

Title: **Housing Strategy**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr James – Housing Portfolio Holder**

Reporting Officer: **Graham Hogg, Housing Services Manager**

Purpose

To enable Council to consider the final draft of the housing strategy for 2005-2009.

Background

Housing authorities are required by statute to produce a housing strategy. This is adopted by each council and then submitted to the Government for an assessment to decide if it is “fit for purpose”.

It is also good practice for a housing authority to have a three to five year strategy that sets out its housing priorities and links these to corporate objectives and the aspirations of stakeholders.

West Wiltshire’s current (2003-2008) strategy was found by the Government not to be fit for purpose. It was therefore agreed that the Council would work with the Government Office for the South West to develop a strategy that is fit for purpose. The Government Office for the South West have now agreed that this final draft of the Housing Strategy for 2005 to 2009 is fit for purpose

Housing Strategy Policy Project Group: In 2003 the Cabinet set up a PPG to develop the new housing strategy. This was a very broad group representative of the different stakeholder interests in housing - as well as councillors, it included the following:

- Citizens’ Advice Bureau
- A tenant representative
- Wiltshire Race Equality Council
- Shelter
- West Wiltshire Housing Society
- Wiltshire & Swindon Users Network
- Kavanagh’s (estate and lettings agents)
- Government Office for the South West (GOSW)

A place was also available to Persimmon Homes, however due to other commitments they were unable to attend.

The Council engaged Michael Guest Consulting to assist with the drafting. The document has been through several versions and has been considered three times by GOSW.

Main issues

The most up to date draft of the strategy is available on the Council's website at http://www.westwiltshire.gov.uk/housing/Services/Housing_Strategy/draft-hsg-strategy-2004-09.php, and a printed copy is available in the members' room. The main thrust of the strategy is contained within the Action Plan and this is attached at Appendix A.

Summary of the draft strategy

It has been divided up into the following key sections:

- **Context:** Sets out the corporate objectives, how the document fits in with policy and strategy set at a national, regional and more local level, and how it dovetails with the strategic objectives of partner organisations.
- **Needs:** Identifies the needs of the district across all tenures, and also identifies support needs and the requirements of special needs groups.
- **Resources:** Here we set out the resources we currently have available to meet the needs of the district. In most cases these are resources that our partners provide under the Council's strategic umbrella.
- **Priorities and actions:** This section starts by looking back to analyse how we performed against the action plan in the current strategy. It then looks forward to set out an action plan to 2009. Some of the milestones include:
 - Carry out a district-wide housing needs assessment
 - Research the capacity for moves to affordable home ownership to generate vacancies in existing social rented housing
 - *Deliver the PFI Project*
 - Create a letting pack to encourage local landlords with the take-up of homeless families
 - Resolve the future of the Council's current hostel provision
 - Develop a public service agreement target for a young persons' housing standard to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds receive life skills training, necessary support and do not use B&B
 - Increase from 67% to at least 70% the proportion of vulnerable households in the private sector living in a decent home
 - Undertake risk assessments to identify all houses in multiple occupation falling within the scope of proposed mandatory licensing scheme.
 - Research black and minority ethnic housing needs

Consultation

As well as the detailed discussions that have taken place with stakeholders through the PPG, the Council also hosted a well attended conference and sent mailings to numerous organisations, providing the opportunity to comment on the

drafts. The draft action plan has also been presented to the Local Strategic Partnership, and the Chair of the LSP has agreed to be a co-signatory to the Foreword along with the housing portfolio holder.

Financial implications

There are no new financial implications that arise from this report. However, it should be noted that the housing strategy is one of a suite of documents that are considered by the Government. These also include the capital strategy. It is fundamental that the information contained within the housing strategy matches that in the capital strategy. Currently the capital strategy covers a three year period, whereas the housing strategy covers a five year period. It has therefore been necessary for the housing strategy to make projections beyond the lifetime of the capital strategy. These have been drawn up in consultation with financial services.

