



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

18 March 2015

Affordable Homes Draft Service Plan 2015/16

Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update on the progress of the 2014/15 Service Plan and approval of the 2015/16 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.
- 3.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio Holder approves the Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2015/16 and notes the progress to date on existing projects within the 2014/15 Service Plan.
- 5.

Reasons for Recommendations

6. The draft Service Plan actions for 2015/16 set out in **Appendix 1** 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

7. Draft actions to be included in the service plan for 2015/16 were agreed at the last Housing Portfolio Holder meeting on 15th October 2014. These have now been incorporated into the Affordable Homes service plan template for monitoring throughout the year.

Considerations

8. As part of this process, the current service plan for 2014/15 has been reviewed on its progress as outlined below:

P1 - Wilford Furlong, Willingham
Identify preferred options to help improve the overall environment of Wilford Furlong in consultation with residents, parish council and local members of Willingham.
Project carried forward into service plan 2015/16
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project group established• Undertaken surveys and tenant consultation• Working with Saunders Boston to look at options – to be reported at June Housing PFH meeting
P2 - Robinson Court, Gamlingay
Demolition of bedsit scheme and re-provision of better quality accommodation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with Saunders Boston on scheme design• Consultation event with residents held• Progressing tenants moving out – 13 tenants to decant/move, with the remainder waiting to move

<p>back to Robson Court, Waterbeach upon completion in April 2015.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-app advice currently being sought – planning application to be submitted shortly
<p>P3 - Housing Company Deliver the pilot scheme to establish a housing company (South Cambs Ltd)</p>
<p>Project carried forward into service plan 2015/16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 homes leased from MOD in Waterbeach • 22 properties bought for private rent • 3 properties bought to be sold on • On track to report to Cabinet Nov 2015 with full business appraisal
<p>P4 - Gypsy & Traveller Site Enhancement To increase and enhance Gypsy & Traveller provision in the District</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiations failed to purchase additional site at Chesterton Fen Road – no longer being pursued as an option • Site enhancement at Whaddon delayed due to unforeseen site issues, such as asbestos. HCA have confirmed an extension of time regarding the agreed funding. Start on site March 2015 and complete by December 2015.
<p>P5 - Community Impact Strategy To assess the wider impact of housing services in the community, including digital and financial inclusion through the publication of the community impact strategy</p>
<p>Project completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Impact Statement, Financial Inclusion Strategy and Digital Inclusion Strategy to be considered by Housing Portfolio Holder on 18th March 2015
<p>P6 - Strategy for Homes of non traditional construction To put in place a coherent and timed strategy to deliver those elements needed to address the non traditional properties as well as those properties identified for demolition in the HRA business plan.</p>
<p>Strategy completed and work progressing well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbishment of the Hawksley Bungalows completed November 2014
<p>P7 -Housing Advice & Options Performance Review Undertake a self assessment of the service and make recommendations for improvement</p>
<p>Completed self assessment based on Government Gold Standard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full report on findings and recommendations to be presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder on 18th March 2015.
<p>P8 – Development of new older persons housing related Support Services Implement new visiting support contract for older people and explore potential for enhanced services for older people</p>
<p>New housing support contract (tenure neutral) implemented May 2015.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot of Lifeline Plus launched April 2014. 19 clients supported since implementation. • New project identified for further development of older people support services in 2015/16 service plan - as part of the Commercialisation Programme
<p>P9 – Review of Mears Contract Undertake a mid-term review of the Mears Contract to establish whether to extend the contract</p>
<p>Most of data collection now completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of data underway • Report back planned for late summer
<p>P10 – Disabled Adaptations in HRA stock To review the service provided in relation to disabled adaptations in HRA stock</p>
<p>Policy reviewed and approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder in October 2014.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In process of recruiting an in-house Occupational Therapist to speed up process and provide a more holistic approach
<p>P11 – Estate Inspection To implement a programme of estate inspection, including reviewing the need for a welfare garden scheme</p>
<p>Project complete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estate Inspection programme in place, each HSO's to carry out at least 1 formal inspection per month. These can be backed up with less formal estate walk about's as and when required. Formal inspections are arranged with or sometimes lead by interested parties these include,

Village Voices, Tenant Inspectors, Cllr's and local residents.

- In response to recommendations made as part of the tenant scrutiny exercise, Environmental Improvement Grants were introduced - £15k available for 2014/15. HSO's can make bids for these funds to support estate improvements. Several successful bids have already been made and we are close to exhausting the full £15k.
- For 2015/16 the Grant will be increased to £50k.
- A further recommendation from the tenant scrutiny exercise was to re-introduce the Welfare Garden Scheme wef April 2015. A group of tenant volunteers met with lead officers in November to discuss how the scheme should look and parameters agreed.
- Contract for grounds maintenance – Unhappy with Eastern Procurement process and have taken the opportunity to consider a joint tender with County Council. Currently at PPQ stage and will be assessing submissions shortly to take forward full tender.
- Due to the timescales involved we were not in a position to let a new contract for 1st April and it was considered impractical to let a contract mid season. The contract with SP Landscapes has been extended to see out the current growing season with a view to awarding a new contract from October / November. The delay will also mean we are able to implement the recommendations made by the scrutiny team.

Options

9. The Portfolio Holder is requested to approve the key actions identified for the 2015/16 Service Plan and to suggest changes or additions where required.

Implications

10. 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: -

There are no significant implications arising since the draft actions for the service plan 2015/16 were agreed by the Housing Portfolio Holder on 15 October 2014.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

11. The draft service plan has been produced with the help of the Tenant Participation Group.

Effect on Strategic Aims

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

Background Papers

None.

Report Author: Julie Fletcher – Acting Head of Housing Development & Strategy
Telephone: (01954) 713352