

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder

17 October 2012

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Housing

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### AFFORDABLE HOMES DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2013/14

#### **Purpose**

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update on the revised Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2013/14
2. This is not a key decision

#### **Recommendations**

3. That the Housing Portfolio endorses the service plan actions identified in this report and suggests additions to or amendments to these service plan actions if required.

#### **Background**

4. The existing Affordable Homes Service Plan covers the period 2012/13 - 2013/14 and includes a number of service plan projects intended to run over a 2 or 3 year timeframe. This is therefore a refresh of the service plan designed mainly to introduce new service plan actions to address external challenges.
5. The Affordable Homes service plan differs to other service plans within the Council as it is closely linked to the HRA Business Plan. The introduction of the self financing regime for council housing from April 2012 means that a separate 30 year HRA Business Plan is in place from 2012/13 onwards.
6. There is also a linked Asset Management Strategy that sets out the Council's 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 planned expenditure to maintain the Council's homes and forms part of the HRA Business Plan.
7. The service plan is set in the context of the overarching Housing Strategy 2012 - 2016, which in turn is related to the sub regional housing strategy, which reflects the sub regional strategic housing agenda of the sub regional housing market centred on Cambridge.

#### **Considerations**

8. The service plan takes account of a number of significant changes arising from the national policy changes. These include a new housing regulatory regime from April 2012, proposed changes to Housing Benefit and welfare benefits and changes to allocations and lettings following the Localism Act 2011.
9. In addition the service plan addresses the key actions of the Council which include the commencement of a new build strategy.

## Options

10. The Portfolio Holder is requested to consider these proposed actions and to suggest changes or additions where required. Service plan actions carried forward from last year are not listed in the table and include:

- Developing tenant engagement in particular the setting up of tenant led scrutiny.
- Delivering the Warm Homes Strategy.
- Homelink developments including the private sector module
- Bidding for/implementation of new Supporting People contract for older people.
- Robson Court (Waterbeach) redevelopment
- Robinson Court (Gamlingay) redevelopment

**Table 1**

<b>Council Aim</b>	<b>Service Plan Action</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
1	1. Increase supply of temporary accommodation	To reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation by the Council.  The project will need to link with other initiatives such as the Empty Homes Strategy and the New Build Strategy but also needs to explore all available options and develop an action plan.	Sue Carter/Heather Wood	Activities will run throughout the year. There will be an initial review in November 2013 to assess the effectiveness of the programme and identify the strategy being taken.
1	2. Improve joint work on homelessness with the County Council.	To seek ways to better communicate with the County on the issues of mutual concern relating to homeless households. To identify improved ways of using budgets to improve the quality of service to households	Sue Carter/Heather Wood	A review of progress mad will be undertaken by December 2013.

		and potentially reduce cost for both Councils.		
2	3. Explore the setting up of a new delivery vehicle to deliver equity share, market sale and private rented properties.	<p>To address unmet housing need from across a wider set of incomes bands than those identified by affordable housing products. This is important to meet the needs of those on the lowest banding of the housing register and to meet the needs of the growing economy within the district.</p> <p>The Council will need to work in partnership with other public sector bodies which may include the County Council.</p>	Stephen Hills	A scoping paper will be produced June 2013.
2	4. Establish a Council back to work project including a Council led apprenticeship scheme.	<p>To try and mitigate the impact of welfare benefit changes.</p> <p>To promote positive practice amongst all employers within the district.</p>	Anita Goddard	<p>Strategy to be completed by June 2013.</p> <p>Review of progress scheduled for November 2013.</p>
3	5. Complete the build of the Council's first new Council house in the new strategy	The first of the 200 houses in the 2012- 2022 period identified in the New Build Strategy.	Schuyler Newstead	Completion between December 2013 & March 2014.

3	6. Project to consider the options for upgrading and improving the Council homes at Wilford Furlong, Willingham.	To consider the potential redevelopment of the area to improve the energy efficiency and overall quality of the homes.	Schuyler Newstead	Project feasibility to be reported February 2014
3	7. Gypsy and Traveller accommodation Project	To seek funding and sites to help deliver the Council's obligations for Gypsy and traveller accommodation.	Stephen Hills	Progress review scheduled for March 2014.

### Implications

11.	Financial	There are financial dimensions to all of these projects but there is no significant new funding required. 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 staff team has been restructured during 2012 to take account of service changes. No new changes are anticipated.
	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	None

### Consultations

12. The draft service plan has been produced in line with the Housing Strategy which in turn was produced with the help of residents

### Consultations with Children & Young People

13. None

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

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

### **Conclusions / Summary**

15. This report sets out in summary the key drivers that need to be addressed by the 2013/14 service plan. Table One, contains a draft service plan actions list that will be incorporated within the final form of the service plan.

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

None

**Contact Officer:** Stephen Hills- Director of Housing  
Telephone: (01954) 3412