

Information/Discussion Paper

Social and community overview and scrutiny committee - 5 September 2011

Housing review update report

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 A housing review was initiated in response to legislative changes both to housing policy and welfare reforms. A member working group has been established including members from this committee. This report sets out some of the key issues, opportunities and challenges which have been highlighted to the review group of the reforms. The working group are not yet in a position to make formal recommendations on what actions need to be taken in response to these changes.
- 1.2 The working group is also proving to be a useful sounding board for the development of the housing revenue account business plan, which is on the agenda for the committee this evening.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 Any successful place succeeds by ensuring its residents have good homes. Shelter is a basic universal need and serves as a foundation for enabling the pursuit of broader positive outcomes for individuals through their engagement with activities, opportunities and other services.
- 2.2 The physical environment in which people live has a significant impact on both an individual's well being and that of a community at large in terms of being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being. It is important for people to have access to appropriate housing; i.e. good quality, well designed, affordable and safe; in a strong community (i.e. cohesive); and free from hazards, pollution and conflict.
- 2.3 Accessing suitable housing is just the first stage, it is the on going provision and sustainability of adequate housing that enables people to undertake their daily lives, achieve positive outcomes, aims and aspirations; and also contribute and participate positively at a wider community level. Communities can then in turn increase their self-reliance, resilience and collective productivity and decrease reliance on mainstream statutory services.
- 2.4 There has recently been considerable change in relation to the planning, regulation and financial frameworks for the delivery of housing and affordable housing. The changes have been duly documented and are being analysed in terms of how they are to be implemented and delivered. However to understand the issues surrounding housing we must also look to the wider reforms and funding regimes of government

to assess the implications at a local level. The recent changes present both opportunities and challenges which are often interdependent and can create a 'domino' affect with regard to interaction with each other and the subsequent collective impact on our ability to achieve outcomes to meet the needs and aspirations of our customers.

3. Summary of evidence/information

- 3.1** Set out in the attached document are some of the issues and opportunities which arise from these reforms. Officers are currently developing a risk assessment with actions to mitigate against these risks which has been shared with the member review group but requires further work. This will form the development of a draft Cheltenham housing strategy, building on the county wide consultation which was undertaken last year. This strategy will link closely to the development of the business plan for the housing revenue account.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1** Members are asked to consider the issues paper and identify any specific issues they would wish to see addressed within an emerging housing strategy. It is proposed that once the document has been drafted and the member working group are comfortable with the direction of travel that all members will be given an opportunity to shape the document at a member seminar prior to any consideration by cabinet.

Appendices	A Issues Paper B Scale of benefit change impact
Contact Officer	Jane Griffiths, Director of commissioning, 01242 264126, jane.griffiths@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Cabinet Member Housing and Safety, Councillor Klara Sudbury
Scrutiny Function	Social and Community