



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

18 November 2015

Affordable Homes Draft Service Plan 2016/17

Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update on the revised Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2016/17
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

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

Reasons for recommendations

4. A list of service projects needs to be agreed in the autumn to enable service and financial planning to be put in place for effective delivery by April 2016. The proposed list represents a continuation of key projects already underway and a series of new projects designed to take forward key developments identified in previous years work and to further enhance the service to customers.

Background

5. The existing Affordable Homes Service Plan includes a number of service plan projects intended to run over a two or three year timeframe. This is therefore a refresh of the service plan designed mainly to introduce new service plan actions to address external challenges.
6. The Affordable Homes service plan differs to other service plans within the Council as it is closely linked to the Housing Revenue Account (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. Following changes to the rents system announced by the Government in the July 2015 Budget statement; a full review of the HRA Business Plan will be undertaken and reported the Council during 2016.
7. 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.
8. 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. The strategy itself is an action for the service plan.

Considerations

9. The service plan addresses the Council's key aims and actions from the Corporate Plan 2015 - 2020, as well as projects contained within the Business Efficiency and Improvement Plan.
10. The July 2015 budget announcement of a reduction in anticipated rent increases requires a fundamental review of the HRA Business Plan. A number of the service plan actions are designed to help feed into that review process.
11. Other Government policy changes such as the reduction in rents, changes to welfare benefits and the proposal to sell council houses to pay for the extension of the Right to Buy to housing associations, also require specific activity to model the impacts and to identify possible mitigations for both the Council and for the Council's tenants.

Options

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

Table 1 Service Plan themes 2016-2017

Topic	Carried Forward or New	Budget implication	Notes
Housing Strategy 2016 - 2021	CF	No extra budget required	Process of review underway but will be completed in in early 2016/17 to allow time for details of new Housing Bill and other Government policy changes to be firmed up.
Wilford Furlong project	CF	Funding required will be addressed when proposal is brought to the Housing Portfolio Holder	Establish delivery phase after PFH decision in March 2016
Tenant profiling project	N	No extra budget required at this stage	We will need to gather more information on our tenants to enable us to understand the impact of welfare changes and help mitigate any negative impacts. In particular we need to understand who might fit within the over £30K household income category.
Tenure models review	N	No extra budget required	We will need to explore if there are more creative ways of using tenancies to help deal with the welfare benefit changes e.g. different types of shared ownership and shared equity.

Delivery models review	N	No extra budget required	Working in partnership with Cambridge City, housing associations and private sector contractors we will need to explore if there are new and efficient ways of delivering core front line services e.g. new partnership models to deliver responsive repairs delivery of housing related support.
Modular housing review	N	No extra budget required	Explore the potential for system build and other modular homes to be able to provide new accommodation for people in housing need at a much cheaper rate than standard housebuilding.
Stock holding options	N	No extra budget required to develop initial thinking	Explore if there are innovative ways by which housing could be built and held in JVs or other bodies that provides greater flexibility to the Council to meet the need for housing that is affordable
New build and Housing Development Agency (HDA)	N	No extra budget required	Work with Cambridge City to launch new housing delivery body to include work needed to comply with new statutory requirement to promote self build
HRA service review	N	No extra budget required	Full VFM review of the HRA to ensure maximum efficiency and identify any potential area of cost savings
Welfare benefit monitoring	N	No extra budget required	Work with Benefits team to monitor roll out and impact of welfare benefit changes in particular to ensure that Council has right resources in place to respond to changes on workload.
Local employers survey	N	May require some funding from General Fund but there will be an opportunity to share this cost with Cambridge City.	Survey all key local employers to get a better understanding of the type and cost of housing needed to maintain their workforces. In partnership with Cambridge City. Work already undertaken by Cambridge Ahead and other bodies will be taken into account when developing the survey.
Asset maximisation project	N	No extra budget required	Review all stock holding and land parcels to identify where a return could be made through market sale.

Implications

Financial

13. There are financial dimensions to all of these projects but there is no significant new funding required at this stage.

Legal

14. A number of these projects will require specialist input from our legal services.

Staffing

15. There are no specific staffing requirements arising from these projects at this stage.

Risk Management

16. Risk logs will be developed for each project.

Equality and Diversity

17. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on each policy change as it is developed.

Consultations (including the Youth Council)

18. The final version of the service plan will be produced with the help of the Tenant Participation Group and the Youth Council.

Effect on Strategic Aims

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

Conclusions / Summary

20. Table 1, contains draft service plan actions list that will be incorporated within the final form of the Affordable Homes service plan to be brought back to the Housing Portfolio Holder in March 2016.

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

None

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