

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) HOUSING STRATEGY
(Report by the Head of Housing Services)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the second draft Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Race Relations Act 1976 and subsequent amendments to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial groups; and promote good relations between persons of different racial groups. The Council's work in this area is the subject of regulation and inspection, for example, under the CPA regime.

- 2.2 The Commission for Racial Equality have released a draft Code of Practice in Housing which gives advice on how housing organisations can avoid unlawful racial discrimination and promote good race relations. It covers nine areas of housing. The document confirms that BME households are more likely to suffer disadvantage in housing, for example, they are more likely to live in the social rented sector than other people, to live in poor housing, to live in deprived areas, and /or to live in over-crowded conditions.

- 2.3 When the Audit Commission inspected the Council in 2004, they found that one of the areas for improvement was the Council's work on assessing the housing needs of BME groups. Therefore, Housing Services undertook the following:

1. Analysis of census data
2. Analysis of the users of the Council's Housing Services
3. Commissioned a specific study into the housing needs of BME groups in Huntingdonshire
4. Jointly commissioned some research into the needs of Gypsies and Travellers (not yet concluded).

The findings of these strands of work have been brought together in a draft BME Housing Strategy (Appendix 1). The document has been the subject of consultation with partners and stakeholders, and the local Diversity Forum.

3. IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The main findings of the research are set out in the Executive Summary. There is an action plan at the end of the Strategy which will be achieved within current resources.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The strategy has been prepared using a range of data sources. The Strategy will strengthen the Council's work in this area and will address the weaknesses identified by the CPA Inspectors.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That Cabinet endorse the draft Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Commission for Racial Equality, Draft Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing, 2005
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Huntingdonshire District Council, Equality and Inclusion Strategy, June 2005
- CPA Inspection Report
- BMG, Housing Needs and Preferences of BME groups in Huntingdonshire, 2005

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