

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
10 February 2012	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Cereste	
Contact Officer(s):	Simon Machen – Head of Planning, Transportation and Engineering Richard Kay – Group Manager – Strategic Planning and Enabling Anne Keogh – Housing Strategy Manager	Tel. 01733 453475 01733 863795 01733 863815

PETERBOROUGH HOUSING STRATEGY 2011-2015 AND THE PETERBOROUGH STRATEGIC TENANCY POLICY (ATTACHED AT APPENDIX 1 TO THE HOUSING STRATEGY)

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM : Executive Director Operations	Deadline date : 12 February 2012
<p>1. That Cabinet supports the Peterborough Housing Strategy and the Peterborough Strategic Tenancy Policy (as attached at Appendix 1 to the Housing Strategy) and agree to recommend the Housing Strategy and the Strategic Tenancy Policy to Council for adoption at Council's meeting of 22 February 2012.</p>	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following recent changes to Government's policy and procedures towards housing, following the end of the current Peterborough Housing Strategy 2008 to 2011 and following the conclusion of the recent public consultation on the draft version of the Housing Strategy.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek support from Cabinet for the attached Peterborough Housing Strategy 2011 to 15 and the Peterborough Strategic Tenancy Policy (as attached at Appendix 1 to the Housing Strategy) and for Cabinet to recommend adoption of both documents by Council at its meeting of 22 February 2012.

2.2 It is a statutory requirement to prepare a Housing Strategy, under the Local Government Act 2003. A Strategic Tenancy Policy is also now an additional statutory duty under the Localism Act 2011.

2.3 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.1: To take collective responsibility for the delivery of all strategic Executive functions within the Council's Major Policy Framework and Budget Framework and lead the Council's overall improvement programmes to deliver excellent services.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	YES	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	10 Feb 2012 (to approve final)
Date for relevant Council Meeting (to adopt Strategy)	22 Feb 2012	Date for submission to Government Dept (<i>please specify which Government Dept</i>)	N/A

4. PETERBOROUGH HOUSING STRATEGY

Introduction

4.1 The Peterborough Housing Strategy is a major policy item for the council. It sets out the council's policies, commitments and programme for the period 2011 to 2015 for a wide range of housing matters, including:

- How we will assist vulnerable people, such as the homeless;
- What our priorities are for delivering new homes, including prestige and affordable homes;
- How we will endeavour to regenerate existing housing stock, whether that be private or social housing;
- How we will assist people to get access to housing, including the council's Mortgage Scheme;
- How we will meet the housing needs of households with specific needs including older people and people with disabilities;
- How we will tackle Gypsy and Traveller housing issues; and
- How we will respond to the Government's reforms to social housing.

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 The strategy recommended for approval by Cabinet has been written so that it is:

- Brief, yet informative;
- Clear as to what the council's proposed policies are; and
- Specific in actions we will take.

Structure of the Strategy

4.4 The Strategy is in three main parts:

1. An **introductory section** setting out the national and local policy context and an evidence base that highlights key trends relating to the Peterborough housing market, housing need, house conditions and homelessness.
2. A set of **four priorities**, each with their own set of policies and actions (see below); and
3. A summary 'Action Plan', so we are clear who is to do what by when. This will also form the template for regular monitoring and reporting on whether we remain on track with delivering the Strategy.

The Housing Strategy Priorities

4.5 There are four headline priority areas within the Strategy. First, **supporting the delivery of substantial yet sustainable growth**. A range of key objectives are identified to contribute to the delivery of growth in Peterborough. These include confirming that we are to maintain the current targets for additional dwellings in Peterborough but also ensuring that growth is sustainable and achieves high environmental standards. Supporting other important initiatives such as ensuring a supply of suitable accommodation for Peterborough's

growing student population, meeting the accommodation needs of the new City Hospital and supporting Government's promotion of self build, are all identified as important objectives. The council's asset disposal plans and ways of stimulating the local housing market through the council's 'mortgage scheme' are also identified as key areas that can contribute to Peterborough's growth.

- 4.6 The second priority is **securing the regeneration and improvements to Peterborough's housing stock**. This priority focuses on utilising a range of preventative and proactive measures that will improve living conditions in Peterborough's existing homes. The key objectives identified are tackling empty homes, addressing serious disrepair in the private sector through grants and through enforcement and maximising the energy efficiency of existing housing.
- 4.7 The third priority is **meeting existing and future housing needs**. The key objectives that are identified to contribute to achieving this priority are: maximising the supply of affordable housing within the context of Government's new social housing funding regime; preventing and alleviating homelessness and rough sleeping in Peterborough through a range of measures with a strong focus on homelessness prevention; ensuring the suitability of accommodation for households with specific housing needs including older people and people with disabilities both within the existing stock through aids and adaptations and within future stock by ensuring the provision of a range of property types that will cater for different specialist needs; and meeting Gypsy and Traveller needs (especially in terms of meeting short term temporary needs).
- 4.8 The fourth priority is **encouraging the development of mixed and sustainable communities**. The key objectives identified in this section are; ensuring that new housing developments are planned and managed to ensure a sense of community is developed; ensuring a balanced mix of property types and tenures; ensuring the sustainability of rural communities through affordable housing provision to address local need; supporting community led housing solutions (in both rural and urban neighbourhoods); and ensuring that allocation policies and tenure policies for social housing promote mixed and sustainable communities in the light of Government's social housing reforms.

