

<b>17 January 2012</b>		<b>ITEM 7</b>
<b>Health Well-being Overview and scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Thurrock's Housing Strategy 2012-17 and Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Group</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Cllr Andrew Smith Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Linda Sinclair, Interim Head of Housing		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Graham Farrant, Chief Executive		
<b>This report is Public</b>		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To highlight the key priorities of the housing strategy and for the committee to consider recommending the adoption of a new Housing Strategy for the period 2012 -17 to cabinet.		

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Housing Strategy sets out our housing plans and ambitions for the period 2012 - 17 within the Council's overall vision and objective for Thurrock. It represents our contribution to Thurrock's Community Strategy and the Council's Corporate Priorities, responds to the growth agenda, as well as deliver fundamental change in the way social housing is let, managed and delivered.

The Housing Strategy assesses the current and future housing market across tenures, seeking to balance the housing market and setting out the Council's approach to meeting need. It sets out the wider links with planning and the economy particularly the LDF, and responds to national, sub-regional and local priorities. It also links and integrates with other Council and partnership strategies. These include the delivery of affordable housing, preventing and tackling homelessness, meeting the needs of vulnerable and older people and improving the quality of our housing stock and the lives of our residents.

The strategy sets out our response to the governments wide ranging reforms including planning, housing and welfare, as well as seeking to influence local housing markets to meet local demands.

## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **The Health & Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- 1.1 Consider and comment on this report**
- 1.2 Consider and comment on the proposed Housing Strategy for 2012 - 17 and the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix A & B).**
- 1.3 Consider and comment on the proposed housing vision as outlined in 2.4 to be adopted as the housing vision for Thurrock.**
- 1.4 To recommend the proposed Housing Strategy for 21012 -17 and the findings from the Equality Impact Assessment to Cabinet.**
- 1.5 To recommend the final draft of the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) Housing Strategy 2012- 15 to cabinet.**

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

- 2.1 This strategy has been developed at a time of rapid change and uncertainty in housing and public services. The strategy sets out the Thurrock response to these key changes including HRA subsidy reform, the Localism Act, changes to the funding of affordable housing and the impact of proposed welfare reforms. The Housing Service is responding to these changes by developing a robust evidence base of needs through the Local Investment Plan; balancing competing priorities, developing new approaches, and ensuring the best use of resources and assets available to us and our partners.
- 2.2 The Housing Strategy sets out the housing plans and ambitions for the period 2012 -17. In the period covered by this strategy we are proposing specific initiatives designed to address:
  - the rapidly changing policy context;
  - the affordability gap for young people and young families;
  - the existing and emerging demand for housing;
  - improving standards across all housing sectors;
  - priority areas for regeneration;
  - the need for investment in existing stock
  - the future challenges of supporting an ageing population;
  - the needs of our most vulnerable residents.
  - the need to deliver customer focused services that deliver value for money
  - a resident led approach through community development and empowerment

Over the life of this strategy we will aim to shape housing demand and supply to meet resident needs and aspirations. This will ensure we help the most vulnerable and contribute to helping residents achieve wider regeneration goals, excellent resident led services, build energy awareness and sustainable neighbourhoods.

2.3 The housing services achievements since the last strategy has meant we have been able to make further progress in a number of areas as well as being well placed to address some of the challenges presented by new policies and emerging issues. Some of our key achievements since the last strategy include:

- All the Council's housing stock met the Decent Homes Standard by March 2010
- Social housing is let through a Choice Based Lettings system enabling greater transparency and choice
- Reduced the level of households in temporary accommodation by 50% (from Dec 2004 levels) by 2010
- We have produced 233 units of affordable housing since 2007/8
- Undertaken a Strategic Housing Market Assessment with sub regional partners
- Successful secured £4.2m for a sub regional scheme with regards to fuel poverty and empty homes; 132 clients lifted out of fuel poverty, 258 homes made thermally decent and the average SAP improved to 50-65
- Introduced an accessible housing register, resulting in over £500k savings.
- Successfully secured external funding to refurbish Gypsies & Travellers sites
- Embedded Sheltered Housing Forums
- Secured Trade School funding for next 2 years to provide young people with transferable skills
- Opening of the Seabrooke Rise Community House run by the community for the community

### **Our Housing Vision**

2.4 A clear strategic housing vision supports the wider community strategy for the area and helps all stakeholders to understand and share our ambitions for Thurrock. Our strategic housing vision for Thurrock sets out how we intend to contribute to the economic prosperity of our Borough:

*“To provide high quality housing opportunities in safe, clean and green environments. We will continue to care for our existing homes and ensure that new developments are well designed and support our ambition for our communities to flourish alongside business growth. Thurrock will be a place to live, learn and enjoy.”*

If Thurrock is to be a place of choice there needs to be good provision of housing in attractive residential areas. Thurrock aims to provide its existing and future residents with high quality housing. Our role as the strategic housing authority is to take a lead in creating sustainable communities, encouraging innovative design and making sensitive use of our environment. Thurrock also wants to ensure its existing housing in both the public and private sectors is well maintained, well managed and of a decent standard.

