

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**19<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2011**

**Recommendation from Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee,  
Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

**Worcestershire Housing Strategy**

The Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee considered a report from the Strategic Housing Services Manager that explained why a countywide housing strategy had been developed to replace the former district housing strategy. The report outlined who the report was aimed at and who and what helped shape the strategy. It also summarised the key vision and objectives of the strategy.

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.

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 DC 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.

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.

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 Department for 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.

The new countywide strategy will address and pick up 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.

## **Agenda Item No. 8.1**

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.

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 Registered Social Landlords 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.

**Recommended to Cabinet to Recommend to Council:**

**The Worcestershire Housing Strategy and associated action plans be adopted.**