

SUBMISSION TO COMMUNITY HOUSING AND HEALTH (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY)

COMMITTEE

Date: 24th March 2014

Agenda Item: 7

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SUBMISSION BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY, HOUSING AND HEALTH

FIT FOR THE FUTURE - HOUSING SERVICE REVIEW

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 A Service Review of Housing Services is to be undertaken under phase 2 of the Fit 4 Future Programme. Members are asked to comment on the Project Initiation Document.

2. Background

- 2.1 The purpose of a service review is to consider what service is required, assess how we currently deliver it, compare, contrast and challenge those working practices and determine how it could be delivered differently in the future, either internally, as a shared service, or externally and ensuring that efficiencies are delivered and the service is improved.
- 2.2 The review of Housing Services will include homelessness and housing options, delivery of disabled facilities grants and housing assistance, strategic housing and the provision of affordable housing, private sector housing including enforcement and empty properties, energy efficiency and carbon reduction.
- 2.3 A Project Initiation Document has been prepared and this is attached at **APPENDIX A**. The outcomes the project is seeking to achieve are reproduced below: -
- To reduce the cost of Housing Services.
 - To maximise income generation
 - An effective and efficient structure and delivery model is identified for Housing Services
 - To ensure a Housing Service that complies with legislative and contractual requirements
 - To ensure a Housing Service that continues to be able deliver the priorities identified in both the Housing and Homelessness Strategies.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That the Committee notes the contents of the report and Members are asked to comment on the Project Initiation Document attached at **Appendix A**.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Service review aims to reduce the cost of Housing Services and maximise income generation where possible.

5. Strategic Plan Implications

5.1 Housing Services has a key part to play in contributing to the delivery of the 'Plan for Lichfield District 2012-2016', particularly within the themes of 'supporting people' and 'shaping place' where long term outcomes relevant to housing services are :

- We'll help and support vulnerable adults, families and children to live independent and fulfilled lives in their own homes and communities, and prevent homelessness wherever we can
- We'll improve the health and wellbeing of the whole population making sure we make the biggest improvement for people with the lowest life expectancy
- We'll work with others to provide access and choice to a range of market specialist and affordable homes that meet the needs of our existing and future residents
- We'll reduce carbon emissions and promote energy efficiency and renewable energy within the home

6. Sustainability and Climate Change Issues

6.1 The creation of mixed, sustainable communities where people want to live and work, both now and in the future is a key principle of the priorities identified in the Housing Strategy.

7. Human Rights Issues

7.1 None identified.

8. Crime and Community Safety Issues

8.1 The Strategy includes the aim of working with partners to support those who are vulnerable, especially those with complex needs. This will include ex-offenders and those with issues around substance misuse.

9. Risk Management Issues

Risk	Likelihood / impact	Risk Category	Countermeasure	Responsibility
Work to deliver Service Review of Housing impacts on service delivery	Medium /Medium	Legal & Reputational	Project management of the Housing Service Review and close monitoring of service delivery	Housing Services Manager

Project Initiation Document

Document purpose

The Project Initiation Document (PID) is the collation of information that defines the project and how it will be managed.

The PID has three main purposes:

1. To ensure that Members and Leadership Team have all information necessary to assess the project
2. To be a baseline document that future progress and ongoing viability can be assessed against
3. To provide a single-source of reference about the project, enabling people to access the information needed to familiarise themselves with what the project is about and how it is being managed

Project details

Project Name	Housing Services Review
Project Executive	Helen Spearey
Project Manager	Clive Gibbins
Project Sponsor	Leadership Team
Project Team	Helen Spearey, Clive Gibbins, Lucy Robinson, David Whittaker, Gareth Davies, Financial Services Rep, Julie Walker (Head of Neighbourhood Bromford Housing), further external challenge to be identified
Lead Councillor	Councillor Colin Greatorex
Challenge Director	Diane Tilley

