

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet – 18 October 2011
Housing Review Working Group

Accountable member	Councillor Klara Sudbury, Cabinet Member Housing and Safety
Accountable officer	Jane Griffiths, Director of Commissioning
Accountable scrutiny committee	Social and Community
Ward(s) affected	All
Key Decision	No
Executive summary	A housing review was initiated in response to legislative changes both to housing policy and welfare reforms. A cross party member working group was established including members from the social and community overview and scrutiny committee. The working group are concerned about some of the changes which are being proposed and this report sets out the key issues, opportunities and challenges which they wish to bring to the attention of the Cabinet.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Cabinet endorse the recommendations of the review group as set out in appendix 2 and builds them into workplans. 2. The Cabinet endorse the principle of the development of a housing and homelessness strategy which incorporates the review groups findings for consideration by Cabinet in March 2012. 3. The Cabinet endorses the outcomes framework as set out at appendix 4 as a basis for consultation with stakeholders and to be used to inform the development of the housing and homelessness strategy. 4. The Housing Review Member Working Group continues to meet to support the development of the strategy and to provide a sounding board on the development of the HRA business plan preparation ready for Council in February 2012.

Financial implications	No financial implications arising from this report. However as housing strategies and policies are developed, future reports could identify financial implications for the council. Contact officer: Andrew Sherbourne, andrew.sherbourne@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264337
Legal implications	There are no direct legal implications arising out of the report. Legal advice and assistance will be sought on the implications of any future proposals, strategies or work plans. Contact officer: sarah.farooqi@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272693
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	No HR implications arising from this report. However as housing strategies and policies are developed, future reports could identify HR implications for the council. Contact officer: Julie McCarthy, Julie.McCarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264355
Key risks	These are set out in appendix 3 and identify the risks associated with the new legislation and changes and the mitigating action that can be taken.
Corporate and community plan Implications	The challenges set out in the issues paper will impact on the delivery of the outcomes the council's wishes to achieve as set out in the corporate plan and therefore it is important that the council is responds proactively to the changes
Environmental and climate change implications	

1. Background

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 Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny committee. Members of the working group are:

- Councillor Klara Sudbury (Chair)
- Councillor Barbara Driver (also a CBH board member)
- Councillor Chris Coleman
- Councillor Wendy Flynn
- Councillor Rowena Hay
- Councillor Duncan Smith
- Councillor Jon Walklett (also a CBH board member)
- Karl Hemming – overview and scrutiny co-optee

1.2 This report sets out some of the key issues, opportunities and challenges which have been

highlighted to the review group of the reforms.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1** Shelter is a basic human need, but the homes we live in also serve as a basis for broader positive outcomes for individuals and families. Accessing suitable housing is the first stage in enabling people to live their lives in a fulfilled and positive way. It is therefore vitally important for people to have access to appropriate housing; for example, good quality, well designed, affordable and safe.
- 2.2** Accessing appropriate housing is just the first stage. The physical environment in which people live has a significant impact on both an individual's well being and that of the community at large. Everyone benefits when we have strong, balanced communities that are free from hazards, pollution and conflict.
- 2.3** Local and National policies are vital to enable new housing development which is affordable and sustainable. Policies should encourage the ongoing provision of adequate housing and sustainable communities, providing the basis for people to undertake their daily lives, achieve positive outcomes and 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 the working group also looked at the wider reforms and changes to funding regimes to try to assess the implications at a local level.
- 2.5** 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.
- 2.6** Set out in the attached document (appendix 3) are the issues and opportunities which arise from these reforms. Additionally there is a risk assessment with actions to mitigate against these risks. The review group were concerned about the scale of changes and particularly the impact on some of the most vulnerable in the community.
- 2.7** Listed at appendix 2 is a set of recommendations from the working group which they feel should be built into the council's workplans. These recommendations summarise the discussions within the group and also some of the specific actions as set out in the issues paper in appendix 3.
- 2.8** The review group also provided a useful sounding board for the development of the HRA business plan and for the advice contract, both of which are on the agenda this evening for discussion. In hindsight it would have been appropriate for the Cabinet member finance and community development to be a standing member of the working group (rather than just invited for specific agenda items) because of the interdependencies between his portfolio and the housing portfolio. It is suggested that in taking the review work forward that the Cabinet member becomes a full member of the group.

3. Developing a housing and homelessness strategy

- 3.1** The scale of change means that it is appropriate to develop a long term strategy to meet these challenges and it is proposed that a housing and homelessness strategy is developed. Attached

at appendix 5 is proposed contents page. The intention would be to develop the strategy over the coming months and align this to the HRA business plan. Attached at appendix 4 are an initial set of draft outcomes based on needs and the challenges ahead which the working group have developed. These have yet to be tested with stakeholders.

- 3.2** The working group have developed a good knowledge base about the impacts of the proposed changes. It is therefore recommended that the working group continues to meet to provide member input into the strategy until it is approved next March.

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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Risk Assessment 2. Recommendations of the working group 3. Issues paper 4. Outcomes framework 5. Outline content page for housing and homelessness strategy.
Background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None

Risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-4	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	If the council does not plan to address the legislative changes arising from housing and welfare reform there is a risk that residents and tenants could be adversely affected.	Jane Griffiths Director of commissioning	30 September	3	3	9	Reduce	The working group have identified a number of recommendations and suggested course of action. Housing and homelessness strategy to be prepared. Specific actions to be built into the corporate strategy and or workplans	31 March 2012	Martin Stacey Housing and communities manager Paul Aldridge Benefits manager	Divisional risk register

Explanatory notes

Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-4 (4 being the greatest impact)

Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (6 being most likely)

Impact Description	Impact score	Probability	Likelihood Description	Likelihood Score
Negligible	1	0% - 5%	Almost impossible	1
Marginal	2	5% - 15%	Very low	2
Major	3	15% - 30%	Low	3
Critical	4	30% - 60%	Significant	4
		60% - 90%	High	5
		> 90%	Very high	6