

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: EXETER BOARD
DATE OF MEETING: 17 JULY 2014
REPORT OF: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR HOUSING
TITLE: EXETER CITY COUNCIL HOUSING STRATEGY

i. **Is this a key decision?**

No

ii. **Is this an Executive or Council function?**

Executive

1. **What is this Report about?**

This Report comments on the status of Exeter City Council's Housing Strategy and the way forward for this document.

2. **Recommendations**

That the Exeter Board notes the contents of this Report which is for information only.

3. **Reasons for the recommendation**

4. **What are the resource implications including non financial resources?**

No extra resources are involved; the Housing Strategy will be delivered within existing budgets.

5. **Section 151 Officer comments**

Not applicable.

6. **What are the legal aspects?**

There is no legal requirement for a Local Authority to have a Housing Strategy but it is standard practice to have one document that articulates the Authority's vision and priorities, giving strategic guidance to both internal services and external organisations.

7. **Monitoring Officer's comments**

Not applicable

8. **Report details**

8.1 **Consultation**

The Housing Service has already undertaken widespread consultation over the form and content of the Housing Strategy. This consultation took the form of:

- **Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM):** four separate discussion sessions took place on housing need, housing provision, the role of social housing and the private sector. These were followed by a formal debate between academics, politicians and prominent housing leaders around the key issues affecting housing today.
- **Documentary screening at The Phoenix:** Screening of the film "The Great Estate – the Rise and Fall of the Council House" by Michael Collins followed by a debate by an

invited audience of councillors, charities and other interested parties on the role of social housing.

- **Public consultation at St Stephen's Church:** Members of the public were invited into the church for discussions on their particular issues, and the role of Exeter City Council in the provision of solutions to housing need and the functioning of a healthy housing market.
- **Belmont Chapel council tenant and leaseholder event:** over 80 tenants and leaseholders were consulted for their views on the areas that they wanted the housing service to concentrate on over the coming years
- **An online and paper survey of Exeter citizens:** Over 300 people responded to an online and paper survey asking for their views on a range of housing-related matters

8.2 Aims of the new Housing Strategy

The principal aims of the new Strategy that emerged from the consultation have been established. They are:

1. To support the key strategic aim of Exeter City Council by promoting the economic prosperity of the City.
2. To ensure that people have somewhere to live that is suitable for their needs
3. To work in a joined-up way to help solve people's housing problems
4. To maximise the supply of different forms of quality, environmentally sustainable homes
5. To maintain our Council housing stock to a decent standard and use our position as the largest landlord in Exeter to make housing 'work' for the City

8.3 Research project with Exeter University

One major factor that emerged from the consultation and from officer experience was that our data on housing need and demand in Exeter were very limited. We have information from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (updated 2010) and from the Devon Home Choice Housing Register but this is either based on secondary data or is unrepresentative of the whole of the City.

Without knowledge of demand we cannot formulate our response in terms of housing solutions with any confidence.

For these reasons we have commissioned a piece of work from Exeter University to look at the following questions:

- How do we measure need not recorded on the Housing Register?
- How do we use that measurement to help us to provide the right housing in the right place?
- What are the housing issues and problems of the people of Exeter in whatever type or tenure of housing they live?
- What are their hopes and aspirations?
- What is the best way of meeting them?
- How is the housing market functioning in Exeter?
- What can we do to improve it?

The Research will largely take the form of a questionnaire directed at people from all backgrounds in Exeter which will be processed and analysed by the University with a Report being presented to Members and senior staff towards the end of the year.

8.4 The way forward

Once the University research project has been completed and the results evaluated we will be seeking formal approval for the new housing strategy through the City Council's Scrutiny & Executive process early next year.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

The Housing Strategy will help the Council deliver on its aims to:

- Meet housing needs
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Support Exeter's communities and neighbourhoods

It will also contribute to the following purposes:

- Help me find somewhere suitable to live
- Improve the environment and my neighbourhood
- Maintain the assets of our city
- Deliver good development
- Help me get back to financial independence
- Keep my city safe and looking good
- Enable me to have my say and be heard

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

The assessment and mitigation of risks will form part of the Strategy.

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

The impact on all these groups will be beneficial and will be elaborated on in the Strategy itself.

12. Are there any other options?

No

Assistant Director Housing

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:

Democratic Services (Committees)

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