



Report To: Housing Portfolio Holder
Lead Officer: Director of Housing

21 March 2018

Affordable Homes Service Plan 2017/18 and 2018/19

Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update on the progress of the 2017/18 Service Plan and to seek approval for the 2018/19 Affordable Homes Service Plan.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder because it sets out the proposed key actions for the Affordable Homes Service for the forthcoming year.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder approves the Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2018/19 (**Appendix 2**) and notes the progress to date on existing projects within the 2017/18 Service Plan.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The draft Service Plan actions for 2018/19 set out in Appendix 2 have been developed taking into account the key aims and objectives of the Council, central government direction and the forthcoming priorities for the Affordable Homes Service.

Background

5. Draft actions to be included in the service plan for 2018/19 were agreed at the Housing Portfolio Holder meeting on 18th October 2017. These have now been incorporated into the Affordable Homes service plan template for monitoring throughout the year.

Considerations

6. As part of this process, the current service plan for 2017/18 has been reviewed on its progress as outlined below:

P1 – Housing Strategy 2017-2022 (Cfwd)
To work with Cambridge City Council and the Combined Authority to draft a joint Housing Strategy with Cambridge City.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scope for Strategy approved by Shared Housing Board on 22/5/2017• Workshops held with officers and tenants of both South Cambs DC and Cambridge City during July/August 2017• Strategy currently being drafted with a view for internal consultation during March/April 2018• External consultation to be carried out May/July 2018• Expected adoption of Strategy by September 2018
P2 – Tenant Profiling Project (Cfwd)
To obtain robust and up to date information on the profile of our tenants to enable us to understand the impact of

welfare changes and help mitigate any negative impacts.

- Project commenced in March 2017 with just over 1100 questionnaires completed. The commitment of officers within Neighbourhood Services to support the project by carrying out home visits alongside their day job is commendable but there has been slippage in the original timeframe we set to complete the programme of visits.
- The majority of tenants we have met with so far have expressed their gratitude towards the team taking the time to engage with them and seek their views. There are great examples of us supporting tenants to seek additional benefits, giving advice around fuel poverty, signposting to services that tenants were not previously aware of and supporting community events so that tenants who were expressing concerns around loneliness could come together.
- To provide this level of engagement, it is recognised that more resources are required to support the project and a bid has been made to have an additional officer to work alongside those already taking part. The original timeframe for the completion of the project has now been extended into a rolling programme.

P3 – Fixed Term Tenancies

To prepare for any policy changes in relation to fixed term tenancies when further details are published

- SCDC participated in DCLG workshop to help shape and influence proposed regulations relating to fixed term tenancies – March/April 2017
- Project now on hold – waiting for further confirmation from DCLG on proposals.

P4 – Joint Services (Cwfd)

To explore new and efficient ways of delivering core front line services.

- There has been a pilot of shared housing management services with Cambridge City Council for the past year. In that time there has developed a greater understanding of both Councils which has allowed for sharing of best practice in housing. The service at this moment will not be proceeding towards a shared service but both Councils will continue to build on the links that have been made and share best practice.
- The review of the Sheltered Housing Communal Review has commenced with a pilot of the initial review reporting to the Housing Portfolio Holder in March 2018 to seek permission to role out the project.
- Work with Housing Associations is continuing as South Cambridgeshire District Council is represented at the Communities Theme Group which is comprised of all active housing associations in the area. Its remit is to establish where housing associations can work in partnership with Councils to add value to existing and new communities.
- Discussions regarding Shire Homes providing housing management services to other agencies are on going.
- All savings required from the HRA have been identified

P5 – Social Value

To understand our community better to enable us to help improve economic, social and environmental well-being

- Work on Social Value is progressing with the greatest impact being made in the employment of a Neighbourhood Support Officer employed by Mears Group and embedded into the Neighbourhood Services Team. The role is dedicated to supporting tenants who have been identified as having significant financial issues. The role is proving very effective at engaging with and assisting those households who have been difficult to engage with.
- A Community Impact Assessment Tool has been developed and piloted and will be contrasted against other tools available through other organisations such as HACT.
- The Through the Door project is being taken forward by the Communities Team.
- South Cambridgeshire District Council is integrated into the “Think Family” and “Early Help Initiatives” lead by Cambridgeshire County Council

P6 – Homelessness Mitigation (Cwfd)

To ensure the Council understands and monitors the risks of increasing homelessness following policy changes in welfare reform, the spending review, Housing and Planning Bill and the Homeless Reduction Bill..

- Successful training for external agencies in relation to the new duties and shared responsibilities set out in the Homeless Reduction Act – delivered February 2018.
- Successful in-depth training for Housing Advice and Options staff in relation to new duties set out in Homeless Reduction Act – delivered February 2018.
- All training delivered collaboratively with neighbouring councils to ensure cost savings.
- Recognition of the successful partnership working arrangements supporting the Trailblazer

