

Item 7

REPORT TO COUNCIL

29th September 2006

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Portfolio: Housing

Sedgefield Borough Housing Strategy 2006/7 –2008/9

Developing a Fit for Purpose Housing Strategy

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Borough Council's last Housing Strategy covered the period 2003/4 – 2006/7 and provided the Council with a robust basis to develop its response to range of emerging housing and housing related support issues in the Borough.
- 1.2 Since the adoption of this last Strategy, the Government has significantly changed its approach to the development of Housing Strategies. The Government wish to see all local housing authorities adopt a housing strategy, which is "fit for purpose" i.e., meets certain requirements in terms of key content and monitoring arrangements.
- 1.3 The attached Sedgefield Borough Housing Strategy 2006/7 –2008/9 has been developed to take account of the national, regional and local policy issues and priorities. The Strategy has established clear links to the Council's Corporate Plan and the Local Strategic Partnership's Community Strategy. The Housing Strategy has been submitted to the Government Office for the North East for assessment against the "fit for purpose" standard, and it has been signed off as meeting standard.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Sedgefield Borough Housing Strategy 2006//7 – 2008/9 be adopted.

3.0 **Sedgefield Borough Housing Strategy 2006/7 -2008/9**

- 3.1.1 The Borough Council's last Housing Strategy covered the period 2003/4 – 2006/7 and provided the Council with a robust basis to develop its response to range of emerging housing and housing related issues in the Borough. Since the adoption of the Strategy there has been significant changes both at a national regional and local levels in the issues facing housing. The importance that housing and housing related services can play in delivering sustainable communities and neighbourhood renewal has been recognised in number of key policy statements including the Sustainable Communities Plan, The North Way

Growth Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy.

- 3.1.2 The “fit for purpose” standard for housing strategies has seen a shift towards a shorter more accessible document which aims to provide the non specialist reader with a clear understanding of the Council’s key priorities for action and it’s future plans. The new Hosuing Strategy has been developed in light of these changes and is a document of 25 pages supported by a number of “hyperlinked” documents that provide detailed background information on key issues.
- 3.1.3 The Housing Strategy takes account of the Council’s ambitions articulated in the Corporate Plan and the vision for the Borough set out in the Local Strategic Partnership’s Community Strategy.
- 3.1.4 The Housing Strategy 2003/4 – 2006/7, aim for housing and housing services in the Borough was:-

‘To provide a comprehensive, customer focused housing service, which makes a positive contribution to the achievement of strong and sustainable local communities.’

The new Housing Strategy retains this aim but recommends a change to the objectives that underpin it, to reflect those set out in the North East Regional Housing Strategy (NERHS) July 2005. The driver for this is change is the way in which resources are allocated to local housing authorities to support their housing programmes. The Regional Housing Board is responsible for the allocation of all non Housing Revenue Account housing resources in the North East. They have cleared articulated that the future allocation of resources will be linked to the contribution that local housing authorities play in delivering the objectives set out in its Regional Housing Strategy. The Council has already aligned many of its priorities to these objectives and benefited with a successful Single Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) bid for 2006/7-2007/8 of £2.5m. The Regional Housing Strategy’s objectives have a good strategic fit with the priorities for action facing the Borough. Given this fact and to ensure that the Council continue to be in a position to maximise the opportunities to bid for external funding it is appropriate to adopt the Regional Housing Strategies objectives:-

- To **rejuvenate the housing stock** to meet 21st Century aspirations, replacing market failure with high quality housing in the right locations to help create successful, cohesive and sustainable communities.
- To ensure the **type and mix of new housing provides choice**, supports economic growth and meets housing needs and demand. This will reflect the diversity of urban and rural communities and the needs for affordable, family and prestige housing.
- To secure the **improvement and maintenance of existing housing** so that it meets required standards, investing in sustainable neighbourhoods.
- To promote good management and targeted housing investment to address **specific community and social needs**, including an ageing population and the needs of minority communities; this will be

integrated with the Supporting People programme and promote greater community involvement.

3.1.5 The Housing Strategy has been developed based both on the key legal, policy changes and evidence-based assessments of need. This has seen the development of 14 key priorities for action grouped under the 4 objectives. Each priority is supported by number of key actions.

3.1.6 The delivery of the Housing Strategy will be monitored through the Council's performance monitoring framework and an annual update will be produced linked to the publication the Corporate Plan.

4. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The development and adoption of the Housing Strategy 2006/7 –2007/8 has no direct resource implications.

5. **CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 Consultation has occurred with residents, partners and other stakeholders on the development of the Strategy.

6. **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Links to Corporate Ambitions / Values

The Community Strategy Outcomes include a Borough with Strong Communities where residents can access a good choice of high quality housing. The Council's ambitions, which mirror those in the Community Strategy outcomes and are articulated through the Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan. Our ambitions include delivering a Borough with Strong Communities the Housing Strategy has a direct contribution to the delivering these ambitions.

Risk Management

The delivery of the discrete elements of the Hosuing Strategy will be subject to appropriate risk management controls.

Health and Safety

There are no additional health and safety implications over and above those for existing staff of the Borough Council.

Equality and Diversity

Full account has been taken of the Borough Council's obligation to promote equity and diversity in the development of the Strategy. Copies of the Strategy will be made available in other languages, braille and formats if requested

Legal & Constitutional

“No new implications have been identified”.

7. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no overview and scrutiny implications.

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Background Papers:

Feedback on Sedgefield Borough Councils Housing Strategy and Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account submission 2003
Fit for Purpose Housing Strategy Guidance Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Audit Commission Housing Key Lines of Enquiry

Examination by Statutory Officers	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>