

# Chichester District Council

CABINET

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## Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-2021

### 1. Contacts

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### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. **That the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-2021 be approved, together with accompanying financial assistance options for implementation commencing on 1 April 2016.**
- 2.2. **That the repurposing of the Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency grant funding of £20,168 be approved to be used for the provision of heating and insulation for vulnerable members of the community as part of the Chichester Warm Homes Initiative.**

### 3. Background

- 3.1. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 empowers local housing authorities to provide a wide range of assistance for housing renewal. In order to use this power the Council is required to adopt a policy on housing renewal and the policy tools it is proposing to use.
- 3.2. The Council approved the last Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy on 17 October 2006 and it set out the assistance it was going to make available to homeowners and landlords.
- 3.3. A house condition stock modelling exercise was carried out in March 2015 and it identified that an estimated 22% of dwellings in the private rented sector in the Chichester District have a category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System hazard and indicated that the levels of excess cold in the private sector stock in Chichester District are double that of the national average.
- 3.4. This report seeks to update the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy to take into account the outcomes from the house condition stock modelling exercise and the draft strategy forms the appendix to this report.

#### **4. Outcomes to be achieved**

- 4.1. To adopt a strategy that makes the best use of limited financial resources so that assistance is targeted at the most vulnerable households in the District in order to improve the health and safety of their homes and in particular to tackle fuel poverty and reduce the number of category 1 hazards relating to excess cold from 14% to below the national average of 7%.
- 4.2. All applications for funding will be assessed to ensure that applicants meet the qualifying criteria and expenditure will be monitored on a monthly basis. All works carried out will be inspected prior to payment to ensure that they are carried out to a satisfactory standard.

#### **5. Proposal**

- 5.1 The proposed Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, which forms the appendix to this report, is to ensure that limited resources are targeted at the most vulnerable households and to improve conditions in the private rented sector where the poorest housing conditions are encountered. The strategy includes a work plan, which will be regularly monitored to evaluate progress. Provided approval is granted implementation of the strategy will commence on 1 April 2016.
- 5.2 Two key changes are proposed in the strategy. The first is the introduction of a Chichester Warm Homes Initiative to assist vulnerable home owners and landlords to improve the heating provision and energy efficiency of their homes in order to reduce fuel poverty and minimise the health impacts of cold homes.
- 5.3 The second change dispenses with the home loans provided to owner occupiers in partnership with the Parity Trust. The loans are no longer considered effective because of the low uptake. It is proposed instead that we provide Home Repair Assistance to vulnerable owner occupiers in the form of interest free loans that are repayable upon the sale of the property.

#### **6 Alternatives that have been considered**

- 6.1 The Council must have an adopted strategy if it wishes to provide financial assistance for housing renewal. The existing policy does not fully meet the need because there are no policy tools to adequately address the hazard of excess cold and the issue of fuel poverty.
- 6.2 Consideration was given to dispensing with housing renewal assistance but that would be contrary to one of the key objectives within the Council's Corporate Plan i.e. "to improve the provision of and access to suitable housing". The draft strategy seeks to improve access to suitable housing.

#### **7 Resource and legal implications**

- 7.1 The strategy sets out the financial resources required over its five year life. The majority of the funding has already been secured. However an additional sum of approximately £325,000 over five years for the Chichester Warm Homes Initiative is sought. Cabinet approval is sought to repurpose £20,168 of grant

funding previously received by the Council in respect of the ceased Care & Repair Home Improvement Agency. The original purpose of the funding was to assist vulnerable people to repair and improve their homes, which is consistent with the objectives of the Chichester Warm Homes Initiative. A further £208,000 has been identified and this is subject to Council approval in March 2016 as part of the Housing Strategy review. Cabinet will also be asked to approve the transfer of £95,221 of funding from the Low Carbon Chichester Fund to the Private Sector Renewal Housing budget as part of the Grants Task and Finish Group report.

- 7.2 Aside from the work undertaken by officers within the environmental housing team, the Chichester Warm Homes Initiative element of the draft strategy will be reliant on the funding for the Home Energy Visiting Officers being continued by West Sussex County Council. These officers are crucial in identifying vulnerable households lacking suitable heating and at risk of fuel poverty.

## 8 Consultation

- 8.1 During the strategy development process the Community Wellbeing Manager including the Home Energy Efficiency Officers the Council's Environmental Co-ordinator were consulted.
- 8.2 The draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2015 when all comments were noted and amendments made as necessary.
- 8.3 Following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consultation was undertaken with our partners including private sector landlords, Hyde, higher educational establishments, West Sussex Fire and Rescue, Citizens Advice Bureau, West Sussex County Council, Your Energy Sussex, rural estate landlords, Arun District Council, health professionals and letting agents. Their comments were generally supportive and have been taken into account in the final drafting of the strategy.

## 9 Community impact and corporate risks

- 9.1 When the strategy is adopted it will have the potential to have a positive impact on the community by improving the quality of the poorest housing stock and reducing fuel poverty.

## 10 Other Implications

	Yes	No
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>		No
<b>Climate Change:</b> The introduction of the Chichester Warm Homes Initiative has the potential to have a positive but small impact on climate change by improving energy efficiency.	Yes	
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact:</b> The strategy is likely to have a positive impact on human rights and equality because financial resource will be targeted at improving housing conditions for the most vulnerable people including people of retirement age, disabled people and low income families.	Yes	
<b>Safeguarding:</b>		No

<p><b>Public Health:</b> The strategy has the potential to improve the health of the community. The strategy identifies research carried out by BRE (Building Research Establishment) that estimates that significant health and safety hazards in homes in England costs the National Health Service £2 billion per annum. This suggests that poor quality housing has a similar impact on health as smoking or alcohol.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
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## 11 Appendix

11.1 Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

## 12 Background Papers

12.1 Chichester Stock Modelling Report 2015