
Executive Member Decision Session – Neighbourhood & Housing

15th March 2011

Report of the Assistant Director for Housing and Public Protection

Update on the Private Sector Strategy

Summary

1. The report outlines progress delivering the Private Sector Housing Strategy and proposes a refreshed action plan to reflect and compliment the changes:
 - a) Emerging from the new coalitions government agenda;
 - b) To the local priorities in particular the new Climate Change Framework, the refreshed York Housing and North Yorkshire Housing strategies and the new Older Person strategy;
 - c) To funding regimes following the comprehensive review;
 - d) To new strategic partners and in particular the work being carried out by the new Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership.

Background

2. In March 2009 Members approved the Private Sector Housing Strategy based on the evidence collected through the 2008 private sector stock condition survey. The strategy contains an action plan with five key strategic aims each with a series of objectives showing how the council and its partners will work to help improve and maintain the condition and management of owner occupied and privately rented homes in York. A Steering Group of stakeholders and partners monitors the progress
3. The Steering Group has met twice, the last time in November 2010 when the group reviewed the action plan. The overall progress of the five strategic aim is outlined in the attached **Appendix A** and has been identified as either a key achievement or an action to be taken forward in to the refreshed action plan

Strategic Aims

4. The conclusion of the steering group was that the City of York Council and its partner agencies were making good overall progress delivering the Private Sector Housing Strategy. However, it was felt that the action plan needs to have regard to the current challenges and opportunities. Partners' views and contributions resulted in the proposed changes to the action plan which are set out below.

Current Strategic Aims:	Proposed new Strategic Aims:
Encourage and support owner occupiers to maintain and repair their homes and introduce energy efficiency	Encourage and support Owner Occupiers to maintain and repair their homes
Encourage private landlords to provide good quality and well managed properties for their tenants	Encourage private landlords to provide good quality and well managed properties for their tenants
To help people whose independence may be at risk to remain in or return to their homes	To help people whose independence may be at risk to remain in or return to their homes
Maximise use of the existing housing stock and to increase the supply of decent affordable homes	Maximise use of the existing housing stock and to increase the supply of decent affordable homes
Strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to support the private housing sector	Strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to support the private housing sector
	To help to create sustainable homes and reduce carbon emissions from the domestic sector

5. Within the above revised strategic aims there are several revised objectives/actions. The full proposed action plan is attached as **Appendix B**. The most significant change to the action plan is to create a new sixth strategic aim, which will strengthen and focus private sector housing work on the local climate change framework agenda.

Aim 6: To help create sustainable homes and reduce carbon emissions from the domestic sector

6. The council has set very ambitious targets to reduce carbon. Within the city the domestic sector alone is responsible for 34% of all of York's CO2 emissions. Work and funding opportunities are currently being explored with other councils through the Leeds City Region to develop a regional programme, called the Domestic Energy Efficiency Programme (DEEP) aimed both at stimulating the installation of energy efficiency measures and renewable technologies to reduce carbon emissions and helping residents to be warm and safe. Bradford Metropolitan Council on behalf of the councils in the Leeds City Region has submitted a regional growth fund bid.
7. This work will be further complimented by a study, which has been commissioned by our sustainability colleagues in City Strategy, which has analysed the gap between what is being currently delivered in the city, and what

is required to be delivered to meet our climate framework targets in 2020. A further report on this will be brought before members.

8. It is intended that this work will form the baseline for the council and its partners to develop both a three-year programme and longer-term action plan to help the city meet its targets. It is intended that a further paper will be brought to members in summer about these proposals.
9. Other changes include:

Aim 1: Encourage and support owner-occupiers to maintain and repair their homes

10. Following the comprehensive spending review it was clear that there was a commitment to the disabled facilities grant programme however, there was no specific commitment to providing funding for the private sector renewal programme (which currently funds the council programme of loans and energy efficiency grants programme to help vulnerable homeowners maintain their homes and be warm and safe). Going forward the council and its partners will need to be innovative in finding solutions to help residents. A separate paper will be brought to the executive member outlining the proposals for the council revised assistance policy.