Peterborough's Strategic Tenancy Policy

- 4.9 Included as an appendix to the Housing Strategy is the 'Peterborough Strategic Tenancy Policy'. The enactment of the Localism Bill in November 2011 introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy within 12 months of the Commencement Order that came into force on 15 January 2012. We undertook a proactive stance and prepared a draft Strategic Tenancy Policy alongside the wider draft Housing Strategy and consulted on both documents from mid November 2011 (see section below for details on consulting). Consequently Peterborough will be one of the first local authorities in the country to have an adopted policy. Once adopted, the Strategic Tenancy Policy will be published as a separate document as well as continuing to be included as an appendix to the Housing Strategy.
- 4.10 The purpose of a Strategic Tenancy Policy is to set out what the council expects from housing associations which operate within the district. To be clear, 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;
 - The appropriate cap to rent levels for homes let as 'affordable rent' tenure, to ensure affordability; and
 - Any other matter to be taken into consideration by social landlords to determine how their stock is let.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Housing Strategy and Enabling team has coordinated the preparation of the Strategy, in association with a considerable number of teams across the council, reflecting the wide range of issues which the Strategy covers. Following approval of the draft Housing Strategy and the draft Strategic Tenancy Policy at Cabinet on 7 November 2011, both documents were subject to a 4 week public consultation process from 14 November to 12 December 2011.
- 5.2 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. 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 On completion of the consultation process, issues raised during that consultation period were fully considered and changes have been made to the Housing Strategy and Strategic Tenancy Policy where appropriate. Further details of the consultation responses received can be found at Appendix six of the Strategy document.
- 5.6 In short, the consultation exercise was a success. We received some useful comments and suggestions though it is also notable that there was considerable support for the Strategy including from our key stakeholders, such as housing associations and from Stewart Jackson MP. Sustainable Growth Scrutiny further debated the post consultation version of the Strategy on 10 January and also supported the broad thrust of its approach.
- 5.7 As a result of the consultation, the following notable amendments have been incorporated into the final version of the Housing Strategy:
- Introduction of a new policy under the heading 'Ensuring Effective Housing Enforcement' which commits the council to exploring the benefits and implications of introducing a 'selective licensing' scheme in Millfield and New England as a means of regulating the private rented sector in that area of the city
 - Expansion of the commentary relating to the city council's approach to land asset disposals to include reference to the council's capacity to consider on a case by case basis accepting a price below best consideration for land if it is satisfied that this would be in the best interest of the community and in keeping with government regulation and also to add reference to the council's capacity to consider 'alternative payment mechanisms' for land transactions (such a deferred payment arrangements).
 - Amendment to the policy that commits the council to preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule so that it also commits to carrying out a full consultation on the proposed charging schedule.
- Numerous other minor amendments and updates have been undertaken to the document as a result of feedback from the consultation and progress on national policy delivery and local delivery targets.
- 5.8 As a result of the consultation, the following notable amendment has been incorporated into

the final version of the Strategic Tenancy Policy:

- A new introductory paragraph has been included at the beginning of section three of the policy to emphasise that the policy has been developed in collaboration with the Council's partner housing associations and to confirm that the terms of the policy reflects the robust shared statement of our mutual objectives and values.

6 ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 6.1 It is anticipated that Cabinet will support the Peterborough Housing Strategy 2011 to 2015 and the Peterborough Strategic Tenancy Policy. Subject to Cabinet approval, as this is a Major Policy Item, Council will be asked to formally adopt the Housing Strategy and the Strategic Tenancy Policy on 22 February 2012.

7 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is a statutory duty to prepare a Housing Strategy, albeit there is very limited statutory guidance as to what it must contain. The Council's current Housing Strategy (2008 to 2011) has come to the end of its intended period and thus a revised strategy is necessary. The Localism Act November 2011 introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy within 12 months of the Commencement Order that came into force on 15 January 2012.
- 7.2 The Housing Strategy has also been prepared bearing in mind the financial constraints under which the council will operate during the 2011 to 15 period.

8 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The council could decide to delay adoption of a revised Housing Strategy. However, not only is the existing Strategy coming to the end of its life but it was prepared under a very different national economic and policy situation – it is considered essential, therefore, that our local housing strategy is updated to reflect both of these matters.
- 8.2 Alternative policy options are, of course, possible for inclusion within the strategy. However, the ones presented today are considered by officers as fit for purpose, tackle the key issues that Peterborough faces, yet are realistic and take account of financial constraints.

9 IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 **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 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 agreeing this draft Strategy for the purposes of consultation, other than those already accounted for in existing budgets.
- 9.2 **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 is nothing in this 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.

9.3 **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.

10 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

None.