

Report of: Head Community Housing and Community Development

To: Executive Board

Date: 21st April 2008



Item No:

Title of Report : Draft Housing Strategy 2008-2011



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: This report presents the draft Housing Strategy 2008-11 
 seeks approval for wider consultation.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Patrick Murray

Scrutiny Responsibility: Housing



Area(s) affected: All

Report Approved by:



Patrick Murray (Portfolio Holder)

Jeremy King (Legal)



Paul Fogden (Finance).





Policy Framework: None



Recommendation(s): That the draft Housing Strategy 2008-11 is approved for wider consultation



1. The Housing Strategy (circulated separately) sets out the aims and  objectives for strategic housing services provided by the Council. It is a follow-on document from the existing Housing Strategy 2005-08. This  strategy is the over-arching document for housing services in the Council with the HRA Business Plan, Homelessness, Older Persons Housing, BME and Private Sector Housing strategies sitting beneath it.

2. Progress with the Housing Strategy (2005-08) action plan has been good. This is outlined in the draft strategy in section 2.4 and Appendix 5. Principal outcomes for each objective from this strategy have been:

2.1. Increase the supply of housing for people in need: 551 (net) new affordable homes have been provided in the City (2004/05 to 2006/07).

2.2. Improve the affordability of housing in Oxford: detailed Housing Market Assessment undertaken identifying a clear picture of housing need and affordability in the City.

2.3. Increase opportunities for choice and mobility within the housing stock: Oxford Register of Affordable Housing (ORAH) established 2006 & Choice Based Lettings (CBL) launched 2008.

2.4. Improve the condition of Housing in Oxford: HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) licensing introduced.

2.5. Reduce homelessness in Oxford: Households living in temporary accommodation reduced by 45% and homelessness acceptances reduced by 47%.

2.6. Improve housing and support services for all those who need to use them: Physical improvements to temporary accommodation.

2.7. Improve the environment on estates and in areas of decline: Redevelopment of Rose Hill underway.

2.8. Develop housing strategy and policy to support service improvement: Clear affordable housing focus in community and corporate strategies.

2.9. Address the financial pressures on the Council for housing related services: Ongoing and additional Government grant funding for homelessness services.

3. The proposed aims and objectives of this new Housing Strategy 2008-11 are:

3.1. Aims

The Housing Strategy 2008 to 2011 aims to ensure housing:

- Meets needs and offers choice;
- Is affordable;
- Is high quality;
- Reflects the City's diversity;
- Is delivered in partnership, and;
- Is managed efficiently.

3.2. Objectives

The objectives of this Housing Strategy are to continue to:

- Meet Housing Need in Oxford:
 - Provide more affordable housing to meet current and future needs in and around the City.
 - Prevent and reduce homelessness.
- Help Vulnerable People:
 - Address the housing needs of vulnerable people and tackle social exclusion.
- Improve the housing stock and services and support communities:
 - Improve the quality of the existing housing stock across the City;
 - Improve housing services, choice and quality of life on estates;
- Plan for the future:
 - Improve our understanding of housing needs to develop and implement housing strategy, and;
 - Ensure housing services offer value for money.

4. Wide ranging consultation has already taken place to inform the development of this Housing Strategy. This is outlined in detail in the draft document in section 2.9 and Appendix 1. The main consultation activities to date have been:

- Resident questionnaire via the City Council's Talkback Panel.
- Service user questionnaires for people in temporary accommodation, users of homelessness and housing options services and Council and RSL (Registered Social Landlord) tenants including those on the waiting list.
- Questionnaires to partner organisations (RSLs, voluntary sector, etc).
- Focus groups (service users, Community Housing staff and managers and partner organisations).
- Meetings with members.
- Stakeholder conference.

5. Key findings were:

5.1. The main areas of concern for housing in Oxford were:

- High house prices and rents

- Lack of affordable rented housing for families and singles & couples.
- Long waiting lists for affordable rented homes.
- Street homelessness or rough sleeping.

5.2. Peoples priorities for addressing these problems were:

- Build more family sized (3+ bedrooms) and smaller (1 or 2 bedrooms) homes to meet demand.
- Build new homes in or immediately around the City, and;
- Build more homes away from the City in surrounding towns.
- The responses for the latter two options varied between respondent type with the Talkback Panel opting, by a very slight margin only (1%), in favour of 'away from the City', and service users opting by a large margin for 'in or near the City'.

5.3. Specific issues raised by respondents included:

- More and better housing services for young people.
- Affordability of private rented housing for those in work.
- Ensure there are good links between housing and support for vulnerable people.
- The condition of housing (public or private sector).

6. These findings have directly informed the draft Housing Strategy aims and objectives and action plan.

7. Additional consultation is planned for as many individuals, partners and stakeholders as possible subsequent to approval to consult.

8. Recommendation – that the Board approves the draft Housing Strategy 2008-11 for wider consultation.

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Background papers: None