<p>project. Selected to participate in a national evaluation of the project – April 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing joint work with Sub Regional Homeless Leads and partner agencies to take forward revised pathways and protocols for accessing accommodation. • Refreshed timetable for publishing a new homeless strategy. Homeless Review currently under way. Homeless Strategy to be published in Q2 of 2018/19.
<p>P7 – Private Sector Leasing Scheme</p> <p>To develop an in-house PSL scheme that replaces the existing King Street scheme to provide access to affordable accommodation in the private rented sector.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 properties let. • 3 confirmed properties in the pipeline. • Up to 5 additional properties in negotiation.
<p>P8 – Purpose built shared accommodation</p> <p>Assess the need for shared accommodation in view of welfare reforms and changes to LHA on social rents and look at development options for this type of accommodation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project not taken forward given the change in proposals for including social rents within the LHA criteria which would have meant that a single person would only qualify for the shared accommodation room rate. As this is no longer happening, the preference is to continue to develop one bedroom accommodation rather than shared.
<p>P9 – High Value Sales & 1:1 replacement programme</p> <p>Review the options to help mitigate the impacts from the potential sale of high value Council properties.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project postponed until further information is available from government on the proposals for high value sales. • As there is still no secondary legislation in place for the policy, the decision has been taken as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy to defer the assumption of any payment until at least April 2019.
<p>P10 – Devolution Housing Delivery</p> <p>To establish a framework to enable delivery of an additional 2,000 new affordable housing starts during the five year period commencing April 2017.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework completed and pipeline of schemes handed over to the Combined Authority March 2018 • Pipeline representing around 85% of the target
<p>P11 – Housing System Procurement (Cwfd)</p> <p>To undertake a procurement exercise for a fully integrated Housing IT System.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenders were returned from 3 suppliers, one of which was disallowed because it did not reach the required standard. • A joint assessment panel has been convened with Cambridge City and assessments of the tenders have been completed. • Site visits are being carried out to reference sites • Financial and technical assessments are being carried out by 3C • Staff demonstrations of the two systems have been arranged for w/c 19th March both here and at City. • Discussions will be undertaken with the suppliers to clarify any technical points • It is hoped that a decision will be made in April 2018.
<p>P12 – CLT Umbrella</p> <p>To enable community-led development for affordable housing to meet local needs as an alternative model of delivery</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2017 - CLT East appointed to provide advice and support to community groups on behalf of South Cambridgeshire DC and Cambridge City • September 2017 - Launch of the community-led housing grant through the Parish Forum. Groups with an interest in developing their own affordable housing for the community can apply for up to £4,500 in grant funding to cover start-up costs. • September 2017 - Publicity of scheme through Members and Parish Bulletin and Cambridge News • November 2017 - Approval of first community-led development grant fund of £4,500 to Cottenham Community Land Trust • CLT East currently working with 15 communities who are interested in taking forward community-led development • Publication of a community-led strategy on target for July 2018

P11 – Self Build (Cwfd)

To comply with the new statutory requirement to promote self build and provide a self sustaining sub-regional service, as well as maximising HRA assets where there is the potential for self build plots

- Promotion of register ongoing – currently 788 people interested in self build registered.
- Workshop held for self builders on 5th July 2017 - bringing together leading industry experts to help people learn more about new self build legislation and regulations, modular building construction methods and practical building tips.
- Work is progressing well in preparing and marketing parcels of HRA land that provide self-build opportunities that will help facilitate the delivery of new homes in the district.
- Officers have identified HRA sites with the potential to provide in the region of 100 self-build plots in total. A rolling programme of potential plots is currently being progressed, with the first single plot having now been sold. Outline planning approval has been gained for 7 of the plots, which will be marketed in early 2018 and a further 4 are in the planning process with committee dates scheduled.
- The authority has now recruited to a dedicated post to take forward work in respect of the sale of these plots.

Options

7. The Portfolio Holder is requested to approve the key actions identified for the 2018/19 Service Plan, as set out below and at Appendix 2, and to suggest changes or additions where required.

Ref	Project	Objective
P1	Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy	To work with Cambridge City and the Greater Cambridge Partnership to draft a joint Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy
P2	Community Impact & Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of the Communal Room Review• Health & Safety internal review (HRA)
P3	Homelessness Mitigation	To ensure the Council understands and monitors the risks of increasing homelessness following policy changes
P4	Housing & Planning Policy Review and Updates	To have up to date policies in relation to housing following the adoption of the Local Plan and Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy
P5	Greater Cambridge Partnership Housing Investment Plan	Work with Greater Cambridge Partnership (CGP) to provide detail for 10-50 million investment proposal for keyworker housing
P6	Options for New Housing Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To continue to deliver council new build affordable homes• To comply with the new statutory requirements to promote self-build and provide a self sustaining sub regional service, as well as maximising HRA assets where there is the potential for self-build plots• To begin a project to explore modular construction
P7	Projects to support the Health and Independence of Older People	Making housing choices available that help to maintain the health and independence of older people
P8	InTouch Project	To take forward the Digital Inclusion Strategy within Housing Services, linking to financial inclusion, communications and loneliness.
P9	Local Housing Company Group Structure and delivery of Cambourne High Street	Work up a business case for the establishment of a Local Housing Company Group Structure in order to take forward development opportunities.

Implications

8. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -
9. Appendix 2 details the additional resources required for each project. Where extra financial resources are required these have been incorporated within the HRA Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 22 February 2018.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

10. The Tenant Participation Group have been kept informed of the key challenges and priorities facing the housing service in the coming year.

Effect on Strategic Aims

11. The Affordable Homes service plan is important for all four of the Council's main strategic aims.

Background Papers

None.

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