

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Partnerships, Planning & Policy	Overview & Scrutiny	28 th March 2011

MONITORING REPORT RE JOINT AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK & FINISH GROUP

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress made following the Executive's response to the recommendations made by the joint O&S Inquiry on Chorley Community Housing in June 2010.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- (i) To note the progress on the various recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- To report the progress of the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

- To ensure members are updated on progress.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Strong Family Support		Education and Jobs	
Being Healthy		Pride in Quality Homes and Clean Neighbourhoods	√
Safe Respectful Communities		Quality Community Services and Spaces	
Vibrant Local Economy		Thriving Town Centre, Local Attractions and Villages	√
A Council that is a consistently Top Performing Organisation and Delivers Excellent Value for Money			

BACKGROUND

7. In June 2010 the Executive Cabinet responded to the recommendations from a joint overview and scrutiny inquiry which examined the delivery of affordable housing and considered alternative methods to increase affordable housing supply.

CURRENT POSITION

8. Between April 2008 (prior to the Inquiry) and the present time, we have seen an increase in the number of affordable houses delivered in Chorley:
- 2008/09 61 affordable houses
 - 2009/10 107 affordable houses
 - 2010/11 72 to Dec 2010 (subject to audit) and a further 27 are predicted by 31st March 2011.
9. Since the Inquiry, there has also been a number of changes announced by the new Government which will have implications for Affordable Housing delivery, namely:
- From April 2011 cessation of the National Affordable Housing Pot (NAHP) – a grant accessed by RSLs for the delivery of social rented and intermediate housing which is to be replaced with the new Affordable Rent Model whereby social landlords will be able to offer fixed term tenancies at up to 80% of the local market rate creating revenue to invest in building new homes,
 - Phasing out of the Plumlife Scheme which provided a range of intermediate products to help people onto the housing ladder. The scheme was part funded by the Homes and Communities Agency using some of the NAHP grant,
 - The intention to make available £100m through the HCA in supporting housing associations to refurbish empty properties and manage them at an affordable rent for up to 10 years.
10. Appendix A sets out the recommendations and the position as at March 2011, taking account of the changes outlined in para. 9 where appropriate.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

11. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	✓

LESLEY-ANN FENTON
DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS, PLANNING AND POLICY

Lesley-Ann Fenton	5323	15/03/2011	Doc ID
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Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
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Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Lesley-Ann Fenton	5323	03/06/2010	***

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Report of Joint Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Affordable Housing	***	03/12/2009	***

	Recommendations	Response as at 14/03/2011
1.	A 50/50 split for affordable housing not to be adopted in the interim period and each local authority in Central Lancashire continue to utilise existing policy tenure splits until analysis of the Housing Needs Survey has been carried out. A higher provision of social renting housing would be preferred.	The Central Lancashire Strategic Housing Market Assessment published in October 2009 is used to inform all negotiations with developers and RSL's when considering sites with affordable housing obligation. The tenure split across Chorley is 74% social rented and 26% intermediate.
2.	Publicity promoting the concept of social housing and the wider benefits to the community giving a positive example, such as enabling young people to access housing in their local area.	We have continued to publicise the range and availability of social housing through press releases the most recent being affordable housing on Botany Brow (the former Talbot Arms Pub site). We also continue to publicise other products available across the Borough ie directing customers to the Home-buy Plumlife scheme and plans are currently being developed for later this year for the Plumlife trailer to be located on a market day in Chorley Town Centre to promote the Plumlife remaining properties in Chorley.
3.	All authorities be requested to identify land for potential affordable housing and to call for land specifically for smaller sites for affordable housing from private owners.	<p>All three Central Lancashire authorities are currently in the process of producing Site Allocations Development Plan documents and housing issues/allocations will be included as part of this process.</p> <p>The Council have identified our own developable land and are currently in negotiation with Adactus Housing Association with regards to using the land to enable further affordable housing delivery.</p>

4.	The Joint Local Development Framework team to be requested to produce a map showing those sites identified for affordable housing to highlight any sites adjacent between two authorities that could be merged.	All three Central Lancashire authorities are currently in the process of producing Site Allocations Development Plan documents and housing issues/allocations will be included as part of this process.
5.	In addition to the Central Lancashire Councils other bodies, like the Police, PCT, Fire Service, RSL, English Partnership, Churches and Parish Councils and should be approached regarding land that could be brought forward for affordable housing on rural exception sites.	We continue to seek appropriate land from partners as opportunities arise. Mid Lancashire authorities have been invited by the Homes and Communities Agency to develop a local investment plan for the area which includes taking account of the HCA land holdings. Initial discussions are currently taking place across Mid-Lancs on how best to respond to this invitation.
6.	To investigate any flexibility in the Local Development Plan for each authority to encourage rural exception sites where there is demonstrable housing need and broaden the local needs area around settlements and beyond specific villages without harming the green belt.	The current Chorley Local Plan is positive towards the development of affordable housing in rural areas. Since the last update 24 (100%) social rented houses have been approved for a rural exception site in the village of Croston. The Joint Central Lancashire Core Strategy will replace the Local Plan and is currently on track to be submitted at the end of March 2011. The strategy seeks the provision of 30% affordable on sites of 15 units or more, but in rural areas seeking at or near 35% affordable housing on any sites of 5 units or more. On rural exception sites the requirement is for 100% affordable housing. This document is scheduled for adoption in November 2011.
7.	For each Authority to investigate how they can stimulate the local housing market and assist first time buyers. This could be through provision of mortgage or assistance with a deposit.	The Council has continued to promote the successful 'Homebuy' Direct programmes across Chorley, which provide citizens with a range of affordable housing products which are helping to stimulate house sales in the Borough and supporting both first

		time buyers and families requiring larger properties.
8.	To promote and advocate the bonds scheme with lettings agents and landlords publicise new legislation regarding deposits/bonds.	A Rental Bond Scheme for Chorley was established in June 2009 and has to date successfully provided 45 guarantees.
9.	To promote the provision of additional affordable housing with parish councils (and area committees where they exist) by keeping them informed at an early stage and the public generally through communication mechanisms used by each Authority.	The Council has recently undertaken a Rural Housing Needs Study which the Parish Councils have been invited to participate in developing and circulating within their Parishes and some have engaged. The results will be available in the coming months and will form the basis on which further collaborative working and communication mechanisms can be built.
10.	Council publications be utilised to promote the availability of debt advice, with strong message to those experiencing financial hardship to contact advisors and lenders as appropriate at an early stage.	In addition to the existing suite of Housing Options leaflets including one specifically dealing with repossession. We have successfully secured for 2011/12 a further year of funding to provide a County Court Duty Desk which provides advice and representation at court for those facing possession proceedings. Since September 2009 we have assisted 224 people.
11.	Where one isn't in place, councils give consideration to implementation of a Housing Association Leasing Scheme.	Due to low take up of a previous scheme between 2005-09. The scheme is time consuming and costly to administer and with a reduction in temporary accommodation needs there is no incentive or sufficient need to re-consider implementation.
12.	Councils continue to investigate the possible use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO). Respective Chief Executive write to CLG, the local MP's and the Government requesting that they review the	EDMO's are appropriate in areas where there are large numbers of derelict dwellings ie inner city areas. However, along with many Councils we have lobbied for support in tackling empty homes and as part of the Localism Bill and the consultation

	EDMO process with a view to changing the legislation and that the Minister for Housing and Planning also receives correspondence.	paper, "Local Decisions" – Next Steps towards a fairer future for Social Housing, the Government have stated their intention to introduce £100m Empty Homes Fund for local authorities to bid for to tackle this issue. Preston are considering putting in a bid to the fund and invited South Ribble and Chorley to take part.
13.	The empty homes function be placed within Strategic Housing.	<p>As stated previously, the Council has no plans to place the Empty Homes function within the Strategic Housing Function.</p> <p>Strategic Housing will continue to be responsible for the strategic direction/strategy for responding to empty homes; however the delivery will continue to be within the People and Places directorate.</p> <p>Regular liaison meetings between Strategic Housing and Environmental Health take place, in order to share best practice and update one another on progress made against appropriate projects.</p>
14.	The 3 Authorities produce an Empty Properties Register based on a consistent approach, recording, if possible, the number of bedrooms.	Due to resource limitations in all involved Local Authorities, no progress has been made on this action. We will look to take forward possibly as part of the bid for Empty Homes Funding in 2011/12.
15.	To lobby Government to amend building regulations in England and Wales to reflect those of Scotland, with a view to ensuring that all new build meets minimum functional space standards to facilitate the transfer of properties to registered Social Landlords.	Building Regs have been amended as of 1 October 2010 so that houses built now have to conform to Code Level 3 for Co2 emissions. There has been no change on space standards.

16.	Investigations to be undertaken with the Homes and Communities Agency with a view to differential weighting of various criteria contained within the Design Strategy & Standards to allow existing private housing stock being brought into the housing supply of affordable housing.	As stated earlier Mid Lancs has been invited by the HCA to produce a Local Investment Plan. This may be a suitable vehicle for raising this issue.
17.	Local authorities to meet with RSL Partners to discuss and agree an acceptable formula for pepper potting affordable housing within developments.	Discussions regarding 'pepper potting' are currently undertaken on a site by site basis to ensure developments are viable whilst also meeting strategic objectives of delivering mixed tenure developments. A flexible approach to negotiations is required to ensure that the Councils approach takes into consideration the demands of RSL's managing sites who have locally expressed a preference for clusters of properties – which assists in their maintenance of properties. It is recommended that these flexible principles be outlined in Supplementary Planning Document due to be produced as part of the Core Strategy process.
18.	The code for Sustainable Homes be met in full in all new developments.	The adopted Chorley Sustainable Resources Development Plan Document outlines how the Code for Sustainable Homes is to be met in Chorley. It sets out a phased approach to meeting the standard in the Borough. All new dwellings will be required to meet Level 3 of the Code by 2010, Level 4 by 2013 and Level 6 by 2016. This approach is proposed to be strengthened in the Joint Core Strategy as it requires Level 4 of the Code where viable before 2013.
19.	The Homes and Communities Agency & CLG to be invited to discuss matters of mutual interest relating to the provision of additional affordable housing.	As indicated in action 16, the Homes & Community Agency are committed to regularly meeting Local Authorities in order to discuss housing related interest.