

**HOUSING STRATEGY FOR THE CAMBRIDGE SUB-REGION
(Report by the Head of Housing Services)**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek endorsement of the Housing Strategy for the Cambridge sub-region 2008-11.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Cambridge sub-region comprises the seven local authorities of: Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, working together on housing issues. It is one of nine sub-regions within the East of England.
- 2.2 This is the third joint Housing Strategy for the sub-region. It is an important document because increasingly, local authorities are being encouraged to work on housing market areas which span local authority boundaries. The Strategy has two main implications: implications for funding and implications for any future inspections we may be the subject of.
- 2.3 The Housing and Sustainable Communities Panel at EERA are responsible for allocation of the Regional Housing Pot. This multi-million pound programme funds new affordable housing and Decent Homes. The Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2010 sets the policy platform for investment and it was written with much involvement at the sub-regional level. It is based on a collation of all sub-regional housing strategies. The Regional Housing Strategy sets the investment priorities for the Region which drive the Housing Corporation's investment programme. When considering the allocation of funds, the Housing Corporation considers the strategic fit with the priorities set out in the sub-regional strategy.
- 2.4 The Strategic and Enabling Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) which the Audit Commission would scrutinise if we were inspected describes an organisation delivering an excellent service as:
- The council has a thorough understanding of the dynamics of the housing market in its area, sub-region and region. It works closely with its neighbours to understand where there is an imbalance between supply and demand, the scale of this imbalance and the actions necessary to tackle this.
 - The council has a high quality and excellent Housing Strategy (which may form part of a sub-regional housing strategy) which

is clearly based on extensive stakeholder and service user consultation as well as the research that supports its understanding of the housing market.....

- The strategic approach (to working together to tackle the problems set out in the housing and other strategies) where by all sections of the council, neighbouring councils and the council's partner agencies are working together is very effective
- Its strong and close working with neighbouring councils and parish councils has enabled the provision of high quality affordable and/or specialist housing across boundaries that meets needs locally and sub-regionally.

2.5 This KLOE is under review and at a recent housing event hosted by GO-East, the Audit Commission's Housing Lead Inspector reported that the emphasis on sub-regional working will be further strengthened in the next Strategic / Enabling KLOE. At the same event, the Communities and Local Government official confirmed that they are '*looking for councils to incorporate their contribution to sub-regional housing strategies into Sustainable Community Strategies where possible*' and that '*..alliances, partnerships and sub-regional working are vital*'.

3. IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The document aims to set out the issues facing the sub-region and the Councils' plans to work together to jointly tackle these issues. This document does not replicate this Council's individual Housing Strategy and it only deals with the issues that benefit from a joint approach. Specifically, the Strategy:

- Describes why housing is important and how housing contributes to the strategic priorities for Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, including the LAA targets;
- Sets out how the Strategy fits in the national, regional and local strategic context;
- Describes the housing markets in the sub-region including analysis of house prices, affordability and housing need, as set out in the sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment;
- Describes housing's impact on the environment, the economy, the growth agenda, existing communities, housing options and choice, vulnerable people and those in need of supported housing, and Gypsies and Travellers;
- Sets out investment that has been secured up to 2011; and the investment priorities for the sub-region; and
- Highlights priorities for action for 2008-11.

3.2 The housing investment priorities are taken into account by the Housing Corporation when they assess housing associations' bids for funds to build new homes. The investment priorities set out in the Strategy are:

- Meet the challenge of significant housing growth to create mixed, balanced and sustainable communities across the sub-region while respecting our environmental assets.
- Plan for and respond to the sub-region's changing demography, particularly the needs of a growing number of older people.
- Invest in rural homes to support vibrant, sustainable communities.
- Respond to the diverse and changing needs of our communities including migrant workers, Gypsies and Travellers and hard-to-reach groups.
- Tackle both housing and support issues for people who are most vulnerable.
- Make best use of existing homes and extend housing options by improving housing conditions, reducing risk, updating sheltered housing and bringing empty homes back into use - focusing on those who are vulnerable and live in private housing.
- Prevent and tackle homelessness, help reduce deprivation and improve health and social inclusion.

3.3 Huntingdonshire District Council, together with housing association partners, has generally been very successful in attracting Housing Corporation investment into the district, and this success continues in the investment period 2008-11. The following homes have already been funded and the Housing Corporation's Continuous Market Engagement process enables more resources to be allocated to homes that come forward for development within the investment period.

| | Homes | Grant |
|----------------|-------|------------|
| Camb City | 98 | £4,966,000 |
| East Cambs | 168 | £6,772,806 |
| Fenland | 109 | £4,334,353 |
| Forest Heath | 60 | £1,134,000 |
| Hunts | 312 | £8,353,680 |
| South Cambs | 185 | £5,243,250 |
| St Edmundsbury | 159 | £3,365,000 |

3.4 The action plan for this Strategy is based upon existing work streams. The action plan will be implemented by officers working in partnership across the sub-region. It will be monitored by the Sub-Regional Housing Board which is attended by the Head of Housing Services. There are no additional resource implications for the Council arising from this action plan that have not been previously considered.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 This is the third sub-regional Housing Strategy. It is an important document that sets out the housing issues facing the sub-region and the Councils' joint plans to work in partnership to tackle the issues. The Strategy is only concerned with joint projects, not the issues that

affect stand alone districts which will continue to be dealt with in District Council's own Housing Strategies.

- 4.2 The Strategy strengthens our sub-regional approach to tackling the housing issues and it will be monitored by the Sub-Regional Housing Board. It is important to assist us with bidding for funds which seek sub-regional strategic fit; and in delivering best practice in strategic housing services, as set out by CLG and assessed at time of inspection.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse the Housing Strategy for the Cambridge sub-region 2008-11.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Huntingdonshire's Housing Strategy 2006-11
- Housing Strategy for the Cambridge sub-region 2004-8
- Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England 2005-10, EERA

Contact Officer: Jo Emmerton, Housing Strategy Manager

☎ (01480) 388203