

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

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide the City Executive Board with a refresh of the Action Plan for the second term of the Housing Strategy.

Key decision: Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons

Policy Framework: Housing Strategy 2012-15

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

(1) To note the report on consultation

(2) To approve the updated Housing Strategy Action Plan targets in Appendix A.

Appendices

- A - Housing Strategy Action Plan (as updated)
- B - Risk Register
- C - Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction

- 1 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. A report was presented to CEB on 11th September 2013 following which consultation was carried out with stakeholders inviting comments and suggestions for additional measures. This report gives the updated position following

consultation.

- 2 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 A. Further measures have been added following consultation (see overview of additional measures below)
- 3 The targets are distributed between the five Housing Strategy priorities which remain as:
 - 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

- 4 Following consideration by City Executive Board, consultation was undertaken with stakeholders on the proposed amendments during late September and October 2013, to obtain comments and refresh the Strategy Action Plan for the remainder of the period. The Action Plan has been updated to include new measures for Objectives 1, 3 and 4 as detailed.
- 5 Stakeholder consultation was carried out from late September to mid October 2013 with the following groups; Oxford Strategic Partnership, Registered Providers, Council Members, Single Homelessness Group, and Policy Officer Group. No comments were received from external stakeholders during the consultation period. All stakeholders consulted received a copy of the Revised Housing Strategy Action Plan and a copy of the Housing Strategy evidence base.
- 6 A brief overview of additional measures as proposed against each priority is outlined below:

Objective One: Provide More Affordable Housing

- Consideration of further development schemes and a bid for HCA funding in the AHP programme round 2015-18
- Sheltered Housing review- due to start January 2014 with completion in April 2015

Objective Two: Prevent Homelessness

There are no additional measures for this objective, however new approaches are being looked at for access to suitable PRS accommodation in out-of-Oxfordshire locations, which is covered in the Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018.

Objective Three: Address Housing Needs of Vulnerable People

- Review Disabled Facilities Grant provision and services following changes to Central Government grant.

Objective Four: Improve Housing Conditions

- Review approach to regulation of the Private Rented Sector - Develop evidence base and consider existing approaches to regulating PRS
- Extend insulation upgrade for OX3 and OX4 under the 'Warming Oxford' pilot
- Complete the Asset Management Strategy
 - Complete stock condition survey (of OCC owned housing)
 - Resident Engagement
 - Analysis of condition survey and resident comments
 - Completion of Asset Management Strategy
 - Revised Stock Investment Plan
- Deliver the Annual Investment Programme in Council Housing and Estates
 - Deliver the 13/14 and 14/15 Greater Estates Programme
 - Deliver the Tower Block refurbishment and improvements to project plan

Objective Five: Improve quality, cost effectiveness and efficiency

There are no additional measures under this objective.

Level of Risk

- 7 A risk register is attached as Appendix B. 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

- 8 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

- 9 The original EIA is attached as Appendix C 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 Housing Strategy Action Plan refresh

Financial Implications

- 10 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.
- 11 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 been 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
- 12 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.
- 13 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 and the transfer of assets from the HRA to the General Fund (as agreed by CEB in Sept 13). However there are risks around homelessness levels increasing, 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.
- 14 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

- 15 The Local Government Act 2003 requires local housing authorities to have in place a Housing Strategy for the district.
- 16 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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0.5

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