Document details

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Project Initiation Document

PROJECT DEFINITION

1. Project description

The project will review all elements of the Housing Service to consider ways of becoming more cost effective and efficient. For the purposes of this review Housing Services¹ includes:

- **homelessness, housing options** and advice
- **strategic housing including the assessment of housing needs and stock conditions**, development of our housing strategies and enabling the provision of affordable housing
- the **delivery of disabled facilities grants** and other housing assistance schemes to help people repair and improve their home
- energy efficiency of homes and carbon reduction
- private sector housing including **enforcement** and dealing with empty properties

2. Project background and approach

The Council has launched a programme called Fit for the Future which includes undertaking service reviews for all parts of the Council. The Reviews will check to see:

- a) Whether we are doing the right things in the best way
- b) Whether there are any alternative ways of delivering services (including focusing on improving the effectiveness of our processes)
- c) Whether these alternative ways should be adopted by us
- d) Whether we can do things cheaper than at the moment

We need to be mindful of the changing profile of our local community. Our population is growing and the average age is increasing. This means we have to consider how we can deliver our services to our more vulnerable residents, particularly elderly people. We do not know yet how welfare reform will affect us and the services we are responsible for, and we need to monitor this closely to ensure we are able to react to any changes in demand.

As part of the Fit for the Future Programme, reviews of all service areas will be undertaken to identify the minimum outcomes (the 'must do's') we expect each service to deliver, and the costs of the various options available to us.

A comprehensive review of Housing Services is therefore required to ensure that that an efficient, cost effective service can be provided that will deliver efficiencies and explore potential opportunities for savings, income generation or alternative delivery methods including shared services.

At the same time as this Housing Service Review, we will participate in a Diagnostic Peer Review of homelessness and housing options services in partnership with Wolverhampton, Solihull and Dudley Councils. This is a key part of the Government's Gold Standard Challenge designed to deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services.

A set of principles that we will apply to the service review process are:

- Be open to all ideas.

¹ Statutory responsibilities are shown in **bold**

Project Initiation Document

- Accept a lower standard of service delivery than is presently provided, subject to this lower standard being clearly addressed in the business case and meeting the minimum outcomes identified at the start of the service review.
- Consider alternative ways of delivering services, eg. through contracts, outsourcing, the creation of trusts or mutuals, or working with the private sector.
- Consider shared services with another council²
- Benchmark, compare and embrace external challenge.
- Work in partnership with neighbouring or like minded authorities and partners wherever we can.
- Use other Councils' ideas and best practice where appropriate, and not reinvent the wheel.
- Consider the needs and seek the views of customers, stakeholders and partners where appropriate.

3. Project objectives

The objectives of the project are:-

- To consider the effectiveness of the housing service to meet its statutory requirements and priorities identified in both the Housing and Homelessness Strategies through the review of the existing structure, policies, procedures, partnerships and service level agreements.
- To analyse the needs of residents, service users and stakeholders and partners.
- To produce process maps for all key processes.
- To benchmark the Service in comparison with other Local Housing Authorities.
- To consider the outcomes of the housing review recently undertaken by Tamworth Borough Council and any lessons learnt.
- To consider alternative options for the delivery of each area of the service, including external provision, shared services with other local authorities, or ceasing activities.
- To implement cost savings and encourage income generation as part of the Fit for Future programme.
- To identify the best/preferred option that meets statutory requirements and delivers the priorities identified in both the Housing and Homelessness Strategies.
- To challenge the preferred option.

4. Project outcomes

- To reduce the overall cost of the Housing Service.
- To maximise income generation.
- To identify an effective, efficient structure and delivery model for Housing Services.
- To ensure that the Housing Service complies with its statutory duties to an acceptable level and meets all contractual requirements.
- To ensure that the Housing Service continues to be able deliver the priorities identified in both the Housing and Homelessness Strategies (see section 11 below).

