

Cheltenham Borough Council

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 16th May 2005

Taking forward our housing priority

Report of the Corporate Policy Manager

1. Summary

- 1.1 The council's updated business plan was approved in March 2005. Through consultation with members, "*We will work towards a balanced and sustainable housing market*" was identified as the joint top priority for this council alongside actions to tackle crime and disorder and improve the environment.
- 1.2 On 14 April, Environment Overview and Scrutiny committee agreed that a joint meeting be held with the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny committee to review the council's draft housing strategy and to review how we are meeting our affordable housing targets. The review would also look at the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Housing Market Partnership in the light of regional planning guidance.
- 1.3 The purpose of this joint overview and scrutiny committee meeting is therefore to set our housing activities in the context of the national and regional policy framework and to bring members up to date with how the council is taking the housing priority forward.

2 Programme for the meeting

- 2.1 The proposed programme will provide members with a thorough overview of our housing activities.
- 2.2 In terms of context, the Assistant Director Community Services will summarise the housing needs assessment carried out in 2004 which analysed housing need in the borough and assessed our local housing market. The study sets out how demographic, social and economic trends have impacted on housing in Cheltenham and what the implications are for our communities and concludes with an assessment of the scale of the problem of meeting local housing need.
- 2.2 The Assistant Director Neighbourhood Regeneration will then set out the national, regional and local housing policy framework and draw out the key housing priorities that have implications for Cheltenham. From the analysis of housing need and assessment of the strategic framework, the key priorities for the council's housing activity for the period 2005 – 2010 have been set. These reflect the community plan priorities, but also, other more specific priorities from the council and our partner organisations. These priorities are:
 - Improving the supply and standard of affordable and appropriate housing
 - Providing decent homes for all (public sector)
 - Providing decent homes for all (private sector)

- Improving quality and choice in the housing market
- Support for those that need it
 - Supporting people
 - Homelessness
- Reducing inequalities and creating safe, healthy and sustainable communities

2.3 The Strategic Land Use Manager will set out the land use planning context with reference to both the regional planning context and the changes to the development plan system.

2.4 In terms of delivery, the Assistant Director Community Services will provide a brief update on progress being made by Cheltenham Borough Homes to deliver the decent homes standard in our housing stock.

2.5 The Assistant Director Neighbourhood Regeneration will provide an overview of how the decent homes standard is being progressed in the private sector housing stock.

2.6 The delivery session will conclude with an overview of how the council is delivering affordable housing with particular reference to the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Housing Market partnership.

2.7 Throughout the evening, there will be plenty of opportunities for members to make comments and ask questions.

2.8 The running order is as follows:

Introductions (10 mins)	Welcome and formalities	Election of Chair of meeting
	Background to the meeting and what we hope to get out of it	Group Director
The context (45 mins)	2004 Housing Needs Assessment	Assistant Director Community Services
	The policy framework and the draft housing strategy	Assistant Director Neighbourhood Regeneration
	Land use planning framework	Strategic Land Use Manager
	Questions and answers	all
Delivery (40mins)	Decent homes in the public sector	Assistant Director Community Services
	Decent homes in the private sector	Assistant Director Neighbourhood Regeneration
	Affordable housing - Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Housing Market partnership	Assistant Director Neighbourhood Regeneration
	Questions and answers	all
Concluding remarks (5 mins)		Chair / Group Director

3 The draft housing strategy

- 3.1 The council has a duty to prepare a 'fit for purpose' housing strategy by the end of July 2005. Work on the fit for purpose strategy began with the publication of our Housing Investment foundation document in July 2004, which set out the key issues and priorities for our housing activities.
- 3.2 The final draft of the strategy will go to cabinet on 19th July, but prior to that, a final round of consultation has been arranged, which will begin with tonight's meeting and last for 4 weeks.
- 3.3 The purpose the housing strategy is to provide the framework for all housing activity in the borough. It sets out our vision which is:
To ensure that there is a choice of sufficient, quality, accessible and affordable homes within sustainable communities available for all the residents of the Borough, whether they rent or own their homes.
- 3.4 The housing strategy is one of the key documents that sits under the community plan and demonstrates how housing activity can help deliver the aspirations of the plan. It also sets the strategic framework for a series of service-specific strategy documents including the housing renewal policy, homelessness strategy and the supporting people strategy. It also provides the strategic context for Cheltenham Borough Homes' business plan.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 Officers have undertaken a thorough consultation programme to gain key partner, stakeholder and community involvement in the development of the draft housing strategy.
- 4.2 The consultation process began in July 2003 with the publication of the Housing Investment Foundation document, which set out how we engage with residents, tenants and leaseholders, The foundation document was circulated to all stakeholders as well as being placed on the council's website and hard copies made available in libraries and community buildings in the borough.
- 4.3 Specific consultation meetings have been held with Cheltenham Federation and Cheltenham Strategic Partnership.
- 4.4 The Cheltenham Strategic Partnership, Cheltenham Borough Homes and the council organised a joint housing conference on 14th December that focused on how we promote sustainable communities through our housing activities with a focus on promoting quality and choice. The conference provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the emerging housing, homelessness and special needs strategies and on the Cheltenham Borough Homes' business plan.

Background Papers	Draft Housing Strategy (to be circulated)
Contact Officer	Richard Gibson, Corporate Policy Manager, 01242 235354, richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Cllr. John Webster Cabinet Deputy Neighbourhood and Community
Scrutiny Function	Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee