

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for Corporate Services  
to

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

11<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Report prepared by:  
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Agenda  
Item No.

13

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## In depth scrutiny report

*How we plan to meet the growing demand for social rented housing in the current economic climate*

**A Part 1 Agenda Item**

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### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek formal approval to the draft report of the scrutiny project "How we plan to meet the growing demand for social rented housing in the current economic climate".
- 1.2 The Chairman of the Project Team will be attending the Scrutiny Committee to present the report.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report and the recommendations from the in depth scrutiny project attached at **Appendix 1** be agreed.
- 2.2 That the Chairman of the Project Team be authorised to agree any final minor / typographical changes to the draft report.
- 2.3 That in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (Part 4 (e) of the Constitution), to agree that the Chairman of the Project Team present the final report to a future Cabinet meeting.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The former Community Services & Culture Scrutiny Committee selected its topic at the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2012 (Minute 118 refers).
- 3.2 The project plan was agreed by the Project Team and then the Scrutiny Committee on 27th November 2012 (Minute 514 refers) with the following objectives:
  - (a) To assess level of need:
    - ✚ To gain an understanding of the level of supply and demand for social rented and affordable housing in Southend-on-Sea and the powers and resources available to the Council.
  - (b) How to provide it:
    - ✚ To consider the potential role that 'council house building' might play in meeting Southend-on-Sea's future housing needs, the resources needed to fund new homes and other ways of boosting housing supply.
    - ✚ To consider whether the Council is maximising the potential of its assets in meeting Southend-on-Sea's future housing needs.
  - (c) How to manage it:

- ✚ To suggest possible changes / improvements and help inform the development of (a) the Strategic Tenancy Policy (i.e. how flexible tenancies may be used to better manage stock); (b) the review of the Allocations Policy.

- 3.3 The outcomes/aims agreed by the Committee were to make appropriate recommendations to the Council & Health & Wellbeing Board to:
- Raise awareness of the issues and share and highlight best practice
  - Role of social rented housing sector in meeting demand, in comparison to other tenures
  - To make recommendations to amend, where appropriate, the Council's Housing Strategy and Policies

3.4 The Member Project Team, which was Chaired by Councillor David Norman, met on 8 occasions and considered a wealth of evidence, held 5 witness sessions and undertook a number of site visits.

## 4 Recommendations

4.1 The draft scrutiny report is now attached at **Appendix 1**. The report has been discussed by the project team and will be shared with the witnesses. It should be noted that approval of any recommendations with budget implications will require consideration as part of future years' budget processes prior to implementation.

4.2 Scrutiny is recommended to endorse the following conclusions from the review, for approval by Cabinet:

1.	That the Council take the opportunity to actively engage in developing and building new social housing for rent.
2.	The Council should continue to review all Council-owned land that is capable of supporting housing development.
3.	That the Council investigate all possible options for bringing empty residential and commercial properties back into use.
4.	To review opportunities to improve and regenerate Council-owned high-rise accommodation.
5.	That the Council continues to work with housing association partners to deliver new social housing.
6.	The Council and social housing landlords consider new policies and initiatives which promote housing delivery and access to housing.
7.	Partnership working between local landlords to share best practice on policy issues should be encouraged.
8.	Recognise the role of private rented housing in meeting housing needs and promoting improvement in the sector.
9.	The Council and partners to find new ways to assess the level of housing need in the town.

## 5. Other Options

Not applicable.

## 6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision and Critical Priorities – Becoming an excellent and high performing organisation.
- 6.2 Financial Implications – there are financial implications to some recommendations but as yet they are unquantifiable. However, any recommendations progressing with associated financial implications will need to go through the annual budgetary process before implementation, as currently no revenue or capital budgets exist for the proposals.
- 6.3 Legal Implications – none.
- 6.4 People Implications – none.

- 6.5 Property Implications – none.
- 6.6 Consultation – as described in report.
- 6.7 Equalities Impact Assessment – none.
- 6.8 Risk Assessment – none.

## **7. Background Papers –**

- Project team meeting notes – meetings held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 20<sup>th</sup> December, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 27<sup>th</sup> June.
- Agreed notes from witness sessions – meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2012, 20<sup>th</sup> December, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013, 4<sup>th</sup> March and 15<sup>th</sup> April.
- Other evidence as described in the report

## **8. Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 – draft project report**