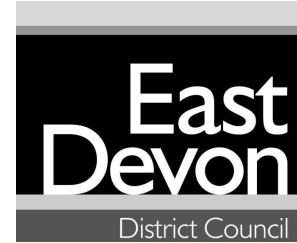


Agenda Item: 11

Executive Board

15 July 2009

MS



East Devon Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2008-2011

Summary

This document sets out East Devon District Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy for 2008-2011. It addresses the need for improvements in the private housing stock in East Devon and then explains how we intend to meet this need. It builds upon the existing Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, the Housing Strategy 2008 - 2011 and the Council's Corporate Strategy developed in 2008. Together these documents set the Council's aims for private sector housing renewal for a period of three years and identify delivery tools in an action plan.

The strategy takes into account new national, regional and local issues now evident in private sector renewal and the results of a survey of the condition of the private sector housing stock carried out in 2008.

The Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy went out to consultation in September 2008 and comments received have been incorporated.

Recommendation

The Executive Board approves the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2008-2011

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To ensure that the Council has an up-to-date Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and to meet our statutory duties.

b) Alternative Options

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy is not adopted and we do not meet our statutory duties.

c) Risk Considerations

If we do not have an up to date Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy we will not comply with the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

Positive Impact Overall

Affordable homes
Thriving economy
Excellent customer service
Inspirational Council
Meeting our diversity and equality duties

e) Date for Review of Decision

April 2011

1. Background to revising the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy (PSRS)

- 1.1 It has been a statutory duty for district councils to develop a private sector housing renewal strategy, since the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002, which gave local housing authorities wide-ranging powers to provide assistance for housing renewal.
- 1.2 The existing Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy has been revised and updated to ensure that it is an accurate reflection of our current work, local private sector housing, the housing market and forthcoming challenges. The drafting of the current policy has been delayed as a result of changes to the distribution methodology, and level, of government funding of private sector renewal activity.
- 1.3 The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy must reflect not only key developments and challenges for the private sector but also links to developments with all other housing tenure types within the district. Partner agencies have played a key role in both developing and assisting with the delivery of the strategy.
- 1.4 We have linked the priorities and actions to key national, regional and local policies and strategies to ensure that we are in tune with government priorities and importantly applying these locally to improve private sector housing conditions.
- 1.5 The Strategy looks at the condition of private housing and the steps being made to improve standards. It reflects the issues being faced in the private sector regarding housing needs within the district, and states the steps we are taking both to maintain and improve existing homes and looks at developing ways to provide additional affordable homes. An Action Plan comprising a comprehensive list of our key objectives and has been drawn up.
- 1.6 It is important to remember that the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy links to other policies and strategies developed by the Council (Corporate Strategy, Sustainable Communities Plan). There are clear links with the Housing Strategy which incorporates many of the actions identified within the PSHRS.

2. Significant issues

The key issues the strategy aims to address are:

- 2.1 **Decent Homes** – reduce the number of non-decent homes in East Devon by utilising financial assistance packages, advice, and enforcement where appropriate.
- 2.2 **Safe and Healthy Homes** – prioritising health and safety risks within homes in the private sector and, through the use of guidance, advice and enforcement, encourage this housing sector to eliminate poor, unhealthy homes.
- 2.3 **Disabled People** – continue to work in partnership with Social Services, GPs and the Home Improvement Agency and disabled people to ensure that accommodation is effectively and efficiently adapted to encourage disabled people to remain in their own homes.
- 2.4 **Warm Homes** – helping to reduce the numbers of people in fuel poverty and encouraging more private tenants and landlords to make their homes warmer by providing insulation and proper heating systems. Developing partnerships with energy suppliers and other local authorities to provide alternative heating/energy sources particularly in rural areas.
- 2.5 **Secure Homes** – encouraging elderly, vulnerable and disabled to make their homes safe and secure, by using partnerships with the police and fire service and the Home Improvement Agency.

- 2.6 **Accessible Homes** – utilising empty homes through the use of financial assistance, advice and enforcement; encouraging homeowners who are under-occupying their homes to convert or offer alternative types of accommodation; utilising space above commercial premises to be converted into residential accommodation, by offering suitable financial assistance.

The action plan contained within the strategy details the targets and methodology for addressing these issues.

3. **Funding**

The capital programme to underpin the strategy is detailed in the report.

The Council has successfully bid for funding, via the Private Sector Renewal Fund, for £150,000 to start up the Loan Scheme (along with the partnership of 8 other local authorities in Devon) and for £87,000 to assist with tackling Fuel Poverty across utilising the Devon Warm Zone project and new schemes identified in the strategy.

4. **Consultation**

4.1 Consultation was carried out in the following ways

- via the EDDC website – advertising and requesting input from the general public.
- Specific partners were sent a letter, and email with the draft document and a questionnaire to complete and return.
- These partners included the Fire Service, Exeter Empty Homes Service, Care & Repair, West Country Energy Action, Devon Energy Advice Centre, all partners of the Wider Housing Strategic Partnership, including EDDC Housing and Planning
- The draft strategy was introduced to the Wider Housing Strategic Partnership at the meeting held on the 24 September 2008.

All comments received have been incorporated, where relevant, into the Strategy.

Legal Implications

There are no legal observations

Financial Implications

It is noted there was a large underspend of £245k on the budgeted £393k in 08/09 on Home Stay Grants, due to a change in repayment conditions.

However, the budget for 09/10 has been maintained at the 08/09 level of £393k putting continued pressure on the capital programme. Consideration needs to be given through the year as to whether this budget will be fully spent.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

The consultation process is explained in the report.

Background Papers

- Questionnaire on the consultation draft
 - Housing Strategy
 - Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2003
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Simon Smale/John Collins
Head of Environmental Health & Health Equalities

Executive Board
15 July 2009