



## **Chester-le-Street** District Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Full Council
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> December 2007
<b>Report from:</b>	Housing Strategy Manager
<b>Title of Report:</b>	Affordable Housing Policy
<b>Agenda Item Number:</b>	

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### **1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the amendments to the Affordable Housing Policy.
- 1.2 A Housing Needs survey completed on behalf of the Council by DCA consultants suggested that to meet the future housing needs 30% of any new developments should be made affordable. The Council is therefore obliged to have a policy in relation to these homes ensuring that properties are allocated to those most in need.

### **2. CONSULTATION**

- 2.1 This is a revision of the policy however comments have been requested from the Housing Strategy Team and the Housing Strategy Focus Group.

### **3. CORPORATE PLAN AND PRIORITIES**

- 3.1 The implementation of the Affordable Housing Policy would make a contribution in particular to:
  - Priority1, Customer excellence, providing affordable housing allowing housing to be accessible by all the community.
  - Priority 2, Working in Partnership to deliver the Community Strategy, delivering affordable housing to those in need.

- Priority 4, Regenerating the District by contributing to sustainable communities.

#### **4. IMPLICATIONS**

##### Financial implications and Value for Money Statement

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this policy.

##### 4.2 Legal

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However it is a requirement to have a policy in place to ensure the affordable housing is going to those in most need.

As a council we have an obligation to assist those local people who cannot gain access to properties they can afford in a place they wish to live.

##### 4.3 Personnel

There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

##### 4.4 Risk

The risks associated with not producing an affordable housing policy would be:

- Affordable housing not being delivered to those in most need
- Not creating sustainable communities

##### 4.5 Diversity

This Policy is critically important to the council in terms of equality and diversity. This Policy aims to deliver affordable housing to those in most need including diverse groups or households, ensuring the service we provide meets the needs of the wider community.

##### 4.6 Data Quality

Every care has been taken in the development of this Strategy to ensure that the information and data used in its preparation are accurate, timely

and comprehensive. The council's Data Quality Policy has been complied with in producing this report.

## **5. BACKGROUND, POSITION STATEMENT AND OPTION APPRAISAL**

- 5.1** The objective of this Policy is to contribute to the creation of sustainable communities by ensuring that a proportion of affordable homes for sale, within new private developments, are allocated to those people with the greatest need, in a fair and transparent manner at an affordable price.

Policies for affordable housing must consider:

- Households whose incomes are well below the levels required for homeownership and who are likely to need to rent their homes on a long term basis.
- Households who aspire to homeownership but can only afford properties in lower price ranges.
- Households with special needs who may require both subsidised accommodation and appropriate support in order to live in it successfully.

This Policy ensures a better mix of housing tenures, as this is important if we are to ensure a sustainable future for housing and areas. It is equally important to ensure that diversity exists in all new housing developments and we must seek to develop social housing alongside housing built for homeownership and private renting. If communities are to grow and prosper, people need opportunities to meet their aspirations, including homeownership, in the areas where they have grown up. At the same time, such communities must be able to attract new people to join them.

- 5.2** This is a review of the policy agreed in Aug 2006 and the following issues have been raised throughout this time:

- No points were awarded to those applicants already living within the district of Chester-le-Street. This saw households from outside the area attracting more points and subsequently being nominated prior to those in the district.
- No financial assessment was made of a household. This saw households applying and subsequently being nominated in a financial position to be able to purchase on the open market. It is proposed in the changes to ask for financial information.
- No points were awarded to those households who were threatened with homeless. These households are one of the groups of people in most need.
- No points were awarded to those households who may have left the areas however wish to return or have a family connection.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Members are recommended to approve the changes and to adopt revised Affordable Housing Policy.

**7. BACKGROUND PAPERS / DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO**

7.1 Affordable Housing Policy

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