.1 Arc4 Housing Consultants were appointed to assist in developing a five year housing strategy for the period 2014-2019.

5.2 The process of producing the Strategy is summarized below.

Identifying the challenges and potential priorities

5.3 Our consultants carried out telephone interviews with key Council Officers and Managers and reviewed a range of relevant documentation at a local, regional and national level to get a sense of what type of strategic housing issues are facing West Lancashire.

5.4 The review work enabled our consultant to identify the areas which would then be used as discussion points in early stakeholder consultation.

Early Stakeholder Consultation

5.5 This was an important element of the work with a modest event being held late in 2012 at West Lancs Investment Centre. The purpose of the event was to try and tease out what the strategic housing objectives might look like.

5.6 Attendees at the consultation event included:

- Housing Developers / Registered Providers
- Housing Strategy, Economic and Planning Colleagues at Neighbouring Councils
- HCA
- Borough Council Elected Members
- Edge Hill University and Skelmersdale College
- LCC Colleagues
- Public
- Voluntary Sector / agencies
- Other stakeholders and partners

5.7 For those people who could not attend we issued housing strategy questionnaires that could be completed on-line. Two questionnaires were developed; one for professionals and one for members of the public. In addition, our consultants took telephone calls from those who wished to provide feedback in that manner using a free phone number that had been provided.

5.8 The emerging priorities were then used to help develop initial versions of the draft Housing Strategy.

Housing Strategy – Public Consultation

5.9 Following the work undertaken by Arc4, Council Officers refined the strategy document so that it took account of the local housing context of the Borough. Thereafter the Housing Strategy was made available for an eight week period of public consultation which started on 7 January 2014 and finished on 28 February 2014.

5.10 Consultation feedback was sought via:

- Direct mail of those who contributed to the first stage consultation as mentioned in (5.5) above.
- Press release to direct those parties interested in housing issues to a copy of the draft Housing Strategy 2014 – 2019 on the Council website in order that they can provide their consultation feedback.
- E-mail to all Council Members and Parish Clerks.
- Details placed on to Council web pages.
- Landlord Services Committee
- Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Content of the Strategy – Delivery Objectives

5.11 The Housing Strategy is structured using the following delivery objectives:

- Achieve the right supply new homes including maximising affordable housing
- Regenerate and remodel areas of Skelmersdale
- Making the best use of all existing homes
- Encourage well managed and maintained homes across all tenures
- Encourage investment to meet specialist housing requirements
- Deliver the Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012-2020 – residential and domestic sector objectives

5.12 The proposed Housing Strategy Vision is *“The provision of good quality housing in the right locations which also supports our economic and regeneration priorities, meets people’s changing needs and is situated within pleasant, safe and sustainable communities”*

5.13 The diagram on page 15 of the draft Strategy shows the Housing Strategy in the corporate context. Chapter 6 of the document sets out the key delivery actions for each of the six key objectives.

5.14 The Housing Strategy includes delivery actions under each of the key objectives.

Action Plan

5.15 An Action Plan is attached at Appendix 3.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS / COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 The Housing Strategy complements the housing related objectives of West Lancashire Community Strategy which aims to provide more appropriate and affordable housing to meet the needs of local people.
- 6.2 The Housing Strategy takes account of other related strategy and plans across the Council which are focussed on addressing housing development growth in a manner that is sustainable and meets the housing needs of the Borough's residents.
- 6.3 There are no negative sustainability or community strategy implications by virtue of this report.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 At this stage though no specific resource implications have been identified, key actions will need to be considered through future Service Action Plans.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Failure to develop a housing strategy which has clear evidenced based housing delivery objectives will mean that the Council will not be able to target resources effectively to address the housing requirements of the Borough.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Developing a Housing Strategy will provide direction on which strategic housing issues the Council wishes to address during the life of the Strategy.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained in this report

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Housing Strategy 2014-2019 – Consultation Version
Appendix 2 – Consultation Comments Received

Appendix 3 – Year 1 Action Plan

Appendix 4 – EIA – Initial Assessment

Appendix 5 – Housing Strategy 2014 – 2019 – Amended in light of consultation

Appendix 6 - Minute of Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) held on
12 March 2014 (to follow)