

PLACES SCRUTINY PANEL

9 February 2017

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2017-22

Report of the Director for Places (Development and Economy)

Strategic Aim:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sustainable Growth</i> • <i>Safeguarding</i> • <i>Reaching our Full Potential</i> 		
Exempt Information	No.		
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr O Hemsley, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Growth, Trading Services and Resources (except Finance)		
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Ward Councillors	N/A		

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel considers the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 at Appendix A and that any comments be reported to Cabinet as appropriate.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the draft Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 as part of the consultation process.

2. BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Council to produce a homelessness strategy at least every five years, showing how the Council addresses and prevents homelessness. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 will replace the separate Housing Strategy 2012-17 and Homelessness Strategy 2012-17. As required by law, the strategy is informed by a Homelessness Review of the resources, diverse needs, trends and partnerships in Rutland regarding homelessness.
- 2.2 The Council's homelessness duties – and many of its procedures - are set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homelessness Act 2002. The Council has had regard to the statutory guidance which aids its interpretation. The overall affordable housing target has already been set through the Corporate Plan 2016-20.

The Council's planning policies set out mechanisms for affordable housing delivery through the planning system.

- 2.3 The draft strategy is attached. Its vision is, "fair access to suitable and sustainable housing for everyone in Rutland, particularly those whose needs are not readily met through the open market." It supports the Council's Corporate Plan, the Adult Social Care Strategy and the current and emerging Local Plan. It includes local connection criteria for the Council's self-build and custom housing register.
- 2.4 The draft strategy has four Aims, which lead to the specific Objectives and Targets in the Action Plan (Appendix 1 of the draft strategy). These Aims are listed in the order they appear and not necessarily in their order of importance.
- **Aim 1 – Preventing homelessness and promoting housing options**
 - *Effective housing advice and assistance.*
 - **Aim 2 – Provide targeted support for vulnerable households**
 - *Working with partner organisations to see that people get the help or advice they need to remain safe and independent.*
 - **Aim 3 – Sustainable Growth**
 - *Delivering the housing growth needed in all sectors under the Local Plan, including at least 40 affordable homes per year.*
 - **Aim 4 – Ensure existing homes are fit-for-purpose**
 - *Safe, warm, occupied homes with the adaptations people need.*
- 2.5 The Government announced on 24 October 2016 that it would support the Private Members' Homelessness Reduction Bill which was published on 21 October and passed Second Reading in the House of Commons on 28 October. This will impose additional duties on councils to seek to prevent homelessness, although much of this is similar to the Council's current preventative practices.
- 2.6 Under the Bill, local authorities would be required to help all eligible people – whether they are single or a family - for 56 days before they are threatened with homelessness. Those who are already homeless will get support for a further 56 days to help them secure accommodation.

3. SELF-BUILD AND CUSTOM HOUSEBUILDING REGISTER

- 3.1 Under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, the Council is required to keep a register of people who would like plots on which to build or commission their own homes. At 15 November 2016, there were 20 people on this register, of whom six lived in Rutland.
- 3.2 Under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations 2016, the Council may divide the register into two parts, where Part 1 is for people with a local connection (with an exemption covering Armed Forces personnel) and Part 2 which covers other people. The Council must ensure that there is a sufficient supply of plots for the people on the register, but this duty only applies to those on Part 1 of the register if local connection criteria have been applied.

- 3.3 The Council is required by the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 to have regard to the register when carrying out its housing functions. The criteria for the register, whilst relevant to planning, are not planning policy as such. Therefore local connection criteria are incorporated within Appendix 2 of the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy and are part of the public consultation.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Places Scrutiny Panel considered the delivery of the Council's homelessness services on 24 November 2016. This report seeks the views of Panel Members on the document which was approved by Cabinet on 20 December 2017 for consultation. The consultation period ends on 22 February. Following consultation, responses will be assessed. A report will be taken back to Cabinet on 21 March, including a final draft of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy for adoption.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of the consultation exercise itself is minimal and can be contained within existing budgets. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy does not commit the Council to any expenditure outside of existing budgets. There is the potential for pressure on temporary accommodation budgets should homelessness increase, but this would not be a consequence of the strategy which seeks to minimise this risk.
- 5.2 The Council is able to charge for the assessment and review of applications to the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations. This was included as part of the annual fees and charges report (no. 23/2017) on 17 January, with Cabinet recommending to Council a fee of £75 for new entries to the register. The local connection criteria may also reduce the possibility of the Council having to become more directly involved in the provision of self-build plots.

6. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The Council is required by the Homelessness Act 2002 to produce a Homelessness Strategy at least every 5 years, which is informed by a Homelessness Review. This can be included as part of a larger document, such as the proposed Housing and Homelessness Strategy, but the Council must adopt a new homelessness strategy by 11 June 2017. The Council has had regard to a wide range of documents including the Homelessness Code of Guidance, the Housing Allocation Policy, the Tenancy Strategy, the need to promote starter homes, its self-build and custom housing register and the periodic assessment of housing need required by the Housing Act 1985 (as amended).

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening template has been completed. The nature of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy is to prioritise investment fairly. The public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 is engaged, because the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy addresses the needs of members of a range of groups with protected characteristics, including for instance older people and people with disabilities. No adverse or other unjustified differential

impact was found. A copy of the EqlA can be obtained from the Housing Strategy and Enabling Officer (jfaircliffe@rutland.gov.uk or 01572 758238).

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Housing and Homelessness Strategy aims to promote sustainable communities and to prevent and address homelessness. It encourages regeneration where appropriate and the bringing of empty homes back into use. This is likely to help to promote community safety.

9. HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Housing is one of the 'Wider Determinants of Health' and is an integral part of the Council's social care assessment and support planning responsibilities under the Care Act 2014. Homelessness can have significant health implications. This can be exacerbated if the loss of accommodation was particularly traumatic (such as fleeing violence) or if the household has someone who has vulnerabilities. This Housing and Homelessness Strategy aims to address these issues through partnership working where possible.
- 9.2 People with chronic long term conditions may have physical needs which require major adaptation of existing properties, extra care or other housing with support, or in some cases residential care. Further information on housing, health and wellbeing is under 'Aim 4 – Ensure existing homes are fit-for-purpose'.

10. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Environmental implications

- 10.1 The environmental implications of development will principally be considered through the planning process. Some specific impacts are listed below.
- 10.2 The use of local connection criteria for the self-build and custom housebuilding register will help to reduce the extent of the Council's duty to ensure a supply of these plots, which tend to be larger than average and disproportionately in rural areas. This does not reduce the overall housing requirement, which is calculated in a different way.
- 10.3 The Housing and Homelessness Strategy seeks to promote good property condition.

Procurement Implications

- 10.4 There are no direct procurement implications from the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, which does not commit the Council to any expenditure outside of existing budgets.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The production of a Homelessness Strategy is a statutory requirement and it is appropriate to produce a combined Housing and Homelessness Strategy to avoid duplication and to enable a cross-cutting strategic approach. It will assist in meeting the challenges of homelessness prevention, service provision and temporary

accommodation and the provision of new affordable housing at a difficult time. It sets out a strategic framework which will continue to promote the delivery of these objectives over the medium and long term.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Homelessness Review 2016
- 12.2 Rutland Housing Conference slides 30 Nov 2015
- 12.3 Rutland Housing Conference – 30 November 2015 – Event notes
- 12.4 What Rutland County Council is doing following Rutland Housing Conference on 30 November
- 12.5 Starter homes calculation 2/2/16

13. APPENDICES

- 13.1 Appendix A – Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-22

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.