Legal issues

It is a legal obligation for the Council to put in place a housing strategy of between three and five years.

Equalities

The housing strategy is an important vehicle for delivery of the Council's priorities and objectives in relation to the needs of diverse communities. Housing is a commodity that all people need access to. However, that access can often be hindered because of disability, health, ethnicity, gender, income and sexual orientation. The housing service is aware of the importance of meeting these needs and the adoption of this strategy will help give support to the richly diverse communities that go to make up West Wiltshire.

Options

1. To prepare a wholly new strategy for 2005-2010. The current strategy has suffered from considerable delay, making it out of date in some aspects. However, the GOSW assessment has been based on the current draft and to rewrite the whole document may in fact mean no more than starting a long consultation period again. GOSW have indicated that they are happy to tolerate the slightly out of date information.
2. To consider the current draft and approve it.

Recommendation

To approve the final draft.

Human rights

There are no human rights issues.

List of background papers

There are no background papers.

Plain English Guidance Given

List of Appendices

Appendix A Draft Strategy – Action Plan

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Strategy sep 05.doc

Appendix A

Housing Strategy Action Plan								
Action number	Aim	Milestones action	Target date	Responsible Officers	Responsible Agencies/ groups	Resources Required	Linked strategies	Linked to priority number/s in last housing strategy
<u>SPOTLIGHT AREA - MEETING HOUSING NEED</u> Objective 1: Understand the housing need and the effect of the housing market so that the Council and its partners can work to introduce more choice and develop sustainable communities								
1	Identifying Local Housing Needs	Carry out a District-wide Housing Needs Assessment to update the needs evidence to back Local Plan policies on affordable housing ¹	July 05 & July 09	Housing Enabling Manager	District Council	40000 for each full survey	Local Plan	42
2		Carry out update to Housing Needs Survey ¹	Jul-07	Housing Enabling Manager	District Council	£10,000	Local Plan	42
3		Continue rural needs assessments in partnership with Wiltshire Rural Enabler - Broughton Gifford, Holt, Codford, Hawkeridge, Sutton Veny and Corsley	Dec 05 - ongoing	Housing Enabling Manager/Rural Enabler	District Council Wiltshire Rural Housing Partnership	Continuation of funding for Rural Enabler Post approx £5,000 per year	Local Plan	1 & 19
4	Understanding the Housing Market	Continue to develop local market database to effectively monitor trends in land and development costs - review quarterly. ¹	Half yearly Reviews	Housing Enabling Manager	District Council/Local Agencies also M4 Corridor group	Staff Time		41
5		Understand the role and impact that Local Planning Policy can have on the local housing market ¹	Half yearly review	Housing Services Manager	District Council	Staff Time	Local Plan	NEW

6		Publish our 5 year programme for developing affordable homes, showing types of homes required in each area and the role of partners in delivering those homes ¹	Jul-05	Housing Enabling Manager`	Preferred Development Partnership/ Planning Policy	Staff time	Local Plan/Housing Needs survey	37
7	Increasing choices	Explore alternative options for securing affordable housing - including options for different tenures - produce an annual report setting out numbers achieved in different tenures and options considered ¹	Jan 05 - ongoing	Housing Enabling Manager/ Housing Register and Support Team leader	District Council/PDP	Staff Time	Local Plan	NEW
8		Meet the Structure plan target for the delivery of new homes ¹	Ongoing	Planning Policy Manager	Development Control/Planning Policy/Developers	Staff time and effective policies and procedures	Local Plan/Struvture Plan	34

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<u>SPOTLIGHT AREA - MEETING HOUSING NEED</u> Objective 2: Provide additional rented housing for people on low incomes who cannot afford housing in the local private sector market								

