

**A DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY FOR SUNDERLAND 2017-2022**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER - PLACE**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consult with and get feedback from the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on the draft *Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022* (Appendix 1).

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Currently, there is no up to date Housing Strategy for the City, with the last strategy being produced in 2006 and having a lifespan until 2011. A Housing Strategy Team has now been established within the Strategic Plans and Housing Team and its key role is to ensure that a Citywide Housing Strategy is developed and delivered.
- 2.2 A Housing Strategy is required to:
- provide a clear sense of direction so that partners, residents, officers and ward members are clear what the Council's/City's priorities are in relation to housing;
  - ensure all strategic powers and duties of the Local Housing Authority are undertaken;
  - structure work programmes and housing initiatives around evidence based priorities;
  - provide an evidence base for funding bids and discussions with funding partners;
  - bring Sunderland in line with other regional Local Authorities; and
  - provide links to national, regional and local housing related strategies.
- 2.3 The overarching purpose of the draft *Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017 – 2022* (now referred to as the draft Housing Strategy) is to set out a clear direction, for the next five years around the key priorities for housing in the City. It is a Housing Strategy for the City (rather than solely for the Council) and is reliant on close partnership working for its implementation.
- 2.4 The draft Housing Strategy was written by Council officers, with input from key partners and was drafted in the context of other key policies and plans, such as the emerging Local Plan and the Sunderland Housing Investment Prospectus. It has been supported by the Council's Strategic Housing Board with the recommendation that it is presented to Cabinet in April 2017 to seek its approval to undertake a public consultation on the draft Housing Strategy and to request delegated powers to approve and publish it following consultation.
- 2.5 An Equality Assessment has also been undertaken as part of the strategy development.

### **3. Key Elements of the draft Housing Strategy, Consultation and its Implementation**

3.1 The draft Housing Strategy is divided into three chapters which recognise our three greatest housing priorities. They are:

- maximising housing growth and increasing the choice of housing;
- making the best use of existing homes and improving our neighbourhoods; and
- supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing.

However, each impact on the other and much of the work around these priorities will necessarily be overlapping and interdependent.

3.2 The priorities are all evidence based and the document at Appendix 2 (Evidence Base and Supporting Papers) shows which supporting documents support the draft Housing Strategy. The priorities have been tested with focus groups comprised of key partners.

3.3 The delivery of the *Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022* will be overseen by the Council's Housing Champion, Councillor Graeme Miller, and the Council's Strategic Housing Board, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer for the Place Directorate and progress reports will be provided to both. Updates on delivery can also be provided to the Place Boards and Scrutiny Committees, if necessary.

3.4 Although there is not a statutory requirement to consult publicly on the draft Housing Strategy, there is now a need for it to be made available for a public consultation. The implementation and delivery of the *Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017 – 2022* is reliant on partners working together and, therefore, it is vital that there is "buy-in" to the Housing Strategy from external partners and the public and they agree with its direction and priorities before detailed action plans are drawn up.

3.5 It is proposed that the public consultation will last for 6 weeks from 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017 until 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2017 to co-incide with the consultation on the Council's Core Strategy and Development Plan. The Council's Communication Team is involved in the consultation and will offer advice and support. The consultation will be undertaken using a variety of different consultation tools such as housing developer events, landlord forums, events and briefings with specialist partners (such as Age UK and disability groups) and electronic consultation questionnaires. Partners will also be asked to take the draft Housing Strategy to their own organisational groups. For example, Registered Providers will be asked to take them to tenants' groups and boards.

### **4. Conclusion and Next Steps**

4.1 A new Housing Strategy is required to identify housing priorities within the City. The proposed draft Housing Strategy now identifies these priorities and sets out headline outcomes and actions to address and deliver with partners. These now need to be consulted on.

4.2 Following the public consultation, all representations, including those from this committee, will be considered and the draft Housing Strategy will be revised, where necessary. Once approved, the final version of the *Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022* will be published and distributed among partners and residents. This will

include an electronic version being posted on the Council's website and accompanying PR to publicise the Housing Strategy.

- 4.3 Working groups, comprised of Council officers and key partners, will be established to develop detailed action plans for each chapter for the delivery of the Housing Strategy. These groups will report progress to the Strategic Housing Board and the Housing Champion on a monthly basis. It will also be the role of the working groups to identify resources required to deliver housing priorities and to bid for additional funding if necessary.
- 4.4 Although the Housing Strategy has a life-span of 5 years, due to the frequent changes in housing legislation and because it is a new strategy, it will be reviewed one year after publication and revisions will be made if necessary, after agreement by the Strategic Housing Board and the Housing Champion.

## 5. **Recommendation**

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee note the consultation and provide feedback on the draft Housing Strategy to the Housing Strategy Team.

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