

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

21 March 2012

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AFFORDABLE HOMES DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2012/13

Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with the final draft of the Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2012/13
2. This is not a key decision

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Portfolio notes the service plan attached at Appendix C.

Background

4. The draft service plan actions were agreed at the Portfolio Holder meeting November 2011.
5. The introduction of the self financing regime for council housing from April 2012 means that a separate 30 year HRA Business Plan has been prepared for 2012/13 onwards and has been agreed by Council in February 2012.
6. There is a linked Asset Management Strategy that sets out the Councils approach to managing its homes and other properties, which also covers a 30 year period. Arising from the Asset Management Strategy, the Five Year Housing Maintenance Plan sets out the immediate planned expenditure to maintain the Council's homes.
7. The service plan is set in the context of an overarching Housing Strategy which is also being presented to the Portfolio Holder in March 2012.

Considerations

8. The Service Plan addresses the key actions of the Council which include:
 - Improved resident participation
 - Implementation of changes needed to maintain a quality sheltered housing service
 - The development of new affordable homes within the district.
9. The following items have been added to the service plan actions since the November 2011 meeting:
 - **Value for Money**- the existing VfM strategy action plan needs refreshing during the year to take account of progress made and to realign it with the new guidance from the housing regulator and other developing best practice. The refreshed action plan will be reported to the Portfolio Holder in March 2013.

- **Our staff** – revised induction programme. In recognition of the importance of catering for the needs of staff within the service a new theme, ‘Our Staff’ has been launched within Affordable Homes. This will link work within Affordable Homes to corporate initiatives such as the Organisational Development Strategy. The first task will be to ensure that there is an appropriate induction programme in place for new starters that links with the corporate induction programme.

10. The following matters have been removed from the list of service plan actions for the reasons noted:

- **Robson Court** – the hostel has been successfully transferred to Sanctuary Housing in March 2012. The Council will continue to work in partnership with the housing association as the replacement is built. This is now a mainstreamed service delivery project and not a separate service improvement project.
- **Welfare reform** – a number of projects are underway both within the Council, working with colleagues in Housing Benefit and Finance and with other councils such as the County Council and Cambridge City Council to monitor and respond to welfare benefit changes. This work will continue during the year but is not at this point a specific service improvement project.

Options

11. The Portfolio Holder is requested to consider these proposed actions and to suggest changes or additions if required.

Implications

12. Financial	There are financial dimensions to all of these projects but there is no significant new funding required other than that provided for by the HRA Business Plan. The proposed changes to welfare benefits have potentially significant implications for the income stream for both the HRA (rents) and the Council (Council Tax).
Legal	Some of the proposed legislative changes have legal implications e.g. changes to tenure.
Staffing	The Affordable Homes Staffing restructure report was agreed the Housing Portfolio Holder in January 2012 and endorsed by Council in February 2012. A number of new posts are to be recruited to in 2012 to provide the right level of resource to deliver the housing service.
Risk Management	A number of risk logs will be developed for each project and the overall Affordable Homes risk register amended.
Equality and Diversity	Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on each policy change as it is developed.
Equality Impact Assessment completed	No NA
Climate Change	The Warm Homes Strategy has direct implications for the Climate Change agenda.

Consultations

13. The service plan has been produced with the help and participation of the Tenant Participation Group.

Consultations with Children & Young People

14. None

Effect on Strategic Aims

15. The affordable housing programme is one of the key roles of the Council. Building new homes is essential to ensure households in housing need have safe and healthy accommodation

Conclusions / Summary

16. This report sets the key changes to the draft service plan since the key themes were presented to the Portfolio Holder in November 2011.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None

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