



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

**to
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
28 FEBRUARY 2017**

AND

**PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE
2 MARCH 2017**

COMMUNITY LED HOUSING PROGRAMME

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Members proposals for a Community Led Housing Programme for the District.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) that the draft programme for the Council's Community Led Housing (CLH) as detailed in **APPENDIX 1**, be approved;
- (ii) that a seminar be held for community groups to promote the concept of CLH and consult on the Council's draft programme.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) funding has been provided to the Council to support the implementation of a programme of Community Led Housing (CLH) in the District. CLH can be defined as a way for local communities to provide good quality housing to help certain groups in their community, for example older people, young families and others who are in need of affordable housing. Although this only accounts for a very small proportion of housing development, the benefits it can provide are often seen as being much greater than more conventional methods of development. Those benefits include a stronger link between new development and local housing need; greater community involvement in planning local development; improved options to support local businesses and provide opportunities for training and skills; and an opportunity to strengthen community cohesion.
- 3.2 In recognition of the need to improve the supply of affordable homes and the additional benefits of doing this with the support and involvement of local community groups, the government has launched a funding programme to encourage local housing authorities to work with local communities to meet local housing need.

- 3.3 As an authority that has often had only a small number of new homes and therefore unable to rely on planning gain to provide a consistent supply of new affordable homes, the Council is already experienced in working with local communities and other partners to use innovation and other options to meet local housing need, such as:
- Rural exception schemes;
 - Securing new homes to meet identified need within rural areas;
 - Working with local communities to help identify the need for affordable housing and homes for older people;
 - Facilitating events to help promote options for identifying and responding to housing need;
 - Working with housing associations to acquire properties that may become vacant;
 - Tackling empty homes – both privately owned and owned by housing associations;
 - Supporting smaller local housing charities to gain access to new developments;
 - Urban exception sites to meet the need for affordable homes;
 - Using funding from other sources to meet local need.
- 3.4 These are all options that the government suggest could help local communities meet local housing need, accepting that each community will have different requirements, interests and priorities. This variety is something that the Council's Housing Service has provided help and support within the past and with the right capacity could expand to meet the government's objectives for CLH.
- 3.5 This lends itself to developing a programme that can respond to a variety of possible options for local communities to meet local housing needs. This also complements the need of the Council to retain a programme of housing development to address any residual shortfall of affordable housing outside of that planned and expected windfall sites.
- 3.6 **APPENDIX 1** provides an indication of actions and activities that could be funded through the CLH funding provided by the DCLG to deliver these shared aims, with the primary objective of building up a framework that can support a variety of different options. Most of these actions would be funded from the CLH grant with the intention of ensuring there also remains some funding to meet the cost of more detailed level of working on individual projects as they come forward.
- 3.7 The funding can be used for either capital or revenue funding in the current year and 2017 / 18. It is proposed that it is too early at this stage to commit specific amounts to anything other than capacity building as local organisations may have their own resources to contribute towards the cost of future development, expanding the potential for further projects in the future. The Council also has other resources that could be used to support Community Led Development such as commuted sums paid to provide affordable housing and the CLH funding helps ensure there is capacity to effectively prioritise and allocate other sources of capital funding to the most appropriate schemes.

- 3.8 It is proposed that once the concept and potential of Community Led Housing is explained to local groups, and a framework for delivery is in place, the second half of the next financial year can focus on progressing with local schemes. By this stage, there will be greater clarity as to the need for further resources to support tasks such as identifying particular housing need, outline assessment of financial viability and other technical services. Some of this can be met from the current allocation of funding which it is proposed to hold in reserve for these reasons. It will also help indicate the need for additional funding for the allocation of CLH funding in future years.
- 3.9 The Council may also wish to consider, as it widens the scale of its work in supporting a potentially larger number of strategic developments than it has undertaken before, the benefits of creating a more formal role for itself as a developing organisation which could also provide a source of income generation in the future. The government guidance refers to the possibility of a ‘local enabling and support vehicle so that your use of funding creates a legacy of delivery capacity within your authority and in the local community’ (see DCLG’s guidance on Community Led Housing provided as a background paper). It is also therefore proposed that a proportion of funding could be allocated towards exploring and investigating this as a longer term project to help deliver CLH in the longer term.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The national programme of Community Led Housing fits well with the Council’s previous activities as a local housing authority that has worked innovatively with local organisations to meet local housing need and the need to expand this to meet a growing need and interest for affordable housing within local communities throughout the District. Most of the proposed actions reflect this existing level of knowledge and expertise, combined with experience of what has worked in the past.
- 4.2 The net shortfall between anticipated supply of affordable homes through the Local Development Plan (LDP) and the Council’s requirement is about 450, or 30 additional homes a year. Some of this may be delivered through other means but a target of at least half, 225 homes equating to 15 a year, to be delivered through various forms of Community Led Housing would be a stretching target that would demonstrate to partners and the government the Council’s commitment to this initiative.
- 4.3 The first stage is to build up capacity and understanding so that the Council is using the CLH fund and other resources fairly and effectively, with some provision made to help launch individual projects in the second half of 2017 / 18. Consultation and promotion of the programme would begin with a seminar for local groups which would help provide more detail on the possible opportunities in the District for CLH and how this can link with existing resources and support future applications for funding.
- 4.4 The recently established Strategic Housing Board would provide a framework for more detailed planning and monitoring by Members and Officers.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 5.1 Strengthening communities to be safe, active and healthy – Community Led Housing is intended to strengthen local communities.
- 5.2 Protecting and shaping the District – Community Led Development is intended to reflect local need and provide more sustainable communities.
- 5.3 Creating opportunities for economic growth and prosperity – Community Led Development is seen as a way of supporting local economies, including the potential to work with other local agencies and businesses providing services, skills and training.
- 5.4 Delivering good quality, cost effective and valued services – Community Led Development is intended to be cost effective and provide additional benefits and value to local communities.
- 5.5 Focusing on key projects – development of this type is suited to meeting the need for affordable housing, better homes for older people and also creating an opportunity for the Council to invest in local development.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – There would be a number of positive impacts on customers beyond the most obvious one of improving their housing options, including access to training, skills, better employment prospects and stronger ties with their communities.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – those with protected characteristics are highlighted by the government as groups that would benefit from CLH.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – CLH provides an opportunity to meet both the Council's and local communities' requirement for housing, strengthens the potential to secure additional resources and provides an opportunity for making best use of existing funding including commuted sums; failure to demonstrate a commitment to this initiative and support interested local community groups could have an adverse impact on the Council's reputation.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Funding has been provided to implement the proposed actions to launch a programme of CLH in the District which has to be accounted for to the DCLG. This also provides a framework for making best use of other existing sources of funding and potential creates an opportunity for the Council to generate additional funding from development opportunities.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Some of the funding allocated can be used to ensure that the Council's Housing Service has the capacity to deliver the actions proposed.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – New housing development inevitably has some impact but the intention is that in some cases this would be offset by

making best use of existing properties such as empty homes, homes that need refurbishment or could be converted. CLH development can also reduce the overall level of development needed to meet local need by encouraging the development of what is needed to meet local need rather than demand from elsewhere.

Background Papers: Department of Communities and Local Government Final Guidance on Community Led Development <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/60-million-boost-for-communities-affected-by-second-homeownership>

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