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REPORT

Cllr Cole-Morgan Cabinet Member for Community & Housing

Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2005-2006

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The attached document represents the first review of the council's 'Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy'. The original policy was adopted in July 2003 in response to the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 which required authorities to adopt a Private Sector Renewal Strategy. The Order gives local authorities greater freedom to enable improvements to privately owned dwellings, where owners need financial assistance. The council can be imaginative in how it intends to use these powers to help meet national, regional and local objectives. The policy sets out the direction that the council proposes to take to assist vulnerable people living in private sector housing allowing them to maintain and stay in their homes.

2. Main body text of the report

- 2.1. Whilst it is the house owners responsibility to maintain their properties it is acknowledged that there will be a need for public assistance as houses fall out of repair and people's financial status change. Currently, the council provides a range of grants to help home owners address poor housing condition in the private sector. The new policy recommends that grants will continue, but also proposes that loans and equity release products are introduced to achieve the council's objectives. The new regime of assistance will allow an element of council expenditure to be recycled, increase the type of help that is available and extend the help to a larger number of vulnerable householders. It is envisaged that the assistance will help home owners tackle unacceptable housing conditions and defects and link this with the benchmark defined by the Decent Home Standard.
- 2.2. The strategy sets out the following objectives for improving the stock;
 - To fully utilise private sector housing resources to help meet the housing needs of the district. Including loans and equity release vehicles
 - To target public funds to assist vulnerable groups with reducing unfitness and improving their home to Decent Home standards
 - To improve the energy efficiency of the stock and to reduce fuel poverty
 - Improve partnership working and communication with the local housing commerce sector
 - To enable people to live independently for as long as possible in there own home through the use of aids and adaptations and help in maintaining their home.
- 2.3. The assistance that is proposed will benefit, owner occupier, private tenants and landlords to repair unfit dwellings and meet the decent home Standard. It will allow assistance to be provided to; improve fire safety in houses in multiple occupation; provide adaptations for the disabled; address fuel poverty and energy efficiency; assist with hospital discharge; and bring back long term empty properties back into use.

3. Options for Consideration:

The strategy considers a range of options including 'no change' to 'no assistance'. It is evident that with the increasing percentage of elderly people in the district and the relatively high proportion of such people that are unable to pay for repairs, that some form of assistance would be justifiable to allow them to remain in their homes.

4. Consultation Undertaken:

Formal consultation on this policy has taken place via a county group of officers and locally with Anchor Staying Put, South Wiltshire, Hospital Discharge Team, Age Concern Salisbury District, Wiltshire County Council Social Services and Supporting people Wiltshire.

5. Recommendations:

- 5.1. It is recommended that the members approve the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2005-2006.

6. Background Papers:

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002
Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995
Salisbury Stock Condition Survey 2002

7. Implications:

- 7.1. **Financial** : Contained within existing budget
- 7.2. **Legal** : The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002
- 7.3. **Personnel** : None at this Stage
- 7.4. **Human Rights** : Non at this Stage
- 7.5. **Environmental** : Will help meet the council's responsibilities with regards to Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 and reducing Carbon dioxide emissions.
- 7.6. **Council's Core Values** : It is likely that this proposal will meet a number of SDC core values
 - - Providing an excellent service
 - Supporting the Disadvantaged
- 7.7. **Community Safety** : Risk to the health and well being of householders
- 7.8. **Wards Affected** : All