

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY
2 SEPTEMBER 2008

HOUSING STRATEGY 2007– 2012

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on progress in meeting the targets set out in the revised Housing Strategy 2007–2012.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Housing Strategy 2007 – 12 was approved by the Executive in September 2007 following a thorough review of the previous Housing Strategy; including extensive public and stakeholder consultation and an Equalities Impact Assessment. It has been agreed as “fit for purpose” by the Government Office South West” (GOSW).
- 2.2 The Strategy sets out the actions the Council will take in order to ensure that everyone in the city has the opportunity to live in a suitable home that they can afford. It is organised around the key themes of the Mission Statement: **everyone, home and opportunity.**

Key areas of the Strategy include:

- ensuring that private sector housing in the City is of a decent standard;
 - managing and improving the Council’s housing stock;
 - providing housing advice and preventing homelessness;
 - maintaining a register of housing need;
 - overseeing the allocation of affordable housing in the city;
 - making efficient use of all housing stock;
 - enabling the development of new affordable housing, and
 - bringing empty property back into use
- 2.3 The Housing Strategy was informed by the results of the Exeter and Torbay Housing Market Assessment. This examined housing markets across the sub-region and illustrated the problems of affordability and undersupply of both market and affordable housing throughout the area. The Housing Strategy highlights the need for co-ordinated joint action by both housing and planning authorities to tackle these problems. Discussions are underway as part of the emerging Local Development Framework.
- 2.4 Since the approval of the Strategy, the recent downturn in the housing market is having an impact on the housing challenges and how they are tackled. Whilst improved affordability of the owner occupied stock may be a long term benefit of the downturn, in the short-term, prices remain unaffordable for many, whilst access to mortgage finance has become increasingly restricted, particularly for low cost home ownership products and those households without deposits.
- 2.5 The slow-down in new house building may also impact negatively on the delivery of affordable housing through S106 contributions on private developments. Around 70% of the affordable housing that was thought to be deliverable during 2008-11

comes from Planning Agreements. A new section has therefore been added to the Action Plan (row 27) in order to respond to current market conditions. This highlights ways in which additional affordable lettings can be created and how to take advantage of any opportunities for additional affordable housing development in the current market.

3. PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

- 3.1 The Housing Strategy includes two Action Plans; one setting out actions with specific target dates for completion, while the other outlines those more general actions that should be ongoing. Appendix I attached to this report summarises these and the progress made.

4. RECOMMENDED

- 1) That the Scrutiny Committee Community notes the progress being made towards achieving targets set out in the Housing Strategy 2007–2012 Action Plan.
- 2) That Scrutiny Committee notes the effects of the market downturn on delivery of aspects of the Housing Strategy and supports the additional actions set out in the Action Plan to respond to these conditions.

HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report: