



Ryedale District Council

REPORT TO: Community Services and Licensing Committee

DATE: 25 September 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Head of Economy & Housing - Julian Rudd

SUBJECT: Affordable Housing

WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 Following the resolution at Council on 4 September 2008 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” this report updates Members on progress with initiatives to address local housing needs, including delivery of affordable housing, and seeks endorsement of a proposed strategy for the monitoring of the delivery of this corporate priority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is **recommended** that:

- (i) Members note the progress made to date against the Housing Strategy Action Plan;
- (ii) the proposed performance management arrangements be approved;
- (iii) a programme of presentations from officers and partners on affordable housing issues be arranged;
- (iv) a training session for Members be agreed.

3. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Council adopted the delivery of affordable housing as a key outcome of one of its six Corporate Priorities in 2005: “to have opportunity of housing and employment for all”. Affordable housing is also a priority for the sustainable community strategy – Imagine Ryedale and the North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement as a stretch target.

3.2 High house prices and low average wages mean that Ryedale has one of the largest gaps between people’s earnings and the amount that they need in order to enable them to purchase a home of any district in England. An aging population, the sparse rural nature of the District and the condition of some of the housing stock add further to local housing challenges. The current credit crunch and the impact this is having on the availability of loans for house buyers together with the slow-down in the property market further intensify these challenges.

3.3 Reflecting this situation and the continued importance of delivering actions to address identified local housing challenges, Council resolved, on 4 September 2008, following a recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee that reports be brought to Community Services & Licensing Committee under a standing item of Affordable Housing.

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- 3.4 Council further resolved that this committee consider how to best meet the aspirations expressed by Overview and Scrutiny which were to “enable Ryedale District Council to have a strategy and systems that ensure that the affordable housing stretch target is achieved” through the formation of a steering group.

4. INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 In seeking to meet the intent of the resolution from Council this report will provide, for Members’ information, a progress report against the Housing Strategy Action Plan. It also puts forward a proposal of how this committee should meet the expectations requested by Council.

5. PROGRESS REPORT

- 5.1 Community Services & Licensing Committee approved the Ryedale Housing Strategy Action Plan in January 2008. The Action Plan details the comprehensive package of actions to be undertaken to help meet identified local housing issues (including those revealed in the recent Housing Needs Assessment of Ryedale, such as the need for 292 affordable homes each year).

- 5.2 In order to assess progress against the Council’s Housing Action Plan a detailed breakdown of actions achieved thus far and those currently underway is appended to this report at Annex A. Significant achievements include:

- Securing of £5.6 million from the Regional Housing Board for Registered Social Landlord developments over the next 3 years. This will provide 107 new affordable properties;
- Secured funding to continue Rural Housing Enabler post, plus an additional part time enabler;
- In negotiation on several rural exception sites, with over 20 affordable homes likely to come forward via this route in the near future;
- Secured £400K from a developer to fund affordable housing projects;
- Secured £350,000 plus funding from Regional Housing Board for grants to adapt homes to meet the needs of their occupants in situ over the next three years;
- Established an in-house Home Improvement Agency;
- Achieved a reduction in homelessness over the 2 years from over 150 applications to 59;
- Launched a new Housing Options Service;
- Prevented 149 cases of homelessness in 2007/08;
- Agreed a Homelessness Action Plan 2008/11 and a Sub-Regional Homelessness Strategy 2008/11;
- Secured CLG funding of £60,000pa for homelessness prevention and a private sector housing options officer;
- Upgraded temporary accommodation;
- Secured CLG funding of £90,000 to upgrade and manage a homeless hostel;
- Lifted the affordable housing target on new developments from 35% to 40% of the number of new homes proposed a suitable sites;
- Completed 44 affordable homes in 2007/8.

6. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 6.1 In resolving to instruct this committee to consider affordable housing as a standing item, Council responded to a recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee the intent of which was to ensure that affordable housing stretch targets are achieved. Council resolved however not to create a steering group on the basis that it is more appropriate for this committee to consider these issues.

- 6.2 It is within the Terms of Reference of this committee to ensure that “all Statutory functions of the Council as a Local Housing Authority including assessments of housing needs, homelessness determinations and the development of a strategy to meet such needs” are met and to “determine the level of delegation to officers in respect of the following subject areas and services:
- (a) Housing Strategy, Housing Investment Programme;
 - (b) Housing standards, homelessness and advice, Housing Needs Register and Welfare Benefit;
 - (c) Private Sector Housing.
- (Ref Council Constitution, Part 3, Responsibility for Functions)*
- 6.3 It is therefore within the existing scope of this committee to properly address these issues.
- 6.4 It is proposed to meet the aspirations of both the Council resolution and the original recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny by implementing 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;¹
 - 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 which 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.
- 6.5 Much in the approach outlined above is already taking place both through officer working groups and through the existing work of this committee. New initiatives are currently being examined and investigated by officers, particularly in relation to mortgage assistance initiatives and the impact of recent government announcements on support for home-owners and for those facing fuel poverty. A new Private Sector Housing Strategy has been developed for approval by this committee; a number of Member briefings have been held over the past 12 months to advise Members of changes to government housing policy including changes to government funding with the introduction of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant and the rural housing enabler role.

