

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

24 NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

DRAFT LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2016-2018

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to begin formal consultation on the draft Local Housing Strategy 2016-2018 (attached at Appendix 1).

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The implementation of this Strategy will help to address the following emerging Corporate Priorities:

- Supporting a successful economy;
- Helping people to be more self-reliant; and
- Making smarter use of resources.

3. Background

- 3.1 Under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities have a strategic role to play in the functioning of the local housing market. The principle way this can be delivered is through a Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The intention is for local authorities to play a lead role in developing an approach to housing across all tenures and ensure the delivery of more integrated housing and related services to meet local need.
- 3.2 The strategic housing function incorporates an enabling role, with the local authority working in partnership with other public, private and third sector organisations to deliver suitable housing and to develop innovative solutions to address local housing needs.
- 3.3 The Local Housing Strategy sets out the locally agreed, long term vision for housing and it provides a statement of local strategic housing-related priorities and outcomes, set against a framework of national legislation, plans and strategies.
- 3.4 The current Local Housing Strategy has been in place since 2009 and requires revision in order to take account of new legislation introduced by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 The purpose of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is to set out clearly a vision for housing within County Borough of Bridgend, and the key priorities through which

it is to be delivered. The LHS must be as responsive as possible to the challenges ahead, enabling the key housing objectives to be delivered in light of the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental influences on the housing sector in the County Borough.

- 4.2 A number of new requirements have been placed on local authorities as a result of the new Housing (Wales) Act 2014. By 2018, the Council will have undertaken a Local Housing Market Assessment, a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and prepared a Homelessness Strategy, as a result of the Act. For this reason, it is proposed that this LHS is a relatively short-term strategy, covering the period 2016 to 2018, after which it can be reviewed in the light of these assessments. It may also be possible to incorporate the Homelessness Strategy into the LHS from 2018, subject to guidance from Welsh Government.
- 4.3 A draft LHS for 2016 to 2018 is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.4 The proposed housing vision for the County Borough of Bridgend is as follows:
“To ensure that Bridgend County is a place that people want to live in, where there is a choice of good quality, affordable, and sustainable housing, appropriate to the needs of each household”.
- 4.5 The vision will be delivered through five proposed housing priorities to allow resources and work streams to be targeted, and to define how the Council will work with partners in the public, private and voluntary sector.
- 4.6 The five proposed priorities are listed below together with the areas of focus identified to meet those priorities.

Priority 1 – Take reasonable steps to help prevent homelessness

- Providing a holistic housing solutions service
- Providing financial inclusion advice
- Improving partnership working with the private sector
- Increasing accommodation options
- Developing a homelessness strategy
- Developing a holistic approach to dealing with domestic abuse

Priority 2 – Make the best use of existing homes

- Bringing empty properties back into use
- Working with partners to maximise the use of existing stock
- Promoting energy efficiency
- Improving the conditions of private sector housing

Priority 3 - Work with partners to deliver the right type of new housing

- Undertaking a Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA)
- Undertaking a Gypsy and Traveler Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)
- Maximising the new intermediate rented housing
- Ensuring there is provision for low cost home ownership

- Maximising the use of Social Housing Grant and other grants
- Making best use of Section 106 Agreements to facilitate new accommodation and regeneration
- Ensuring the right type and size of new housing is built
- Ensuring there are appropriate services in place

Priority 4 – Help vulnerable people stay as independent, safe and secure as possible in accommodation that best meets their needs

- Ensuring that the Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan is designed to meet the needs of vulnerable people
- Developing a single access point into supported housing (Gateway)
- Redevelopment of the Council's homelessness hostel
- Developing older person Housing
- Providing appropriate adaptations in the home
- Addressing poverty
- Reducing fuel poverty
- Delivering community cohesion

Priority 5 – Create sustainable town centres through housing led regeneration

- Encouraging the regeneration of Bridgend town centre and periphery
- Encouraging the regeneration of Porthcawl town centre and periphery
- Encourage the regeneration of Maesteg town centre and periphery
- Working with housing association partners to deliver regeneration
- Promoting brownfield regeneration over greenfield new build

4.7 In line with good practice, it is proposed to consult with key stakeholders, for example, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), housing developers, housing and other third sector/voluntary groups and other statutory organisations to ensure the strategy is relevant, comprehensive, and will facilitate future partnership working.

4.8 It is further proposed to consult with the public through a questionnaire which will be publicised via a press release on the Council web pages and on the Bridgend Housing Options web pages. Hard copies of the Strategy and the questionnaire will be provided in libraries and Council Offices. The public will therefore be able to feedback online or in writing. Staff will be available to assist those members of the public who may have difficulty in accessing the consultation.

4.9 The consultation period will last for 12 weeks.

4.10 Following this consultation, a final draft Local Housing Strategy will then be reported back to Cabinet.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the consultation on

the Local Housing Strategy. In particular, the views of specialist housing and support providers will be sought, to assess its relevance to the Council's public equality duties and potential impact on protected equality characteristics.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 In addition to the well publicised new duties on local authorities in relation to homelessness prevention, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has imposed new duties in relation to the strategic housing function. For example, there is a requirement to produce a Local Housing Market Assessment every two years, and to prepare a Homelessness Strategy. These duties will impose an inescapable financial burden on the Council, and while some funding has been provided by Welsh Government to assist in homelessness prevention, no additional resources are being made available for the enhanced strategic housing requirements. Historically, the Housing and Community Regeneration Service has made a significant contribution to savings targets in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and staffing levels are no longer sufficient to enable this work to be carried out in-house. The cost of undertaking additional assessments and strategy development, and the impact of this on departmental budgets will therefore have to be closely monitored going forward.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Cabinet is recommended to:-

8.1.1 Note the additional requirements placed on the Authority in relation to its strategic housing function, as a result of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, and the funding pressures arising from this in future years;

8.1.2 Approve that formal consultation takes place on the draft Local Housing Strategy, attached at Appendix 1;

8.1.3 Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet following the consultation exercise.

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Background documents

None