2.5 Over the course of this strategy we will seek to deliver our vision for housing and in particular to:

- Have supply and choice of housing in the borough that is closely aligned with demand and meets the needs of our existing and new residents.
- Have a greater range of different types of housing and supported housing/independent living schemes that are accessible to vulnerable groups
- Continue to improve our council homes and estates to create decent homes; ensuring housing investment plays a key role in helping to create attractive neighbourhoods; reduce carbon emissions from our houses; and making improvements which contribute to the quality of peoples' lives and place making.
- Have a thriving, well controlled private rented market that provides good quality accommodation for our residents,
- Tenants and residents are at the heart of what we do, and the introduction of the Tenants Panel will influence how our housing services are designed and delivered. Ensuring high quality, customer focused services are delivered that reflect what residents need and want.

## The Strategic Goals

2.6 The Housing Strategy has four strategic priorities focused on delivering quality, value for money, providing the right type of housing to meet the needs of residents and provide appropriate support to enable vulnerable residents to maintain their independence.

2.7 Through the life of this strategy are priorities are:

- **Managing and improving housing supply and choice**

*To better match demand and supply to ensure sustainable access to homes where mixed communities flourish*

- **Meeting and supporting the needs of vulnerable groups**

*Vulnerable young people and adults are able to maintain and increase their independence*

- **Investing in the Housing Stock and environmental sustainability**

*Residents living in decent homes suitable for their needs*

- **Ensure all services are effective and achieve value for money**

*Residents receive high quality, effective, customer focused services*

2.8 We recognise that if we are to realise the priorities in this housing strategy, we will need to work in partnership with key stakeholders including, TGSE, health colleagues, Registered Providers, private sector landlords, tenants and leaseholder groups, and housing developers.

## Content of the Housing Strategy

2.9 Housing plays an important role across a number of services and can be a key determinant to the successful delivery of a number of strategies and plans. So, it is necessary that the links are established and understood across

the different service areas links include; Local Investment Plan, Sustainable Communities Strategy, Local Development Framework.

- 2.10 The Strategy provides an overview of the Housing Market discussing;
- Demographic change and its significant effect and influence on the current and future demand and the specific requirements of specific groups. Therefore our housing services are required to adapt to ensure our services meet the needs of both current and future residents
  - The key conclusions from the Strategic Housing market Assessment
  - Summary of property prices, how this effects the affordability of the housing market, therefore housing choice and options
- 2.11 Each strategic priority highlights the key issues and challenges. The strategy discusses through the context of the relevant objectives and the subsequent action plan how we can prioritise and address the issues and challenges through partnership working and limited resources.
- 2.12 The Council has recognised that the change in economic circumstances following the global recession means that providers of public services will need to demonstrate that they are providing services that are more efficient but increasingly driven by and focussed on the needs of its customers.
- 2.13 To make its due contribution to future success, we will review the capacity, processes and funding required to implement local plans, while seeking to maximise the local leverage of local and sub-regional partnerships on scarce public resources
- 2.14 In view of the level of need within the Borough it is necessary to assess relative priorities; it is not possible to meet all need because resources to achieve objectives are limited. Housing themes and the actions are prioritised in line with national, regional and local concerns. The Council will ensure that available resources are focussed economically, effectively and efficiently to achieve its key priorities.
- 2.15 While the Housing Strategy is necessarily ambitious to impact on the housing conditions in Thurrock, it would be impossible to turn the vision into actions and results without sound financial underpinning.
- 2.16 Wider housing and regeneration conditions can change rapidly over time, e.g. events in the economy, housing market, new government priorities, resources available, and evolving best practice. Through monitoring and review we will ensure that the action plans stay on track, taking remedial action where this is not the case. We also want to learn lessons and make improvements to our approach where this is required. We will carry out annual reviews of the housing strategy to ensure actions are achieved within the timescales set out in the delivery plan

## Thames Gateway South Essex Housing Strategy 2012- 15

2.17 The Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) Strategic Housing Group has developed a medium term three-year housing strategy. The TGSE is a partnership of five local authorities and registered providers (RP). This strategy provides the sub-regional context, taking a wide view of housing issues across the sub region, which makes up our housing market.

2.18 The strategy focus on a number of key actions that are common to all partners and past experience has shown that by working together we can achieve a greater outcome.

2.19 Following the consultation event and the previous supporting work of the Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Group, the following key thematic actions are proposed:

### **1. New Funding Models / Viability / Evidence Base / Site Development**

*Enabling the development of high quality and sustainable affordable housing in places where people want to live responding to local need and supporting the economy.*

### **2. Private sector housing / Green Deal / Decent Homes / Empty Homes**

*Improving the condition and usage of existing housing across all tenures taking into account social and environmental factors that impact on quality of life.*

### **3. Planning for Older People / Extra Care / Adaptations / Under Occupation / Homeless**

*Enabling people to make informed choices about their housing circumstances and enabling them to meet their own housing needs. Develop links between health, well being, employment and housing to help prevent homelessness and support vulnerable people.*

2.20 The draft strategy will be recommended to the Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Members Group, at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012. We plan to present both strategies to February's Cabinet.

## **3. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:**

3.1 Issues and options (through the action plan) are addressed in the main text of this document. A summary can be found in appendix E.

## **4. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

4.1 We continue to ensure that our Housing Strategy meets the wider issues of the Borough by consulting with the widest range of stakeholders as possible. Therefore the Housing Strategy has been developed in partnership with

organisations with an interest in the Borough's housing. The Strategy is a product of joint working and analysis is rooted in partnership working and other joint strategies. A joint consultation day was held in May 2010. The key points have been reflected throughout the strategy. Further consultation for Thurrock included a Councillors Questionnaire, a Councillors Briefing. The consultation was further updated late 2011 by sending a draft Strategy to all key stakeholders for comment and Tenant Excellence Panel and the Corporate Strategy Board.

- 4.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation on the Housing Strategy. Resident engagement initiatives which will focus primarily on local residents and stakeholders have ensured key vulnerable groups were included in this process.

## 5. **IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 5.1 A clear strategic housing vision supports the wider community strategy for the area and helps all stakeholders to understand and share our ambitions for Thurrock. Our strategic housing vision for Thurrock sets out how we intend to contribute to the economic prosperity of our Borough. This vision complements the Council priorities:

- 1 *Improve the education and skills of local people*
- 2 *Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity*
- 3 *Ensure a safe, clean and green environment*
- 4 *Provide and commission high quality and accessible services that meet, wherever possible, individual needs*
- 5 *Build pride, respect and responsibility in Thurrock's communities and its residents*

## 6. **IMPLICATIONS**

### 6.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**  
 Telephone and email: **01375 652772**  
**mxjones@thurrock.gov.uk**

The report sets out the housing strategy for 2012 to 2017.

The costs associated with the delivery of the housing service are part of the budget setting process and are incorporated into the HRA 30 year business plan. This includes the changes to the housing subsidy system, and a detail report on this will be presented to Cabinet in February 2012.

### 6.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Jamie Hollis**

Telephone and email: **01375 652925**  
**[jhollis@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:jhollis@thurrock.gov.uk)**

The Council's housing strategy is an important mechanism for planning the Authority's approach to fulfilling its statutory and discretionary housing duties. Although there are no specific legal implications arising out of this report, legal advice should be sought prior to implementing any of the proposed schemes.

### 6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
 Telephone and email: **01375 652472**  
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The Council has a statutory duty to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and the promotion equal opportunity in the provision of services and employment. This means that due regard should be given by the Council to the equality implication of any strategy, policy, function, or service provision of the Council. The Housing Strategy aims to comply with this legislation and support the whole community. This includes a particular emphasis on understanding the needs and aspirations of all residents.

The provision of additional affordable housing will meet the housing needs of those currently on the Council's housing lists, which are representative of a range of equality groups in Thurrock. This proposal therefore aims to comply with the requirement of the Equality Act 2010. The EIA that was completed as part of the consultation on the Housing Strategy accompanies this report and this details any adverse impact and remedial action proposed. The equality impact assessment included positive resident engagement initiatives focused primarily on local residents and stakeholders and ensured key equality groups were included in this process.

### 6.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

#### **Section 17: Crime and Disorder Considerations:**

Buildings are built to conform to the Secure By Design (SBD) guidelines and so reduce the opportunity for crime

## 7. **CONCLUSION**

7.1 This strategy has been developed at a time of rapid change and uncertainty in housing and public services. It sets out the Thurrock response to these key changes. We recognised the role of different housing tenure have to play in meeting housing needs and aspiration at different points in peoples' lifetimes. We are committed to explore new investment models and delivery vehicles to deliver new homes and increase housing choice like the new social housing



rented development scheme, Oxwich Close, which has been fully funded by the council and built on council land. The Council's strategy around the use of its own land will be a key contributor to bring forward housing supply.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:**

TGSE Strategic Market Assessment Updated 2010  
Thurrock's Corporate Plan 2010 -11  
Thurrock 2020: The Sustainable Community Strategy

**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- **Appendix A:** Thurrock's Housing Strategy 2012 - 17.
- **Appendix B:** Equality & Impact Assessment
- **Appendix C:** Final Draft -Thames Gateway South Essex Housing Strategy

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