

HOUSING STRATEGY FOR HEREFORDSHIRE

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: SOCIAL CARE ADULTS AND HOUSING

CABINET

1ST SEPTEMBER, 2005

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider and agree the Housing Strategy for Herefordshire 2005 - 2008, for submission to the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM).

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area in Herefordshire comprising one or more wards. It was included in the Forward Plan.

Recommendations

THAT the Housing Strategy for Herefordshire 2005 - 2008 be approved, subject to any alterations required to achieve Fit for Purpose rating from GOWM.

Reasons

The Council is no longer required to submit an annual Housing Investment Strategy but is required to develop a Housing Strategy that is rated as 'Fit for Purpose' following assessment by the Government Office for the West Midlands

Considerations

1. The last Housing Investment Strategy for the period 2003 – 2006 was published in July 2002, prior to the Housing Stock Transfer which took place in November 2002. The publication of the strategy coincided with the introduction of the new 'Fit for Purpose' criteria and was therefore developed without the benefit of this newly emerging guidance. Subsequent consultations with the GOWM confirmed that the Housing Investment Strategy 2003 – 2006 had marginally failed to meet the new Fit for Purpose criteria.
2. The Housing Strategy for Herefordshire 2005 – 2008 has been developed to encompass the requirements set out for achieving Fit for Purpose. In doing so appropriate consideration has been given to the evaluation of the challenges faced within Herefordshire, the relative priorities and the actions planned to achieve the agreed priorities. Appropriate regard has been given to the important role of partnership working to identify and deliver the priorities including reflection on the successes that have been achieved to date through the use of partnership working.

3. In developing the Housing Strategy, the Housing Ambition Group of the Herefordshire Partnership co-sponsored a stakeholder event in March 2005 in partnership with Strategic Housing Services. The conference brought together a range of partners, stakeholders, users and statutory, voluntary and private representatives for the purpose of establishing the key themes and priorities for housing services in Herefordshire. A list of delegates is shown at Appendix 3 of the Strategy.
4. The proposals for action agreed in consultation with our partners are set out within Sections 4 to 7 of the strategy and are brought together within a prioritised summary Action Plan at Section 9. The priorities for action over the three year period covered by the strategy are:-
 - a. To achieve a more balanced housing market
 - b. To address the increasing levels of homelessness in the County
 - c. To ensure that vulnerable people needing housing linked to support have their needs met in all parts of the area
 - d. To improve housing conditions in Herefordshire across all tenures
5. The drafting of the Housing Strategy for Herefordshire 2005 – 2008 has been subject to consultation with officers of the GOWM with a view to ensuring the Strategy satisfies the Fit for Purpose criteria.
6. A final consultation meeting was held with GOWM on 18th August, 2005 at which, subject to minor changes in the Resources and Action Plan sections of the Strategy being satisfactorily addressed, a recommendation to award Fit for Purpose rating would be made in early September 2005.
7. Subject to any amendments required by Cabinet, this report proposes that any final alterations to the draft Strategy, required as a result of any concluding consultations with GOWM, may be agreed by the Cabinet Member.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options.

Risk Management

The achievement of Fit for Purpose can contribute to a positive assessment of an Authority's housing service and will enable the Council to further assert its 'Excellent' rating for its Strategic Housing Service confirmed under the Regular Performance Assessment conducted by the Audit Commission in 2004.

Consultees

Consultation on the development of the Housing Strategy for Herefordshire 2005 – 2008 was undertaken in partnership with the Housing Ambition Group of the Herefordshire Partnership and included the consultees listed in Appendix 3 of the Strategy.

Background Papers

None.