

Report to: Extraordinary District Council of Easington

Date: 16th April 2008

Report of: Executive Member for Housing

Subject: District of Easington Housing Strategy 2008-2011

Ward: All

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report provides details of the proposed District of Easington Housing Strategy 2008-11 which has been developed to update the previous strategy which was in place 2002 - 2007. A copy of the proposed Strategy document is attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 The District of Easington Housing Strategy 2008-11 has been developed through extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders including residents of the District and many of the Council's Partner agencies. Consultation has taken the form of questionnaires, presentations, workshops and meetings. Full details of the consultation processes are contained within the Strategy document.

3.0 Background

3.1 Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 puts local housing strategies on a statutory basis and sets out the requirements for the issues to be addressed, including homelessness, housing need, physical standards and energy efficiency of housing stock in the Local Authority area. There is also a requirement for the Local Housing Strategy to be consistent with the Local Community Strategy.

3.2 The current Housing Strategy and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan were produced in 2002 and approved as 'Fit For Purpose' by Government Office North East. Covering a five-year timeframe from 2002-2007, the main policy priorities of these documents reflected the position of the housing market at the time, and included tackling the issue of high voids rates, low demand and poor stock condition by actively disposing of surplus council properties through a marketing strategy. Significant progress has been made against the action plan in the 2002 Strategy, including the replacement of low demand public and private sector housing with new housing development in a number of settlement across the District, the improvement of older terraced housing in the renewal areas of Dawdon and Easington Colliery, a continuing reduction in homelessness through focussed prevention work, and the development of a number of key policy areas including Allocations and Choice Based Lettings.

3.3 The revised Housing Strategy 2008 – 2011 has been developed to reflect the substantial changes in the sub regional, regional and local policy context, the needs of local people and the changing dynamics of local housing markets since 2002. The action plan included as part of the strategy has been developed to address the issues

of affordability, increasing demand for social rented housing, the condition of the housing stock, the needs of vulnerable residents and the role of housing in supporting future economic growth through its contribution to the overall regeneration of the District.

- 3.4 The impending establishment of the new Unitary Authority for County Durham will involve the merging of the 7 District Council's local housing authority roles and a 'Housing Strategy' workstream has been established under the Place Programme Board. The priorities and actions set out in this new Housing Strategy will be used to guide the future delivery of a single housing strategy for County Durham, and will provide a useful policy base for future decision making on strategic housing issues in East Durham.

4.0 District of Easington Housing Strategy 2008-2011.

- 4.1 The Housing Strategy sets out a Vision, four key Strategic Aims and a number of Key Objectives with identified outcomes for local residents. The objectives are supported by a three-year action plan, which is linked to performance indicators that will measure the delivery of the actions and the intended outcomes for residents.

- 4.2 The overall vision of the Housing Strategy is

"We want to ensure that every resident in the District is living in a Decent Home and Quality Environment".

This vision is supported by 4 key aims, expressed as a range of outcomes for local residents and supported by underpinning objectives and a SMART action plan.

Aims of the Housing Strategy

- 4.3 **Aim 1: "To improve the quality and standard of housing and the environment to ensure sustainable mixed communities are created".**

Key actions to deliver this aim include:

- Continue to support East Durham Homes in the delivery of service improvements and the Decent Homes investment programme for the Council's housing stock
- Introduce a new Private Sector Financial Assistance Policy in 2008
- Target long-term empty properties to return them to use
- Introduce a Selective Licensing Scheme for Private Landlords in Easington Colliery.
- Improve the Environmental appearance of residential areas.

- 4.4 **Aim 2: "To target housing investment in locations that will produce the greatest benefit for the District and supports the economic, social and environmental well being of the area"**

Key actions to deliver this aim include:

- Prioritise new housing developments in the two major towns of Peterlee and Seaham .
- Implement the action plans included within the area development frameworks for Peterlee, Easington Colliery Horden and Dawdon.
- Increase the number of properties built on brown field land.

4.5 Aim 3: “ To ensure the type and mix of new and existing housing provides choice and meets housing needs and demands.”

