

Chichester District Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 November 2015

Review of Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-2021

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the committee considers the draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-2012 and makes any comments on this document prior to the consultation period with stakeholders.**

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 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 high compared to the national averages.
- 3.4. It is considered appropriate 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 excess cold and fuel poverty.
- 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 draft 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.
- 5.2. Before the strategy is adopted it is proposed that we consult with our stakeholders including West Sussex County Council's Independent Living Service and Public Health Service, the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the University of Chichester, letting agents, landlords, Your Energy Sussex and clinical commissioning groups. Any viable amendments from the consultation will be incorporated before Cabinet and Council approval is sought in March 2016.
- 5.3. There are two key changes proposed in the strategy. The first being 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.
- 5.4. The second change dispenses with a range of home loans provided to owner occupiers in partnership with the Parity Trust. The loans are no longer considered cost 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 the Council's Corporate Plan. One of the key issues is 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 draft strategy sets out the financial resources required over its five year life. The majority of the funding has already been secured but it has been identified that there is an additional requirement for £300,000 over five years for the proposed Chichester Warm Homes Initiative. So far funding of £225,000 has been identified, subject to Cabinet approval, and it is anticipated that an additional £75,000 will be identified before the strategy is considered by Cabinet in March 2016.
- 7.2. The Chichester Warm Homes Initiative element of the draft strategy is reliant on the funding for the Home Energy Visiting Officers being continued by West Sussex County Council. They are crucial in identifying vulnerable households lacking suitable heating and at risk of fuel poverty

8. Consultation

- 8.1. The draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy is the starting point of the consultation process and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being asked to consider the draft document prior to consultation with stakeholders.
- 8.2. Following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, consultation will be undertaken and the Strategy amended, if required, to take the responses into account. The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy will then be subject to a report to Cabinet in March 2016 seeking its approval.

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
Crime & Disorder:		No
Climate Change: 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	
Human Rights and Equality Impact: 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	
Safeguarding:		No
Public Health: 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.	Yes	

11. Appendix

- 11.1. Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. Chichester Stock Modelling Report 2015