

Agenda item: 

**Decision Maker:** Cabinet Member for Housing

**Subject:** Strategic Plan for Housing 2011/12 – 2014/15

**Report by:** Alan Cufley Head of Community Housing & Regeneration

**Wards affected:** ALL

**Key decision (over £250k):** No

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### 1. Purpose of report

To seek approval to consult on the 2011 – 15 Housing Strategy and to bring a final document back for finalisation.

### 2. Recommendations

**That the Cabinet member for Housing**

- a) **Endorses the draft Strategic Plan**
- b) **Agrees to further consultation with relevant stakeholders.**
- c) **Receives a further report on the consultation responses and the final plan at the November 2011 Cabinet Member for Housing meeting.**

### 3. Background

The city council last published a housing strategy in 2005 and as this expired at the end of March 2011 a new strategy document has been prepared. Earlier this year a wide group of stakeholder representatives and partners were asked for their views on priorities for Portsmouth and these have been incorporated into the current draft text.

The new strategic plan will have a four year life to March 2015 in order to coincide with government budget cycles.

### 4. Reasons for recommendations

The draft strategy is available to Members separately from this report

The strategic plan has 5 main themes which can be developed where appropriate by relevant delivery organisations

**The provision of advice and accommodation:** *pages 17 – 19*

An essential range of services for all residents will continue to be developed and improved:

- Help and advice offered by city council and independent organisations for people needing affordable housing
- Advice for those renting, managing or owning private housing
- A Housing Waiting List to identify those whose need for housing is greatest
- An *Access Scheme* introducing new tenants to private landlords
- A social allocations scheme for City Council and housing association properties.

### **Housing related support services: pages 19 – 21**

A priority feature of housing services available within Portsmouth and by way of illustration includes

- Supporting People Programme helps around 3,000 individuals and households
- Tenancy Support Service assists about 350 households at any one time
- *Telecare* emergency communications has at least 1,000 customers, and growing
- *Homecheck* home safety service making homes safer for older people, young families and people with disabilities
- Designing new housing-with-support will be a continuing element of the affordable housing development programme – sometimes as one-off dwellings whose features make them suitable for wheelchair dependent occupants; and grouped schemes such as extra-care flats for the needs of older residents.
- Sheltered accommodation for older people is an important aspect of the city's housing market with well over 2,000 flats, but on-going reviews will mean changes – sometimes fundamental – in the manner in which these services are delivered.

### **Creating more homes: pages 22 – 24**

Planning for a consistent supply of both market and affordable housing is a continuing priority, and this is presented as three priorities:-

- **Availability:** the intention is to maintain Portsmouth's record of delivering new market *and* affordable dwellings, with an emphasis on family accommodation where feasible. The aim is between a fifth and a third of new homes to be affordable depending on the size and circumstances of each scheme.
- **Affordability:** the aim is to explore all opportunities with development partners to seek solutions that keep rents as low as possible for the intended occupiers.
- **Quality:** ensuring that new housing is of sufficient size, attractive and fit for purpose, with designs for special needs, is important and will be safeguarded by standards that are part of the City Council's planning policy. The *Code for Sustainable Homes* applies to new housing: Code level 3 for affordable and market housing from July 2011 and Code level 5 from 2015.

### **Management principles for affordable housing – page 24**

Rapid changes in the affordable housing sector make it essential to ensure that the quality of management services is maintained. This Strategic Plan therefore publishes six estate management principles for current and future providers to meet

### **Better housing and better health: pages 25 -29**

The maintenance and improvement of Portsmouth's stock of 85,000 residential properties is a priority which this Strategic Plan presents as several sub themes, some of which are highlighted below.

- **Private housing improvement:** this programme is a central element in a strategy to minimise serious disrepair among the city's older housing. It will continue to be encouraged through the City Council's *Financial Assistance Policy* with loans and grants for different situations
- **Landlord Accreditation Scheme:** an increasing number of privately rented properties are being registered under this scheme. The intention is that during the four years of this Strategic Plan the number of participating landlords, agents and companies will more than double
- **Empty Property Campaign:** this campaign will continue to be promoted in various ways in order to reduce long term vacant residential properties. The number of such dwellings brought back into use is expected to increase owing to the Homes and Community Agency's commitment to invest in this policy area
- **Portsmouth stock of social rented housing:** all social landlords are investing substantial sums in the maintenance and improvement of their dwellings but the difference during the period of this Strategic Plan will be the increased emphasis on applying green technologies to energy conservation and production. Social landlords will be at the forefront of Government-sponsored initiatives such as the *Green Deal* although details are awaited pending the enactment of new legislation.

This strategic plan sets out many of the key issues in the delivery of more affordable and quality housing as described in the City Council's Corporate Plan and as such reflects activity around one of the key priorities for the city.

## 5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

A full Equality impact Assessment will be conducted for the final report concerning the strategic plan. It is envisaged that the equality groups will be among the consultees once the document is agreed for consultation.

## 6. Head of legal services' comments

The strategic plan reflects corporate priorities within the corporate plan and there are no legal implications at this time.

## 7. Head of finance's comments

This Housing Strategy is a key document as it sets out the priorities which, together with other key corporate strategies, will determine how City Council resources are used including financial resources from revenue & capital funding for both the Housing Revenue Account (Council Housing) and the General Fund (all other services). It is clear that investment in the five main themes of the Strategy will not only yield "Quality of life" benefits for residents such as improved Health, Education, Housing and Employment outcomes but will also save money both on other public services such as NHS activities and also on City Council services including Adult & Children's Social Care and Homelessness. When setting revenue and capital budgets and finding the reductions in spending on the General Fund necessary to respond to cuts in Government funding it will be essential to understand these links to other City Council services and ensure they are reflected appropriately in any assessment of potential savings.

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Signed by:

Alan Cufley, Head of Community Housing & Regeneration

**Separate Document:**

The Strategic Housing Plan for Portsmouth 2011 – 15 (Draft)

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/  
rejected by ..... on .....

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Signed by: