

Washington Area Committee**28th July 2011.****Report of the Chief Executive****Influencing Practice, Policy and Strategy****1. Why has it come to Committee?**

- 1.1. This report offers Members the opportunity for consultation on plans and strategies relevant to the Washington area. It also provides information and updates which will encourage Members to feed into proposals for service or policy change and facilitates the referral of outcomes of issues previously identified.

2. Background

- 2.1 In February 2011 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) introduced the New Homes Bonus. It will reward local authorities for increases in its housing stock, including empty properties that have been brought back into use. This is calculated by subtracting the stock of empty homes in October 2010 from October 2009 to give the net change. The data is taken from the Local Authority Council Tax Base 2009/10 statistical releases. The payment is made for a six year period. Further information is provided at **Annex 1**.
- 3.2 Sunderland City Council in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency developed the Sunderland Housing Priority Plan (SHPP) which included 6 overarching strategic priorities. One of the strategic priorities was related to bringing empty properties back into use. The SHPP was supported by the Empty Property Strategy (2007-2011) which covered the city. This strategy has now ended and a decision has been taken to develop an Empty Property Action Plan (2011-2012) on an area basis to support the SHPP. See **Annex 2**, attached for Members of the Committee to consider and comment upon.

Recommendation:

- To note the information regarding New Homes Bonus.
- To consider the action plan for the Washington area and send any comments or suggestions through the appropriate consultation channels.

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