Key actions to deliver this aim include:

- Use planning agreements to provide new affordable housing provision on development sites coming forward so as to increase the number of affordable houses for rent and sale
- Introduction of Choice Based Lettings for social rented housing in the District

4.6 Aim 4: “To Address the supported housing needs for vulnerable groups”

Key actions to deliver this aim include:

- Prioritise the review of the older persons housing stock for, investment and new build.
- Determine the type of specialist housing units required
- Continue to target resources at homelessness prevention and housing advice.
- Review the existing arrangements for provision of housing related support in the District

4.7 Chapter four of the Housing Strategy sets out the arrangements for the monitoring of the achievement of the actions and outcomes, with a range of performance measures for each of the outcomes described in the Action Plan.

4.8 Best practice guidance suggest that an annual update of the Action Plan should be produced to ensure that it remains relevant to local housing issues and priorities. This requirement will be fed into the Housing Strategy Workstream as a future requirement for the new Housing Authority.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

The action plan within the housing strategy will be met from existing budgets and various external sources of finance including the Single Housing Investment Pot, National Affordable Housing Programme, English Partnerships and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and the Homelessness Grant.

5.2 Legal Implications

Under S87 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Council is required to produce a local housing strategy, which sets out its objectives, targets and policies on how the authority intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role.

5.3 Policy Implications

If approved, the Housing Strategy Statement for 2008 – 2011 will become the Council’s lead policy statement for addressing the housing requirements and needs of the District. It has been developed to be consistent with the Council’s Regeneration Statement and emerging Local Development Framework.

5.4 Risk Implications

A risk assessment has been completed and the necessary actions to manage the risks will be implemented.

5.5 Communications

The content of the Housing Strategy Statement will be communicated through presentations; briefings, newsletters and the document will be posted on the Council's web site. It is proposed that a launch event will be held in 2008 to present the new Strategy to the Council's key partners and stakeholders.

5.6 Local Government Review

The Council's Transitional Plan adopted in February 2008 includes a specific commitment to review the Council's strategic policy framework, including the Housing Strategy. The main implications of LGR on the new Housing Strategy are covered in sections 3.4 and 4.8 above. The strategy does not make any specific contractual or financial commitments beyond March 2009.

6.0 Corporate Plan and Priorities

6.1 The Housing Service Plan identifies the development of the Council's Housing Strategy as one of its main priorities. The vision, aims and objectives will directly deliver the Council's corporate objective of 'Decent Homes for All' and will make indirect contributions to the objectives of 'Building Healthy Communities', 'Quality Services for our People' and 'Providing Sustainable Jobs for Local People'.

6.2 Equality and Diversity

The housing strategy includes specific actions related to the provision of housing and support services to vulnerable people, and is the subject of an ongoing 'Equality Impact Assessment'.

6.3 E-Government implications

There are no direct e-government implications.

6.4 Procurement Implications

There are no direct procurement implications.

6.5 Service Plan

The production of this revised housing strategy is one of the key actions in the current Housing Service Plan.

6.6 Performance Management & Scrutiny

The housing strategy action plan includes a wider range of performance indicators and targets which will be monitored by the Housing Policy & Strategy team within the Housing Service and will be reported through the East Durham Partnership Action for Housing & Communities Group and the Council's Housing Strategy Group and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

6.7 Sustainability

The Housing Strategy includes specific reference to the Council's work to tackle Fuel Poverty and Climate Change and to improving the standard of local residential neighbourhoods.

6.8 Crime and Disorder

The Housing Strategy contains a number of actions which will have a positive effect on tackling Crime and Disorder, including targeting empty properties, improving the quality of environment in residential areas, and providing accommodation and support for vulnerable people.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The revised District of Easington Housing Strategy 2008 – 2011 has been developed following a thorough review of the local, sub regional, regional and national housing context and through consultation with local residents and the Council's key partners. It sets out a Vision, Aims & Objectives and a three-year action plan which will be monitored against the stated outcomes and performance measures. It is intended that the action plan be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the document continues to reflect the Council's Strategic response to local housing needs and aspirations.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 Members of the Council are recommended to approve the revised District of Easington Housing Strategy 2008 – 2011.

Background Papers referred to in preparing this report: -

Regional Housing Strategy

Sub-regional Housing Strategy

Housing Needs Survey 2004

Housing Strategy 2002-2007

HRA Business Plan 2002-2007

Housing Strategy Group minutes of meetings

Recent Housing Strategies of a number of Strategic Housing Authorities