Aim 2: Encourage and enable private landlords to provide good quality and well-managed properties for their tenants

11. The main changes here reflect the need to promote a healthy private rented sector seeking ways to reduce barriers to the sector. It also focuses on the growing number of houses in multiple occupations and the need to maintain and improve standards in this sector. Actions will aim to balance the need to promote landlords who provide well-maintained accommodation whilst taking action and seeking to tackle problems through the use of planning policy and through accreditation schemes, licensing/regulation and enforcement.

Aim 3: Enable people whose independence may be at risk remain in or return to their homes.

12. There is a renewed commitment to providing a funded adaptation programme and handyperson scheme. We have also focused our work regarding under and over occupation in the private sector. We anticipate with the changes to the housing benefit system that it is likely to put additional pressure on the private housing stock with a knock on potential impact being an increase in the number of HMOs and overcrowding in the city.

Aim 4: Maximise use of the existing housing stock to increase the supply of decent affordable homes in York.

13. We will continue to monitor the low levels of empty homes in the city. The executive member will recall a recent paper, which evidenced that there continues to be low levels of empty homes despite the current economic climate

in the city. However we recognise that where we can we should maximise their return to occupation.

Aim 5: Strengthen partnerships to support private sector housing improvements.

14. The emphasis here is to ensure that, with regard to private sector renewal York's interest and views are represented. There are significant changes occurring at all levels of partnerships in particular the Leeds City region along with changes to the strategic health service.
15. It is well recognised that good quality homes are important for the health and well being of those living in them. The proposed interventions in the strategy will contribute to the new public health agenda. For example both our work around improving energy efficiency by installing insulation in private householders and our enforcement work around improving insulation and heating in private rented accommodation will reduce the treatment of cold-related illnesses. Such conditions are a substantial financial drain on the NHS approximately £1 billion per year. Cold conditions heavily impact on circulation and around half of excess winter deaths are circulatory in cause. The number of excess winter deaths in England and Wales is estimated as 25,000 to 45,000 per year¹

Consultation

16. This report was written following the meeting of the steering group whose ideas contributed towards the revised strategic aims

Options

17. There are 3 options which the executive member is being asked to consider:
 - **Option 1** to approve the refreshed action plan with the addition of the sixth aim;
 - **Option 2** to maintain the current action plan, which is still valid until 2013; or
 - **Option 3** to amend the action plan

Analysis

18. Option 1 - The refreshed action plan provides a clear commitment to maintaining the relatively good standards in the private sector. It recognises that with reducing resources that we need to be innovative in finding ways of helping York residents, 84 % of whom live in the private sector.
19. Option 2 - The existing action plan doesn't reflect:

¹ Statistics from the social exclusion unit

- a) The new local priorities in particular the new Climate Change Framework, the refreshed York Housing and North Yorkshire Housing strategies and the new Older Person strategy.
- b) The change to the funding regimes following the comprehensive review;
- c) The new strategic partners and in particular the work being carried out by the new Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership.

Corporate Priorities

20. Delivery of Private Sector Housing Strategy contributes to the following priorities:
 - Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces
 - Improve the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest
 - Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city
 - Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city

Implications

21. There are no implications arising directly from this report. Any financial and equalities implications arising from the individual actions and targets will need to both fully costed and assessed and will be brought to members as appropriate.

Risk Management

22. Regular monitoring and reporting of progress should ensure early intervention to minimise non-delivery. As such the risks score less than 16.

Recommendations

23. That the Executive Members:
 - Notes the overall progress made to date in delivering the Private sector housing strategy; and
 - Approves Option 1 as outlined in Para 17, to approve the refreshed action plan with the addition of the sixth aim.

Reason: So that the council can encourage the private sector housing stock to be maintained and reduce the carbon emissions

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Report Approved

Date 15th February 2011

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2008-2013

Annexes

Appendices A and B