	New Build Social Housing	To deliver units of social housing at:		Housing Enabling Manager	District Council/Preferred Development Partnership	Housing Corp Council	Financial Strategy/Local Plan/Development Programme	35 & 36
9	General Needs ¹	Bowerhill, Melksham (32)	Mar-05			£1,662,502		
10		Mill Street, Trowbridge (18)	Mar-05			£932,039		
11		Poulton, Bradford on Avon (6)	Nov-04			£296,997		
12		St. Johns Hospital, Trowbridge (12)	Mar-06			£612,000 £165,031		
13		Leigh Park R1, Westbury Leigh (33)	Mar-06			£1,623,000 £427,692		
14		Hatcheries, Hilperton (6)	Mar-06			£352,075		
15		Leigh Park R2, Westbury Leigh (24)	Mar-07			£1,040,000 £382,620		
16		Paxcroft Mead, Trowbridge (20)	Mar-07			£250,000 £268,000		
17		Beanacre, Melksham (14)	Mar-07			£200,000 £313,195		
18		County Way, Trowbridge (14)	Mar-07			£200,000 £259,000		
19		Purchase & Repairs (2)	Mar-05			£72,000		
WWDC/Council/14.9.05								

20		<i>Young Single Persons Project, Trowbridge (6)</i>	Mar-05			£321,457		
						£321,457		
21	<i>Supported Housing¹</i>	<i>Mental Health Scheme, Bradford on Avon (10)</i>	Nov-04			£767,328		
22		<i>Drug & Alcohol Project, Trowbridge (6)</i>	Nov-04			£430,000		
23	<i>Low Cost Market Rental¹</i>	<i>Staverton Marina, Staverton, Trowbridge (12)</i>	Mar-06			Nil Subsidy		
24		<i>Staverton Marina, Staverton, Trowbridge (2)</i>	Mar-06			£42,000		
25	<i>Low Cost Home Ownership¹</i>	<i>Homebuy (4)</i>	Mar-05			£120,000		
26		<i>Deliver the PFI Project (500)</i>	Jan-09					
27	Affordable Housing through the Planning Process ¹	Seek to achieve up to 30% affordable, in small clusters of no more than 12 units, housing provision on all allocation and windfall housing sites within towns on sites of more than 1 hectare or 25 dwellings; and up to 50% provision on sites within villages (500)	Mar-10	Housing Enabling Manager	District Council/Preferred Development Partners	Staff time , well drafted policy, Housing needs data	Local Plan	35
28		Completion of Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance ¹	Jan-05	Housing Services Manager/Planning Policy & Conservation Manager	District Council/Consultation with housing associations, developers and landowners	Staff time	Local Plan	38
29		Develop a housing partnership for new homes that reflects up to date government and housing corporation policy plus local market conditions	Jul-05	Housing Enabling manager	Preferred Development partnership Housing Corporation	Staff time	Regional Housing Strategy	40

30	Research the capacity for moves to Affordable Home Ownership to generate vacancies in existing social rented housing	Dec-05	Housing Enabling Manager/Register & Support T/Leader	District Council	Staff time	Local Plan/AH SPG	NEW
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<u>SPOTLIGHT AREA - MEETING HOUSING NEED</u> Objective 3: Prevent homelessness, reduce the number of people who are homeless, stop the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households, and reduce the Council's use of other forms of temporary accommodation								
31	Eliminate the use of Bed & Breakfast	Sustain the elimination of B&B for families	On Going	Housing Needs Manager		Staff Time ODPM Funding	Homelessness Strategy	3
32		Eliminate total use of B&B by March 2005 except in an emergency	Mar-05	Housing Needs Manager		Staff Time ODPM Funding	Homelessness Strategy & Corporate Plan	5
33		To increase our current Private Sector Leasing Scheme to at least 100 properties to inc District Council properties	Mar-05	Housing Needs Manager	Sarsen	Staff Time ODPM Funding	Homelessness Strategy	24
34		Creation of a letting pack to encourage local landlords with the take up of homeless families	Dec-04	Homelessness Team Leader		Staff Time	Homelessness Strategy	7
35		Resolve the future of the council's current hostel temporary accommodation provision	Mar-05	Housing Services Manager		Staff Time	Homelessness Strategy & Corporate Plan	NEW
36	Prevention of Homelessness	Reduce the amount of accepted homeless cases from the previous year	Mar-05	Housing Needs Manager		Staff Time	Corporate Plan & Homeless Strategy	NEW

