

Cabinet – 13 April 2005

Housing Strategy 2005-2008

Portfolio: Councillor Melvin Pitt, Housing and Community Safety

Service Area: Housing Services

Wards: All

Forward Plan: Yes

Summary of report

This report presents the completed Housing Strategy. The draft Housing Strategy was submitted to the Government Office for West Midlands (GOWM) in December 2004, to be assessed against the 'Fit for Purpose' standard. GOWM have confirmed that Walsall's Housing Strategy is 'Fit for Purpose'. The Strategy is available in the Members' Room and the Council's website.

Recommendations

It is recommended that : -

Cabinet recommend to Council that the Council agree the final version of the Borough's updated Housing Strategy.

Resource and legal considerations

It is a statutory requirement for the Council to produce this strategy. Hard copies are available in the political group rooms and electronic copies are available to view on the Council's website at www.walsall.gov.uk/housing/strategies/default.asp
The Housing Strategy 2005-2008 has been completely revised and updated, and outlines the Council's strategic and enabling role over the next 3 years.

The draft Housing Strategy, and related strategies, the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2005-2008; the Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy 2004 and the Empty Property Strategy 2004, with Cabinet's approval, were submitted to the Government Office for West Midlands (GOWM) in December 2004, to be assessed against the 'Fit for Purpose' standard. GOWM have confirmed that Walsall's Housing Strategy is 'Fit for Purpose'. This is a rigorous standard and it is a great achievement for Walsall to be the fifth of 39 authorities in the GOWM area to have achieved this status.

Citizen impact

This housing strategy, private sector housing strategy, BME housing strategy and empty property strategy address as objectives in Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership Community Plan, to make Walsall a better place to live and work and it will indirectly address other objectives:

- **improving community safety and crime reduction**
Through our strategies we will work in partnership with stakeholders to create a safe and secure environment where people want to live, work and study
- **raising educational standards through lifelong learning**
Through our strategies we will take a holistic approach to housing, health, education and employment
- **improving health, well being and social care**
Through our strategies we will be working in partnership with other stakeholders to deliver the supporting people programme, improve health conditions and tackle social exclusion
- **sustaining a better place to live and work**
Through our strategies we will facilitate urban renaissance and create sustainable communities
- **regenerating the economy**
Through our strategies we will integrate environmental, social and housing initiatives to make the provision of quality housing a catalyst for economic regeneration
- **enhancing community partnership**
Through our strategies we will involve stakeholders in the development and monitoring of the strategy

Environmental impact

National policies and targets for housing included in the strategy are focused on improving the quality of existing and new homes, these are:

- achieve a target of 60% of all new homes to be built on Brownfield land.
- making best use of existing stock especially long term empty homes.
- by 2010 bring all Social housing into decent condition and increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable groups.

Performance and risk management issues

Progress against the action plan attached to the Housing Strategy will be monitored to ensure we achieve both current and future strategic objectives. A number of strategic groups currently exist that cover different aspects of this Housing Strategy. For example Walsall Housing Partnership which is the Council's Housing Association liaison group and also the Housing Theme Group for the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership. These groups play an important role in monitoring and achieving outcomes.

Equality implications

The Council needs to ensure fairness and equity in the delivery of services. The Housing Strategy and related strategies such as the BME housing strategy recognises that different communities have experienced different patterns of settlement and have varied lifestyles and economic circumstances all of which have an impact on the need for housing and services.

The Housing Strategy makes links to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) and aids and adaptations, which are covered in more detail in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.

Consultation

We are committed to involving a wide range of stakeholders in the development of the strategies from the earliest opportunity. It is seen as an evolving process with a variety of groups and partnerships contributing, of which the formal consultation on the draft strategies forms only part. In addition, stakeholders play key roles in delivering and monitoring the delivery of the housing strategy.

A multi-agency approach has been taken in revising these strategies. This has included representatives from Planning, Regeneration, Community Safety, Social Services, Financial Services, Environmental Health, Primary Care Trust and Housing Associations.

We have consulted the Housing Corporation, all members of Walsall Housing Partnership, Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership Environmental Theme Group, voluntary groups, interest groups, Tenant Management Organisations, Walsall Tenants and Residents Federation, Community Empowerment Network, Housing Association tenants, and carers.

Vision 2008

The Housing and related strategies make a positive contribution to the achievement of the Council's vision for 2008 and in particular to the following:

(1) Make Walsall a healthy and caring place

We will work to achieve this pledge by: -

- Helping more people to live at home with care tailored to their needs
- Provide more choice to vulnerable people about where they live
- Involve service users in planning and improving the way we deliver our services

(2) Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall

- Invest in improving the image of Walsall

We will work to help achieve this pledge by ensuring that those people allocated accommodation feel part of a community they live in.

(3) Make it easier to access local services

- introduce standards of customer service for all services – so people know what to expect and what to do if things go wrong

We will work to help achieve this pledge by exploring ways people can access our service, such as putting application forms on our website.

(4) Strengthen the local economy

- Work to ensure that all social housing in Walsall meets the government's Decent Home standards

We will work to achieve this pledge by working with our housing association partners to ensure they meet the Decent Home standard by 2010 and working in the private sector to ensure the percentage of vulnerable people living in Decent Homes is increased.

(5) Listen to what local people want

- Establish local neighbourhood partnerships. These will be an opportunity for local people and stakeholders to have a real say in the issues affecting their neighbourhood. The local partnerships will identify what matters to people and prepare a plan for what needs to improve

(6) Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority

- Work to ensure that the council can move through the official performance rankings, from 'poor' to 'fair', towards our aim of being an 'excellent' authority by 2008.

Background papers

None.

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Signed:

Executive Director: Jamie Morris

Date: 4 April 2005



Signed:

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Melvin Pitt

Date: 4 April 2005