

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
19th APRIL 2011

Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2011-16

OPEN	
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	Multi – A Better Environment for Today and Tomorrow; Economic Success Shared By All; Improving Health & Wellbeing
CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY:	Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor M J Hart
DIRECTOR:	Director of Planning & Regulatory Services
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APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 - Worcestershire Housing Strategy Appendix 2 - Wyre Forest District Council Action Plan 2011-12 <i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details.)</i>

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree the draft Worcestershire Housing Strategy and an action plan for the Council in delivering the Wyre Forest element for 2011/12.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND to Council that:

- 2.1 **The Worcestershire Housing Strategy and associated Action Plan 2011/12 be adopted by the Council.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Strategic housing functions, which include housing options, homelessness, prevention, affordable housing, supported housing services and private sector housing conditions and enforcement, are predominantly operated through district councils with a very wide range of partnerships and statutory and voluntary sector agencies. Strategic arrangements and revenue funding for supported housing provision is administered through the Worcestershire Supporting People programme and has a major impact on strategic housing.

- 3.2 Increasingly there has been more co-operation and joint development between the six district councils, Worcestershire County Council, its partners and other local authorities outside Worcestershire. Significant examples include the South Housing Market Area Partnership, the development of the countywide Local Investment Plan and the development of a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme. In June 2009 the decision was taken by Wyre Forest District Council to support the development of a Countywide Housing Strategy to replace the lapsed Wyre Forest Housing Strategy. We are corporately and jointly committed to this approach as the Chief Executives and Leaders for the district councils, gave approval for the development of a County Housing Strategy in 2009.
- 3.3 District Councils are required to provide comprehensive, needs led, Housing Strategies and Homelessness Strategies which focus primarily on an area's needs. Increasingly these strategies are required to take a much wider geographical overview and respond to complex policy and strategic policy requirements of Government, key partners and stakeholders.
- 3.4 In practice the Worcestershire Local Authorities have been working in a close and effective partnership on housing matters for many years through the Worcestershire Chief Housing Officers Group (CHOG) and Worcestershire Supporting People Commissioning Board (SPCB). Recent Government guidance issued by the Communities and Local Government has broadened the approach for the development of Housing Strategies, enabling these to be developed at Local Strategic Partnership or sub regional level as well as locally.
- 3.5 The new countywide strategy will address national and countywide issues and priorities. It would also include a local focus for each of the districts with Action Plans that reflected the key outcomes for partners.
- 3.6 The six strategic housing authorities have previously developed individual district housing strategies which have led to improved services for our local communities. These strategies have also improved our approach to working together and this has led to an increase in the number of countywide initiatives.
- 3.7 It is intended that the new Countywide Housing Strategy will sit alongside the existing Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy and the Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy, which are closely aligned. The Countywide Housing Strategy also sits comfortably with the recent dialogue that has been developed by the district councils, County Councils and RSLs with the HCA on the development of the Local Investment Plan (LIP) to guide the Homes and Communities Agency's investment in affordable housing across Worcestershire.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The **Vision** set out in the new strategy is ***“The right home, at the right time, in the right place”*** with a view to every household in Worcestershire being able to access housing that suits their needs and circumstances when they need it. In order to achieve the vision, the strategy identifies four **Primary Goals**:

- **To make better use of existing homes**
- **Deliver more new affordable homes**
- **Improve the condition of existing homes**
- **Provide housing related support**

4.2 To underpin these goals, the strategy aims:

- To ensure that our plans contribute to the development of sustainable communities and economic success for Worcestershire.
- To adopt a strategic commissioning approach, including identification of needs; gap analysis; prioritisation; outcome based commissioning; monitoring and review, to ensure the right solutions are provided.
- To embrace the diversity that exists within Worcestershire and ensure that we plan to meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- To ensure that services are delivered efficiently balancing performance, customer satisfaction and cost.

4.3 The strategy is aimed at anyone with an interest in the commissioning and delivery of housing related services within the county. Its objective is to influence thinking, policy making and action at a county and local level to meet the housing aspirations of individuals and communities and to support Local Housing Authorities in attracting resources into Worcestershire.

4.4 Central to the strategy is the promotion of partnership working with customers, other agencies and across boundaries to create sustainable places to live. The strategy identifies the importance of working with all housing providers, including those in the private sector, to achieve a balanced housing market and we will promote the document and its priorities to developers and landlords.

4.5 The Strategic Housing Team have developed a Wyre Forest Housing Strategy Action Plan to support the County Housing Strategy. This action plan outlines the local actions we will be taking to support the overall goals and underpinning aims specifically within Wyre Forest, in addition to the work we will undertake to support delivery of the countywide action plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications to Wyre Forest District Council associated with the approval of the Countywide Housing Strategy and Action Plan as the implementation of the actions will be carried out within existing Strategic Housing staff resources. Where actions within the action plan are set to assess or investigate the potential implementation of certain new services and local funding would be required, further reports would be made to Cabinet for their consideration, including any budgetary implications.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Section 87(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 provides that the Secretary of State may require a local housing authority to have a strategy in respect of such matters relating to housing as he may specify. The Secretary of State may impose requirements as to what ends the strategy is designed to achieve, the formulation of policy or review of the strategy.

6.2 Subsection 2 permits the Secretary of State to require an authority, at a specified time, to supply a statement of their housing strategy and any other housing material that

may be specified. Further, requirements as to the form, content and supply of the statement may also be imposed.

- 6.3 Policies relating to Homelessness, Choice Based Lettings and Private Sector Housing relate to this strategy and have come before committees and Cabinet as separate documents.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken for this strategy.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 It is important that the Council has a coherent and comprehensive housing strategy in place to ensure that it meets its statutory and discretionary housing service requirements.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The development of a Worcestershire Housing Strategy has been supported by all of the Worcestershire Councils and other key delivery partners. Its implementation will continue to be overseen by the Chief Housing Officers Group and within individual District Council political structures. The Strategy action plan will be reviewed annually by Wyre Forest.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 This document has been sent out for consultation with relevant stakeholders and Council Members. The closing date is the 11th April 2011 and a consultation questionnaire is attached at Appendix 3.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Worcestershire Housing Strategy.
11.2 Wyre Forest Action Plan 2011 – 12.
11.3 Consultation Questionnaire.