

**YOUNG PERSONS HOUSING STRATEGY 2005-07
(Report by the Head of Housing Services)**

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consult members on and seek approval for the adoption of the Young Persons Housing Strategy 2005-2007

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Young Persons Housing Strategy sits beneath the council's overarching Housing Strategy and considers the needs of this specific client group. Housing Authorities are encouraged by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to develop Young Persons Housing Strategies and are regarded as a model of good practice. This is the first one produced by the council. The strategy forms part of the information used when Government Offices and the Housing Corporation make their assessment of each authority's efficiency and effectiveness in meeting housing need, and is also part of the evidence considered by the Audit Commission in its CPA assessment of the authority.

- 2.2 The strategy considers:

- ◆ the national and local policy framework, including legislative framework, within which young persons services operate;
- ◆ demand for housing and related support services from young people, including where there are gaps in the information available;
- ◆ comments received from young people as part of a consultation exercise as to what services they would like to see provided;
- ◆ the current supply of housing and support services available for young people in the district; and
- ◆ analyses the gaps between supply and demand.

- 2.3 The number of young people applying for help with housing, either as homeless or through the Housing Register, far outstrips the supply of suitable affordable housing. The strategy considers how the private sector can help meet some of this demand, as an alternative to the social rented sector, although affordability is an issue where a young person below 25 years of age is reliant on help through the Housing Benefit system.

- 2.4 Previous research carried out as part of the district's Housing Needs Survey, in 2002, estimated the annual requirement for each size of new housing based on affordability levels. The research recognised that affordability is an issue for many people trying to access the private sector. Considering the affordability of housing based on income levels it estimated the need for an additional 383 social rented one-bedroom properties per year. This would include provision to meet the need of single young people requiring this type of accommodation. Supplementary planning guidance on housing mix was subsequently issued to help provide a broad range of housing that reflects the needs of the district.
- 2.5 Following on from the supply and demand analysis the strategy identifies further issues arising. These include the diminishing Supporting People budget that provides revenue funding for the housing related support services that young people access. These can include simple and effective services such as staff support within supported housing schemes.
- 2.6 The strategy goes on to consider other interventions that the council may make, such as the provision of mediation services and improved partnership working with other agencies to help with the prevention of homelessness. These lead into actions that form the basis of the strategy's action plan.
- 2.7 Consultation on the strategy is currently on-going with a range of stakeholders, as listed in the strategy. Any material comments made by consultees, that may alter the drafting of the strategy, will be input into the process of member consultation as and when known.
- 2.8 The strategy, with a covering letter, has been sent to all elected members of the District Council. It has been sent out in advance of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Cabinet and Council to allow members to digest the content and to raise any comments with members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Cabinet or for clarification direct to the Head of Housing Services prior to consideration at Council.

3. IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The strategy identifies the extent of the shortfall between young people hoping to access affordable housing and the level of supply of this type of housing. Those young people unable to resolve their own housing difficulties in the private sector are likely to turn to the council for help. The council has a duty to provide all with advice and assistance appropriate to their particular circumstances. Some will be owed a further duty to help directly with housing if they come within the priority categories contained within the homelessness legislation. It is, therefore, important that the council:
- ◆ continues to provide a comprehensive housing advice service, with a proactive approach to preventing homelessness wherever possible;
 - ◆ ensures that adequate levels of temporary housing are available for those young people faced with homelessness;
 - ◆ ensures sufficient permanent affordable housing is available, particularly to help meet our statutory responsibilities; and

- ◆ ensure that appropriate support services are in place for young people to help sustain them in their home and so prevent homelessness.
- 3.2 The strategy's action plan highlights the priority areas where work will be progressed. The key areas include:
- ◆ Progressing partnership working to improve joint systems and procedures, to achieve more effective preventative homelessness services. In particular this will be through involvement in the multi-agency review of services for vulnerable children and young people;
 - ◆ Investigating the need for additional supported housing for young people, including direct access accommodation. This will include consideration on the most appropriate model of provision where a need is demonstrated; and
 - ◆ Working with Registered Social Landlords to increase the provision of tenancy support services where a need is demonstrated. In the light of year-on-year cuts through the Supporting People budget this may involve developing joint commissioning of services with partner agencies where appropriate.
- 3.3 The development of more effective preventative services through partnership working will be achieved through existing resources. The potential resource implications of this strategy are:
- ◆ The grant funding required to maximise the development of new affordable housing within the district;
 - ◆ The capital funding required to increase the provision of supported housing, including direct access housing, for young people. This will depend upon the outcome of future research into whether there is a need for increased provision; and
 - ◆ The revenue funding of support services for young people, whether these are attached to specific supported housing schemes, or tenancy support services for young people in the district's general housing stock. Again, this will depend upon the outcome of future research into need. It may, however, be affected by cuts in the Supporting People budget. Where this is the case, options on the joint commissioning of services will be investigated.
- 3.4 Any additional resources required will be considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Plan.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The council is faced with a level of demand for temporary and permanent social housing from young people that far exceeds the supply. Given that Huntingdonshire is a high demand area for social housing and that supply is unlikely to ever match demand, the council has an important role to play in:
- ◆ preventing homelessness amongst young people wherever possible, for example through timely and effective advice, and the provision of mediation services;

- ◆ prioritising those young people in greatest need of housing through the Housing Register where homelessness cannot be prevented;
- ◆ maximising all new affordable housing opportunities, and in particular the right mix of property sizes in order to address need; and
- ◆ ensuring that support services that meet the needs of young people are maintained, and developed where appropriate, in the context of a diminishing Supporting People budget.

4.2 The Young Persons Housing Strategy is a supporting strategy to the Housing Strategy and forms part of the policy framework. Under the Council's constitutional arrangements, this strategy requires approval by the Council.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Members are invited to consider the Strategy at Scrutiny Panel on 1 March 2005 and Cabinet on 17 March 2005, prior to its consideration at Council on 13 April 2005.

5.2 Council is asked **to approve** the Young Persons Housing Strategy 2005-07.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Preventing Youth Homelessness - ODPM - Sept 2003

**Contact
Officers:**

Jon Collen, Housing Needs & Resources Manager

☎ 01480 388220

Steve Plant, Head of Housing Services

☎ 01480 388240