

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for Corporate Services to

Cabinet

17th September 2013

Report prepared by:
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Agenda
Item No.

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

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the final report of the in depth scrutiny project “How we plan to meet the growing demand for social rented housing in the current economic climate”.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the report and recommendations from the in depth scrutiny project “How we plan to meet the growing demand for social rented housing in the current economic climate”.
- 2.2 To note that approval of any recommendations with budget implications will require consideration as part of future years’ budget processes prior to implementation.

3. Background

- 3.1 The former Community Services & Culture Scrutiny Committee selected its topic at the meeting on 10th 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.

3.5 The scrutiny report attached at **Appendix 1** has been discussed by the project team and shared with the witnesses. Councillor Norman presented the report to the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11th July 2013. At this meeting the Committee agreed that the report and its recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for approval (Minute 160 refers). 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 Other Options

Not applicable.

5. Recommendations

5.1 In accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (Part 4 (e) of the Constitution), the in depth scrutiny report is now attached at **Appendix 1** for approval by Cabinet. The recommendations are as follows:

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.

5.2 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.

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

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – in depth scrutiny project final report - How we plan to meet the growing demand for social rented housing in the current economic climate