

Report of: Community Housing Business Manager

To: Executive Board

Date: 19th February 2007

Item No:

Title of Report : Approval of three housing strategies, Older People, BME and Private Sector



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: To ask the Board to recommend Council to adopt the housing strategies



Key decision: Yes

Portfolio Holder: Patrick Murray

Scrutiny Responsibility: Housing

Area(s) affected: All

Report Approved by

Portfolio Holder: Patrick Murray

Legal: Jeremy King

Finance: David Higgins

Strategic Director: Michael Lawrence



Policy Framework: Housing strategy



Recommendation(s):



That Executive Board recommends Council to adopt:
the Older People's Housing Strategy
the Black and Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy
the Private Sector Housing Strategy



Background.

1. The main Housing Strategy (2005-2008) identified the need to develop more detailed specific strategies for older people, private sector and black and ethnic minority communities. These were developed during 2006 and have been through a consultation process. They have since been amended and members are now being asked to approve for these to be adopted by the Council.
2. The strategies have been presented to members during 2006 and are not attached to this report. The report highlights any changes and includes copies of the action plans (Appendices 1-3). Full copies of the strategies can be viewed in the Members Room or obtained from the report author or committee services.

The Consultation Process

3. The strategies have been through a consultation process, which was carried out between August and November 2006.
4. The consultation process included the following:
 - Publication of the strategies in full and summary versions and guidance questions on the web site',
 - Publicity about the strategies in 'Your Oxford', 'Tenants Issue' and a leaflet distributed at various venues.
 - Presentation of the strategies at area committees
 - Consultation with key stakeholders at the SHOP city housing conference
 - Presentation to Pensioners Forum
 - Attendance at the African Descendants Support Group
 - Focus groups with the Chinese Community Group and the Asian Women's Carers Group
 - Circulation to the Landlords Forum

Changes made to the strategies as a result of the process

Older People's Strategy

5. One of the main concerns has been the loss of the Staying Put Scheme(Oxfords Home Improvement Agency) due to the funding difficulties. The strategy recommends that the Council needs to find a comparable service to replace this.
6. The sheltered scheme appraisal may mean disruption for Oxford City Councils tenants. People were keen that this process fully involves the tenants concerned.

7. It is also important that this appraisal takes place within the context of what other providers are doing with their own stock. SHOP are organising for providers to meet to map provision and to include plans for individual schemes.

Black and Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy

8. The strategy highlights the need for more research into the needs of different cultural and faith based groups. An idea put forward in the consultation process was to use trained researchers from within different communities to undertake this work. However the feasibility of taking on such a big project would need to be explored.
9. The primary need that came out of the focus groups was for better initial advice and information through translations and through holding surgeries at established support groups.

Private Sector Strategy

10. The consultation generally supported the Council applying to run a discretionary licensing scheme.
11. More emphasis should be placed on supporting tenants –perhaps as part of a Landlords Incentive Scheme.
12. We need to be sure that work to improve decency is incorporated in to the climate change action plan and that work done is included in measuring our progress towards SAP rating targets.
13. Older people may be willing to take up loan based assistance providing we can offer good advice and schemes that people could trust. We will therefore investigate loan based assistance schemes as part of our revised Financial Assistance Policy.

Conclusion

14. The points above have been incorporated into the action plans. We now need to ensure the action points are implemented and we are suggesting that SHOP oversees the implementation of the strategies.
15. Council is now being requested to formally adopt the strategies

Appendix one: Older People's Housing Strategy Action Plan

Appendix two: Black and Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Action Plan

Appendix three: Private Sector Strategy Action Plan

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Background papers: Full copies of the Strategies have been placed in the Members' Room or can be obtained from the report author