37		Encourage the take up of benefits & ensure all staff have the required training. Monitoring of Housing Benefit changes and setting up a Housing Benefit liaison group	Mar-05	Housing Needs Manager		Staff Time & Benefits take up training officer	Corporate Plan	NEW
38		To introduce a mediation service	Mar-05	Housing Needs Manager		£15,000	Homelessness Strategy	NEW
39		Create a resource pack for primary schools within West Wiltshire	Sep-05	Housing Needs Manager		Staff Time & publication costs	Homelessness Strategy & Corporate Plan	NEW
40		Reduce the amount of homeless applicants against the three main causes of homelessness	Mar-05	Housing Needs Manager		Staff Time		NEW
41		Regularly monitor level of rough sleeping to ensure it stays at zero	On going	Housing Needs Manager		Staff Time	Homelessness Strategy	21
42	Improve quality and access to housing advice	To start pilot outreach housing advice surgeries within the five town	Dec-04	Homelessness Team Leader	Different options to be considered		Homelessness Strategy	NEW
43		Creation of a Survival Guide	Mar-05	Housing Needs Manager		£5,000 staff time	Homelessness Strategy	NEW
44		Develop a Public Service Agreement Target for a young persons housing standard to ensure that 16 & 17 year olds receive life skills training, necessary support and do not use B & B	Mar-05	Housing Needs Manager/Chief Exec Officer North Wilts District Council	All Wilts Council's and main housing providers	Staff Time		NEW
45	Improve Inter agency working	Update the role of the landlords forum	Nov-04	Homelessness Team Leader	Housing Benefit, Local estate agents and landlords	Staff Time	Homelessness Strategy	23
46		Creation of a homelessness forum	Oct-04	Homelessness Team Leader	Local agencies with an interest in homelessness	Staff Time	Homelessness Strategy	new

47	Increase housing opportunities for all housing applicants	Look into the need for low cost home ownership and develop the required policies	Jun-05	Housing Register and Support Team Leader		Staff Time	Homelessness Strategy	36
48		Introduce a Choice Based Lettings system ²	Mar-05	Housing Register and Support Team Leader	District Council WWHS Policy Group	Staff Time £100,000	Homelessness Strategy	2 & 8

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<u>SPOTLIGHT AREA - MEETING HOUSING NEED</u> Objective 4: Ensure that the Government's targets for decent homes are met or exceeded and make the most of the existing housing stock to meet housing need								
49	Maximise use of Empty Properties	Reduce the number of long-term vacant houses from 650 to 350, (average 50 per annum) ²	Mar-10	Housing Renewal Manager	West Wiltshire District Council/PDP	Staff time, financial incentives, costs of enforcement of management orders or CPOs	Empty Homes Strategy, Housing Renewal Strategy	33
50	Decent Homes in the RSL Sector	Work with RSLs to ensure that they have adequately resourced and realistic plans based on firm information to bring 100% of their stock up to the Decency standard ²	Mar-10	Housing Renewal Manager	West Wiltshire District Council/PDP/all RSLs	RSLs to fund from their own resources		28 & 29