¹ At the present time the reporting focuses primarily on the number of new units built. It is proposed to augment this information with additional statistical data for example: the number of homes adapted; the number of homes secured through S106 agreements; the number of empty properties brought back into use.

6.6 The approach outlined above aims to both formalise the performance management arrangements for the delivery of the Council's objectives for affordable housing and to improve the Council's performance further through close monitoring and policy development.

Background Papers: Ryedale Housing Strategy Action Plan 2008

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Richard Etherington, Housing Services Manager if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at Ryedale House, Malton telephone number 01653 600666 Ext.383 or e-mail: richard.etherington@ryedale.gov.uk.

Strategic Objective	Update
<p>To enable the provision of affordable housing for rent and low cost ownership for sale</p>	<p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Market Assessment completed, published on web-site and in use. • Completion of 44 units of affordable housing accommodation • Secured funding from Regional Housing Board and partner RSL's to secure continued employment of the Rural Housing Enabler together + the employment of an additional 0.5 fte RHE – part of a new partnership arrangement with the other North Yorkshire Districts • Negotiation of £400k commuted sum in lieu of on-site affordable housing provision • Provided support to Yorkshire Housing to secure funding approval for a three year development programme totalling £5.6m to provide 107 affordable homes. • Negotiation of 40% Target in line with the RSS • Completion of Affordable homes at Carlton Lane, Helmsley. Occupied June 08. <p>On-Going/Underway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Housing Needs Info to Developers • Maintenance of Discounted Sale Register • Yorkshire Housing Schemes/initiatives – eg garage site feasibility studies • Rural Exception Schemes – on going survey work and site identification • Review of planning policy/LDF • Involvement in Sub- Regional Best Practice
<p>Development of services to meet the needs of homeless applicants and implementation of measures to prevent homelessness</p>	<p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness Strategy agreed July 2008 • Completion of sub regional homelessness review and strategy – July 2008 • Exceeded targets for Rent in Advance and Bond Guarantee Schemes • Secured a reduction in homelessness applications of 25% through an enhanced emphasis on prevention and new service initiatives • Significant reduction in the use of holiday accommodation for homeless households • Prevented 149 cases of homelessness • Development of three units of self contained accommodation to avoid the use of inappropriate accommodation. (Eastgate Square, Pickering and Station Way, Norton) • Secured £180,000 to support homelessness prevention

	<p>activities and a pilot project to develop a lettings service to facilitate access to private sector housing for homeless applicants. Appointment of new Housing Options Officer (Private Sector) to be in place Sept 08</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a reconfigured homeless and housing advice services to a housing options service to reflect national priorities and performance targets • £90k successful funding bid from the Hostels Improvement Programme to secure improvements and repairs to No 37 Castlegate. The Place of change hostel is now fully operational. • Joint Nightstop scheme with Scarborough BC. To be launched Sept 08. • Funding for CAB Money Advice Worker • Increased floating housing support with funding from the Supporting People Commissioning Plan by 10 places with York Housing Association and 10 places with Stonham Housing Association <p>On-Going/underway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of management agreement with RHA in respect of managing temporary accommodation • Administration of Empty Property Grants linked to nomination rights for the Council • Continued funding for Court Duty System to prevent homelessness • Continued support to Ryedale Nightstop. • Continue to work with Safe Moves Scheme and refer under 25's to YMCA
<p>To address decency issues in the private sector and the maintenance of the private housing stock in general</p>	<p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured almost £1m from the Regional Housing Board for the next three years to facilitate improvements to the private sector housing stock. • Development and implementation of a HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Licensing system. • Completion of District-Wide Private Sector Stock condition survey • Development of Ryedale Home Improvement Agency <p>On Going/Underway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Private Sector Renewal Strategy • Implementation of energy efficiency grant and general advice re national subsidy schemes • Monitoring of fuel poverty
<p>Enabling independent living</p>	<p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained Supporting People funding for the delivery of a Handy Person Service to assist elderly and vulnerable individuals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a new 6 bedspace floating support service with Foundation Housing for young people • Successful re-negotiation of a three year contract with Richmondshire DC for the continued provision of a dispersed alarm service (Ryecare) • Investment into Ryecare call handling equipment • Funding award from Homeless Link (£20k) to support an Activities Worker. This together with match funding from the Council enable the employment of a Resettlement Officer both posts supporting the residents in Castlegate. • Development of Extra Care facility, Norton. Work started on-site. • Provision of office space at Bridge House to support the work of the Ryedale Domestic Abuse outreach work. • New protocol (county-wide) in place following review of county ex-offenders agreement • Housing Information leaflets revised and updated. <p>On-Going/Underway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Assistive Technology Agenda • Attendance at Multi- Agency Prevention Meetings • Member of Scarborough and Ryedale Young Persons Accommodation Panel and Mental Health Accommodation Panel • Support Making Safe Scheme • Information to RHA to maintain a database of adapted properties • Monitor applicants approaching as homelessness with drug and alcohol problems
<p>To contribute to social inclusion and the provision of sustainable communities</p>	<p>Key Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti Social Behaviour Policies for Bridge House in place • Allocations Policy reviewed in conjunction with RHA and a new points system is in place • Quarterly Landlord forums <p>On-going/Underway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominations agreements with RSL's