

To: City Executive Board
Date: 11th September 2013
Report of: Head of Housing and Property
Title of Report: HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN – PERIODIC REVIEW

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide the City Executive Board with an update of the Council's progress against the Housing Strategy Action Plan priorities and to revise future Housing Strategy Action Plan targets

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons

Policy Framework: Housing Strategy 2012-15

Recommendation(s): The City Executive Board is asked:

- (1) To note the progress made against the tasks in the Housing Strategy Action Plan;
- (2) To revise Housing Strategy Action Plan targets as detailed in Appendix B; and
- (3) To report progress annually to City Executive Board

Appendices

- A - Progress against Housing Strategy Action Plan Targets
- B - Housing Strategy Action Plan – Revised Programme
- C - Risk Assessment
- D - Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction

- 1 When the Council adopted the Housing Strategy for 2012-2015 it requested six month reviews on progress. This report sets out performance against the Housing Strategy Action Plan priority tasks to date.
- 2 The targets are distributed between the five Housing Strategy priorities which are:
 - Provide more affordable housing
 - Prevent Homelessness
 - Address Housing Needs of Vulnerable People and Communities
 - Improve Housing Conditions
 - Improve quality and effectiveness of housing services

Progress to date

- 3 All Housing Strategy targets were assessed against the councils RAG (Red, Amber, Green) definitions as at end June 2013 looking at progress, these are shown in Appendix A. The overwhelming majority are either completed or are rated 'Green' (on target). Those that are rated 'Amber' (significant issues) or 'Red' (unlikely to deliver on time, to budget, or to requirements) are annotated with an explanation as to why the targets have not yet been achieved.

A brief overview of progress against each priority is outlined below:

4 **Provide More Affordable Housing**

- The Affordable Housing Programme target for 2012/13 was achieved together with planning policy work to support the provision of new affordable housing.
- A new Empty Homes Strategy was adopted in February 2013 and the empty homes targets were met.
- Delivery of the current affordable housing programme is on target

5 **Prevent Homelessness**

- A new Homelessness Strategy, a policy for Discharge of Duty into Private Rented Sector and a revised housing Allocations Scheme for consultation were approved by CEB in February 2013
- A report to CEB (Sept 11) has been prepared to make recommendations with regard to the supply of accommodation for homelessness prevention

6 **Address Housing Needs of Vulnerable People**

- There have been significant changes to the organisation of the Supporting People programme within the County Council. Officers continue to work in partnership, to re-commission services, and to maintain adequate service provision for

vulnerable persons in Oxford and across Oxfordshire. A review of Homeless Hostel provision is currently underway for re-commissioned services to start from April 2015.

- A review of the No Second Night Out (NSNO) initiative was undertaken six months after the launch of the new approach, involving all relevant commissioning stakeholders, and changes made to the operation of the scheme.

7 Improve Housing Conditions

- There has been good progress in developing the council's role as a landlord in terms of maintaining decent homes standard within its own stock, and updating stock information to inform future priorities
- There has been good progress on addressing poor standards in the private rented sector. This includes meeting challenging targets with respect to HMO licensing. Research has been undertaken in relation to the private rented sector in 2012/13 and updated private sector stock condition information is being obtained.

8 Improve quality, cost effectiveness and efficiency

- A fundamental review of arrangements for tenant engagement was undertaken with a revised Resident Involvement Strategy approved by CEB (Nov 12). New structures and approaches to resident engagement are being implemented in 2013/14.
- A fundamental service review for repairs and planned maintenance is nearing completion and a review of the tenancy management function completed.
- Following adoption of the 30 year HRA Business Plan in 2011/12 and the subsequent refresh of the budget in February 2013, good progress has been made against the assumptions, to ensure that it will support the Council's ambitions with regard to building new affordable homes, investment in the existing stock and the delivery of first class landlord services.

Review of future Housing Strategy Targets

- 9 The Housing Strategy approved in April 2012 stated that the Housing Strategy Action Plan will be reviewed with partners and actions refreshed in September 2013 – the mid point of the Strategy.
- 10 Officers have reviewed priorities and actions and conclude that the Housing Strategy Action Plan targets remain highly relevant. However, there is a need to re-schedule or make minor amendments to targets in some cases. Details of the proposed revisions are contained in Appendix B.
- 11 Following consideration by City Executive Board, consultation will be undertaken with partners on the proposed amendments, and to solicit comments to help refresh the Strategy Action Plan for the remainder of

the period. It is proposed that a report is prepared for CEB in December 2013 with regard to this refresh and to approve the new plan. As to progress, this report proposes an annual report to Council, not six months as Council requested. The Board Member and officers feel that an annual progress report will be sufficient, noting that as and if necessary Scrutiny has the right to ask for more frequent progress reports.

Level of Risk

- 12 A risk register is attached as Appendix C. It should be noted that risks associated with specific projects and work programmes identified in the action plan are identified and addressed in the relevant project documentation for those projects /programmes.

Environmental Impact

- 13 The Housing Strategy 2012 to 2015 does not have any explicit environmental impacts in itself. Specific projects identified in the Housing Strategy Action Plan will have environmental impacts, specifically the provision of additional housing to meet housing needs. These environmental impacts associated with specific projects and work programmes identified in the action plan are identified and addressed in the relevant project documentation for those projects / programmes.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 14 The original EIA is attached as Appendix D and is still current. The Housing Strategy and Action Plan are very specifically targeted at meeting the housing needs of the most vulnerable people in Oxford and as such no adverse impacts on any equalities group are expected as a result of this strategy.

Financial Implications

- 15 Any financial implications for specific projects and work programmes identified in the action plan are identified and addressed in the relevant project documentation for those projects /programmes.
- 16 In February 2013 the Council approved its General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan and Housing Business Plan for the medium term. Included within both plans were the financial implications of meeting all actions within the Housing Strategy. Provision has specifically made within the HRA Business Plan for :
 - Delivery of new housing at Barton
 - The delivery of 112 new dwellings over the coming two years, part funded by HCA grant
 - On-going repairs, maintenance and refurbishment to its stock of council dwellings, including the tower blocks

- Management related costs in providing all landlord services to our tenants
- 17 In the General Fund Budget there is provision for the costs of homelessness and providing other private sector housing advice. No new financial implications are brought forward by this report.
- 18 There are financial pressures both on the HRA and the General Fund but so far these have been containable, through prudent estimating and the use of contingencies. However there are risks around homelessness building, due to reducing supply of available accommodation and increasing demand arising from welfare reforms, which have the potential of causing some concern. Officers are currently examining a number of options to address these issues and will come forward to CEB (Sept 13) with recommendations.
- 19 Officers will continue to robustly monitor the Councils budgetary position and an update of this position will be presented to Members during the financial year.

Legal Implications

- 20 The Local Government Act 2003 requires local housing authorities to have in place a Housing Strategy for the district.
- 21 Meeting the Council's statutory housing obligations is reflected in the objectives of the Housing Strategy, including statutory homelessness duties; provision of housing advice; and landlord responsibilities.

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List of background papers:

None

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