

<b>SUSTAINABLE GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 5</b>
<b>10 JANUARY 2012</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## **Report of the Executive Director of Operations**

**Contact Officer(s) – Richard Kay / Anne Keogh**  
**Contact Details – 863795 / 863815**

### **Public Consultation Response to the Draft Peterborough Housing Strategy 2011-15 (incorporating the Peterborough Strategic Tenancy Policy)**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek comments from committee on the attached draft consultation report that sets out the comments received and responses proposed to key issues arising from the public consultation on the draft Peterborough Housing Strategy 2011-15 (incorporating the Peterborough Strategic Tenancy Policy). This report provides a summary of the comments and issues raised during the 4 week public consultation period which commenced on 14<sup>th</sup> November and concluded on 12 December 2012.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Committee make comments as they see fit on the attached Key Issues Consultation Report with such comments to be reported to Cabinet on 10 February 2012.

#### **3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Housing Strategy cuts across all four priorities of the SCS:
- Priority 1 - tackling inequalities (including supporting vulnerable people such as the homeless and regenerating neighbourhoods)
  - Priority 2 – Creating Strong and Supportive Communities (including the empowering of local communities in delivering housing in their area)
  - Priority 3 – Creating the UK’s environment capital (such as tackling fuel poverty in homes)
  - Priority 4 – Substantial and Truly Sustainable Growth (especially the goal of creating better places to live).

#### **4. BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES**

##### **Introduction**

- 4.1 Committee will recall receiving an item on 13 October 2011 in respect of the draft Peterborough Housing Strategy. The Strategy is a major policy item for the council. It sets out the council’s policies, commitments and programme for the period 2011-2015 for a wide range of housing matters. There are four headline priority areas within the Strategy:
- supporting the delivery of substantial yet sustainable growth;
  - securing the regeneration and improvements to Peterborough’s housing stock;
  - meeting existing and future housing needs; and
  - encouraging the development of mixed and sustainable communities
- 4.2 In clearly setting out the council’s priorities in these matters, the public has full knowledge of what to expect and how to make the most of the services we offer.
- 4.3 Since initially considered by Committee in October, a Strategic Tenancy Policy has, as anticipated, now become a statutory requirement. The enactment of the Localism Bill in

November 2011 introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy within one year of it being passed by parliament.

- 4.4 The purpose of a Strategic Tenancy Policy is to set out the broad objectives that the council expect housing associations which operate within the district to take into account when determining how they will implement the new flexibilities that Government has granted to them through reforms to social housing policy and legislation. It does not dictate what housing associations must do, but rather what we expect and prefer them to do. For example, it covers matters such as:
- The minimum length of tenancy to be granted to new tenants;
  - The circumstances where it is appropriate for tenancies to be offered that exceed the minimum term;
  - The circumstances where it is appropriate to retain the offer of lifetime tenancies;
  - The criteria to inform whether to renew a tenancy at the end of a fixed term; and
  - The appropriate cap to rent levels for homes let as 'affordable rent' tenure, to ensure affordability
- 4.5 Details of the consultation on the draft Housing Strategy and Strategic Tenancy Policy were made available through local media, including a series of newspaper articles, press releases and a radio feature.
- 4.6 As part of the consultation, the documents were published on Peterborough City Council's online consultation portal. Hard copies of both documents, along with printed representation forms, were made available in each library across the city and within council offices.
- 4.7 A wide range of key stakeholders including all housing associations with housing stock in Peterborough were sent electronic notification of the consultation period, electronic copies of both documents with a representation form and a link to council's online consultation portal as a means of providing their feedback.
- 4.8 During the early part of the consultation period, the city council also held a half day consultation event aimed at professional stakeholders. This event provided an opportunity for partner agencies to gain a better understanding of the proposals set out in these two important documents, and to take part in a series of workshop sessions in order to discuss key housing-related themes.

#### **'Key Issues' raised during the consultation**

- 4.9 Attached as an appendix to this agenda report is 'Key Issues' report which summarises all the key points that were made (rather than every detailed comment, though of course officers will consider each of those detailed points as well).
- 4.10 The report has four components:
- An outline of the comments received for each policy contained in the Housing Strategy and the council's response to the comments made with an indication of whether this has resulted in a change to related text within the strategy document. We have also incorporated any general comments made relating to the Housing Strategy in this section of the report along with our response.
  - An outline of the comments received relating to the Strategic Tenancy Policy and the council's response to the comments made with an indication of whether this has resulted in a change to related text within the policy document.
  - A summary of proposed amendments to the strategy arising from the consultation and also from feedback from internal council services that have contributed to the development of the strategy
  - A summary of the outcome of the professional stakeholder's consultation event along with a list of organisations represented at the event.

## **The Final Housing Strategy and Tenancy Policy**

- 4.11 Officers are currently preparing a revised version of the final Housing Strategy and Tenancy Policy, based on the issues raised in the attached report. It has not been possible in the very short time between the end of the consultation (12 December) and committee paper preparation deadlines (23 December) to bring the full document back to this committee. However, that final document will incorporate the points raised in the attached report.
- 4.12 Cabinet will receive the full documents, and then, of course, all councillors will see the final version when presented to full Council at the end of February.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial:** Preparation of the Housing Strategy (and associated Strategic Tenancy Policy) has minimal costs, and can be met within existing budgets. However, the Housing Strategy, once adopted, commits the council to undertaking various activities in the future, each of which have varying cost implications. These tasks, however, have been agreed with the applicable teams concerned, and therefore it is anticipated budgets are in place in order for reasonable endeavours to be taken to achieve the policies and actions proposed. As such, there are no new financial implications directly arising from the Strategy, other than those already accounted for in existing budgets.

**Legal Implications:** The Housing Strategy, once adopted, should be adhered to by the council in the way it conducts its housing-related business. Failure to do so could result in challenges, but these are unlikely to have any legal standing as the commitments being made in the Strategy are not legally binding. Of course, the council has a number of legal duties across the housing agenda, but there will be nothing in the final Strategy which we believe to be contrary to such legal duties or that create new legal duties. The bigger risk in not achieving what we set out in the Strategy is a reputational risk, rather than any legal risk.

**Environmental:** sections of the Strategy relate to environmental issues, such as tackling fuel poverty and bringing empty housing back into use. Overall, the Strategy can be regarded as having a positive impact on tackling environmental issues.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Housing Strategy and Enabling team coordinated the preparation of the draft strategy, in association with a steering group representing a wide range of housing related stakeholders and various teams across the council, reflecting the wide range of issues which the strategy covers. The four week public consultation period has provided feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, and further discussion has also been taken with colleagues across the council's services.
- 6.2 The draft Strategic Tenancy Policy was developed through collaboration with our housing association partners and informal consultation with them prior to commencing the formal public consultation period. The housing associations and the wider public have had the opportunity to formally comment on the draft prior during the public consultation period and their feedback is reflected in the attached Key Issues report.
- 6.3 Comments of today's Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee will be made to Cabinet.
- 6.4 Issues raised during that consultation period have been fully considered and changes have been made to the Strategy where appropriate, in preparation for submitting the final version of the Strategy to Cabinet in February 2012. As this is a Major Policy Item, Cabinet will be asked to recommend the Strategy to Council for adoption (target date 22 February 2012).

## **7. NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 Cabinet consideration and, if recommended by Cabinet, adoption by full Council in February 2012

**8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

8.1 None

**9. APPENDICES**

9.1 'Key Issues' Consultation report