² A Memorandum of Understanding with Tamworth BC was approved by Cabinet in February in which it has been agreed to look for future shared service opportunities with them. Any recommendation to develop a shared service should reflect what is in the best interests of all council tax payers and be fair and equitable

Project Initiation Document

5. In scope

- All aspects of Housing Services
- Enforcement of Private Sector Housing which is currently delivered by the Environmental Health team
- Out of hours provision of temporary accommodation for homeless people, which is currently provided through a contract with Cannock Chase DC

6. Not in scope

- The Connects Customer services team and support services in general.
- Delivery of the Public Health Work Plan³
- The Partnerships and Policy service
- Corporate and directorate administration tasks

7. Constraints

- The timescale for the completion of the review by autumn 2014
- Officer capacity to complete the review within the set timescale
- Carrying out within existing resources (including staff time)
- Statutory requirements will still need to be met during the Review period
- Customer needs and demands will need to be met whilst the review is ongoing
- Existing legal agreements and contracts to be observed

8. Assumptions

- The availability of the project team throughout the project
- That the demand and need for housing services will continue at the similar levels into the future
- That service providers and partners continue as at present

9. Dependencies

- Impact of welfare reform
- Availability of capital resources for Disabled Facilities Grants and emergency housing assistance
- The adoption of the council's Local Plan
- Services provided by others are maintained at current levels e.g. County Council Support and Care Services
- The new Staffordshire wide Home Improvement Agency contract which commences 1st July 2014
- The review of Supporting People at County level
- The introduction of the Better Care Fund and related Section 75 Agreement

³ The Public Health Work Plan has been agreed as part of a signed funding agreement with Public Health Staffordshire for the period 1st September 2013 to 31st March 2015.

Project Initiation Document

SUMMARY BUSINESS CASE

10. Business Justification

Housing is very important as it is the foundation upon which we build our lives, and good quality housing is fundamental to the health and well being of members of our communities. The Council's vision for housing is 'to ensure that the housing stock meets existing and future housing needs and includes a wide choice of affordable homes in healthy, safe and sustainable communities'.

As the strategic housing authority, the district council places great priority on ensuring Lichfield District is a good place to live. Although most residents live in good quality housing, the cost of property makes it difficult for young people to stay here once they have grown up and the shortage of rented accommodation means that homelessness is relatively high. There is also a growing elderly population, whose needs for housing will change as they become older. The council therefore needs to work closely with a wide range of partners who share its goals and ambitions for developing and improving housing and housing options in the district.

The Council has endorsed the following priorities of the Housing Strategy 2013-2017:

- Improve housing choice and access to a wide range of affordable homes
- Prevent and reduce homelessness
- Ensure warm, healthy, well maintained homes, reduce fuel poverty and cut carbon emissions
- Support older and vulnerable people to live as independently and healthily as possible

COMMUNICATIONS

11. Communication Management

Most communications will be by e-mail in addition to meetings of the project group. A progress report will be submitted to Community Housing & Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee in June 2014 and September 2014.

Other methods of communication will include:

- Written meeting minutes and agendas
- Face to face meetings with staff and partners as needed
- Briefing notes for stakeholders and partners.

The main stakeholders of the project are

- Bromford and other housing associations
- Home Improvement Agency – Staffordshire Housing Association
- Providers of services (including accommodation and support) to homelessness people
- Strategic Housing Partnership Members
- Private Landlords
- Staffordshire County Council and neighbouring District Councils

Project Initiation Document

PROJECT CONTROLS

12. Project Controls

- The Project Executive and Lead Councillor will ensure the project is managed in an effective and efficient manner.
- Decisions will be agreed by the Project Team and communicated to Leadership Team and Cabinet periodically.
- A comprehensive project plan will be developed, monitored and updated throughout the project.
- A risk register will be developed, monitored and updated throughout the project.
- Equality Impact Assessments will also be undertaken in reviewing any proposed changes to the Service in the future.

Appendices

Item	Page number

Amendment History		
Document Owner:		
Version Number	Date	Reason for Amendment

Approvals				
Name	Signature	Title	Date	Version