



Ryedale District Council

REPORT TO: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

DATE: Thursday 9 October 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Julian Rudd
Head of Economy & Housing

SUBJECT: Scoping of affordable housing review

WARDS AFFECTED: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertaking a review of affordable housing as part of its work programme, and to agree the scope and programme for any such review.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

That members consider:

- (i) Whether to undertake a review of affordable housing as part of the Committee's work programme; and
- (ii) That if (i) above is approved, the scope and timetable of the review be agreed.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 At the 3 July 2008 meeting of this Committee the Work Plan for 2008/9 was discussed. Members were reminded that the 2004 CPA Report on Ryedale District Council had identified the need to develop and focus the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, in response, the Authority had committed to the production of an annual work plan to provide better links to corporate priorities.

3.2 When considering the reviews to be undertaken in the coming year, the Committee was requested to have regard to certain issues, including that:

- Although the Committee had from time to time touched upon aspects of affordable housing it had not considered the continuing impact on the community of a lack of affordable homes, the performance of the Council to date, the views of the Audit Commission and the high priority the Council gave to affordable housing.
- That there should be a focus on the implementation of the recommendations from the Audit Commission as contained in the Annual Audit Letter;

- 3.3 Following a detailed discussion it was resolved 'That Affordable Housing be considered the next major scrutiny review for the Committee after the completion of the Waste Management Review'. Although the scoping of any affordable housing review was programmed to take place at the 11 December 2008 meeting of this Committee, it was agreed at the 7 August meeting to bring this forward.
- 3.4 This Committee also discussed housing issues at the Special meeting on 19 August when it resolved 'That Full Council creates a broad based Steering Group for Affordable Housing' with an aim 'To enable Ryedale District Council to have a strategy and systems that ensure that affordable housing stretch target is achieved'. However, Full Council on 4 September 2008 subsequently resolved to "instruct Community Services and Licensing Committee to consider affordable housing as a standing item on its agendas" and to "consider how best to meet the aspirations expressed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee". The CS&L Committee on 25 September then agreed to undertake the following actions:
- 'a. Affordable Housing tabled as a standing item on all Community Services and Licensing Agendas;
 - b. The reporting of progress against the Housing Strategy Action Plan being brought to each meeting;
 - c. The development of a set of performance indicators to improve the means by which Ryedale District Council measures its performance against the delivery of affordable housing targets;
 - d. The regular reporting of the indicators to committee;
 - e. To bring forward for discussion and approval new initiatives to enable the Council to both deliver its affordable housing objectives and to help those in housing need.
 - f. To invite presentations from officers and partners on the following:
 - examples of best practise;
 - potential new opportunities – national, regional and district;
 - changes to national policy;
 - g. To run a training/briefing session for Members that will cover the following:
 - national policy and the impact that has on the approach the council could take;
 - practical issues and the options the council has taking account of national, regional and local policy;
 - the need for a local policy and what the council will need to do to achieve an acceptable policy.'

4.0 REPORT

- 4.1 Given the above background it is vital that any review of affordable housing activities takes account of the activities of the CS&L Committee in this regard, and a decision is required as to whether the Committee still wishes to undertake a review of affordable housing.
- 4.2 If a scrutiny review of affordable housing is to be undertaken this should add to and not replicate the activities of the CS&L Committee, as the approach agreed at CS&L covers some of the tasks that this Committee had resolved would be undertaken by the proposed Affordable Housing Steering Group (e.g. examine new ways of obtaining affordable housing). However, the

following aspects of affordable housing could form an element of any such scrutiny review:

- Review of progress in implementing the Audit Commission's Review of Affordable Housing in North Yorkshire;
- Assessment of the impact of raised affordable housing targets in the planning system against a background of economic downturn;
- Potential for working with local estates to deliver increased levels of affordable housing in Ryedale;
- Scope for increased delivery through work with the new Homes and Communities Agency;
- Assessment of current local grants and interventions given the range of local housing needs identified in the 2007 Ryedale Housing Needs Assessment and elsewhere;
- Performance of other Local Authorities / Benchmarking, with investigation of 'success stories' in other parts of the UK to identify good practise.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a budget of £5,000 that it can use to assist in undertaking any review.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The issues relating to affordable housing are wide in their range. The review needs to be focussed and to add to the on-going activities of the Community Services and Licensing Committee with regard to affordable housing.

Background Papers:

None

OFFICER CONTACT:

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