51	Decent Homes in the Private Sector	Increase from 67% to at least 70% the proportion of vulnerable households in the private sector living in a decent home ²	Mar-10	Housing Renewal Manager	West Wiltshire District Council/EEAC/HIA	Capital resources from the Council's Housing Assistance budget. Financial support for the EEAC, currently £5,500 per annum. Grants and discounts from WarmFront and Energy Efficiency Commitment schemes of the energy supply companies. Financial support for the Home Improvement Agency, currently equivalent to £46,000 per annum.	Financial Strategy, Housing Renewal Strategy, Affordable Warmth and HECA strategies	NEW
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52	Increase the proportion of properties meeting the minimum housing standard	Reduction of at least 15% (130 houses) in the number of houses failing the minimum housing standard (equivalent to 3% per annum) ²	Mar-09	Housing Renewal Manager	West Wiltshire District Council	Capital resources from the Council's Housing Assistance budget. Financial support for the Home Improvement Agency, currently equivalent to £46,000 per annum. Staff time for regulation of standards in the private rented sector	Financial strategy, Housing Renewal Strategy	NEW
53	Improve standards in Houses in Multiple Occupation	Undertake risk assessments to identify all Houses in Multiple Occupation falling within the scope of proposed mandatory licensing scheme.	Sep-05	Housing Renewal Manager	West Wiltshire District Council, Fire Service	Staff time	Housing Renewal Strategy	30
54		Ensure that all high-risk Houses in Multiple Occupation comply with relevant legal standards ²	Mar-08	Housing Renewal Manager	West Wiltshire District Council, Fire Service	Staff time	Housing Renewal Strategy	NEW

55	Carry out a District-wide House Condition Survey to inform the Housing Renewal and Empty Homes Strategies, and assess progress towards the Decent Homes Targets ²	Nov-07	Housing Renewal Manager	West Wiltshire District Council	Estimated cost of consultancy work is £50,000	Empty Homes Strategy, Housing Renewal Strategy, Affordable Warmth Strategy	NEW
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SPOTLIGHT AREA - IMPROVING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL **Objective 4:** Support and contribute towards service objectives, particularly in relation to affordable housing, market town regeneration, sustainability and community safety

¹These items also support the objective of improving development control

SPOTLIGHT AREA - IMPROVING OUR MARKET TOWNS **Objective 3:** Help to develop sustainable communities in each of the 5 market towns

56	Identify areas of the district where housing resources are best targeted alongside resources from other service areas	Mar-06	Housing Renewal Manager	Local Strategic Partnership	Housing Renewal resources in particular	Community Strategy	22
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²These items also support the objective of improving our market towns and developing sustainable communities

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<u>SPOTLIGHT AREA - PUTTING CUSTOMERS FIRST</u> Objective 1: Enable easy access to the Council recognising the needs of different customers								
57		<i>Develop Housing Needs Website</i>	Oct-04 – ongoing	Homelessness Team Leader		£5,000	Homelessness Strategy	47
58		<i>Increase literature available to all housing applicants</i>	Nov-04	Homelessness Team Leader		Staff Time	Homelessness Strategy	46
59		<i>Complete a user satisfaction survey</i>	Dec-04	Homelessness Team Leader		Staff Time	Homelessness Strategy	NEW
60	Informing our customers	Increase education and promotion of housing knowledge in the District through holding a stand at the West Wilts Show	Summer 2005, 2007 and 2009	Housing Enabling, Renewal and Needs Managers	District Council	Staff Time	Communications Strategy	46
61		Increase education and promotion of housing knowledge in the District – West Wilts Matters	Quarterly	Housing Enabling, Renewal and Needs Managers	District Council	Staff Time	Communications Strategy	46

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<u>SPOTLIGHT AREA - PUTTING CUSTOMERS FIRST</u> Objective 2: Provide consistent and fair treatment to all customers								
62		<i>To obtain Quality Mark from the community legal services</i>	Dec-05	Housing Needs Manager		Staff Time		NEW
63		Research Black and minority ethnic housing needs	Jan 05 - ongoing	Housing Register and Support Team Leader	Wiltshire Race Equality Council	Funding for Wiltshire Race Equality Council to carry out interviews and surveys £5,000	Hidden voices	9

