

# REPORT FOR DECISION



<b>Agenda Item</b>	
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<b>DECISION OF:</b>	<b>The Cabinet</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>9 April 2014</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Approval of the Housing Strategy 2014-24 and Action Plan</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Councillor Rishi Shori, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health and Housing</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Marcus Connor – Head of Performance &amp; Housing Strategy</b>
<b>TYPE OF DECISION:</b>	<b>CABINET (NON-KEY DECISION)</b>
<b>FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:</b>	This report is within the public domain
<b>SUMMARY:</b>	<p>Whilst it is no longer a Government requirement to submit a Housing Strategy for regulatory purposes, it remains good practice for local authorities to develop a Strategy which sets out local priorities and provides a guide to registered providers and developers on housing requirements within the Borough.</p> <p>Bury’s current Housing Strategy was written 10 years ago and is outdated. The new draft strategy (attached) uses refreshed data from Bury’s Housing Need &amp; Demand Assessment (2011/12) and other sources to identify 5 key themes for action over the next 10 years.</p> <p>Since the initial draft strategy was considered at Cabinet in September 2013, extensive consultation has been carried out with Elected Members, the public, housing providers and stakeholders. Feedback (the results of which are set out in the attached report), was supportive of the strategy’s aims and objectives and has been used to develop the Action Plan so that our aspirations can be translated into reality.</p> <p>The strategy and associated documents have been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2014. The Committee were also</p>

	supportive of the objectives and have requested a progress update in twelve months.
<b>OPTIONS &amp; RECOMMENDED OPTION</b>	<p>Option 1 – Approve the Housing Strategy and Action Plan. This will provide guidance to future housing initiatives in the Borough.</p> <p>Option 2 – Do nothing. This would leave the Borough without an overarching strategy. Although not an essential requirement, a clear strategy assists decision making and enhances the prospects of external funding bids.</p> <p>Option 1 is the preferred option.</p>
<b>IMPLICATIONS:</b>	The Housing Strategy will provide a guide to where housing should be provided in the Borough, helping to obtain a joined up approach and maximising the use of limited resources.
<b>Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:</b>	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes
<b>Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:</b>	<p>The Strategy is a critical document outlining the future direction of Housing in the Borough.</p> <p>The financial issues / options are outlined at section 6.0 of the Housing Strategy, along with considerations to be taken into account when developing new initiatives.</p> <p>The Strategy mitigates the risks of having an unstable supply of housing, and seeks to ensure best use of available resources.</p>
<b>Statement by Executive Director of Resources:</b>	There are no wider resource implications.
<b>Equality/Diversity implications:</b>	The Equality Analysis for the Housing Strategy and Action Plan shows that there will be a positive impact on people with the following Equality Characteristics: Race, Disability, Age, Religion or Belief, and Caring Responsibilities. It will enhance opportunity by seeking to meet the needs of those with specific characteristics and so avoid them being excluded from the housing options generally available in the Borough. It will also help to foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic and those who do not, such as the integration of schemes for older people into the wider community.
<b>Considered by Monitoring Officer:</b>	Yes JH

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Scrutiny Interest:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny

**TRACKING/PROCESS**

**DIRECTOR: Executive Director of Adult Care Services**

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Executive Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
2 September 2013 17 February 2014			
Scrutiny Committee	Committee	Council	
14 January 2014			

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Government Office used to require all local authorities to produce a Housing Strategy for their area that met set criteria. Bury’s Strategy was last assessed in 2004 and successfully obtained a ‘Fit for Purpose’ rating. The burden of external assessment has since been lifted enabling strategies to be reflective of local needs and circumstances.
- 1.2 With changes in the housing, planning and economic climate over recent years, Bury’s Housing Strategy has become outdated and needs to be refreshed. A Housing Need & Demand Assessment was commissioned in 2011/12 and the outcome of this report together with other data on the local housing market has been used to determine future housing trends, needs and demands. Responding to these issues is essential for effective decision making, guiding the actions of housing providers and ensuring that the Council and its partners maximise their use of resources.
- 1.3 As part of the strategy development process, there has been extensive opportunity to take part in consultation and 88 people have contributed to the feedback. While the numbers responding were not great, representation across all stakeholder groups was excellent covering all aspects of the housing market. Comments received, details of which are attached, were supportive of the draft Strategy and their suggestions have been incorporated into the Action Plan.

**2.0 HOUSING STRATEGY 2014-2024**

- 2.1 The primary aim of the strategy is to achieve sufficiency and suitability of housing within the Borough. This means influencing the market and looking to create conditions which encourage the right mix, of the right type, size and tenure of housing, in the right locations, to meet the needs of the Borough. Part of this is about increasing the number of dwellings available to meet a rising population. But it is not just about numbers. The Council also needs to

take actions which promote quality housing that is both accessible and affordable to residents.

- 2.2 In the current economic climate this will be challenging. However it is expected that over the life of this strategy, conditions will change and the Borough needs to be in a position to respond and take advantage of any upturn. Bury is a popular place to live and the strategy needs to develop that unique selling point.
- 2.3 There is also recognition of the social aspects of housing in terms of:
- Supporting the 'Green Agenda' to maximise energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty
  - The affordability of property across the townships
  - Identifying the needs of specific groups such as older people, people with disabilities, homeless households
- 2.4 Through the data analysis and knowledge of the market, certain themes emerge which can be categorised under five main headings:
- Objective 1: Delivering a sufficient and suitable supply of housing in the Borough
  - Objective 2: Affordability
  - Objective 3: Fewer empty properties
  - Objective 4: Good quality accommodation
  - Objective 5: Partnership development
- 2.5 These issues formed the basis of the draft strategy and the consultation discussions during October / November 2013.

### **3.0 CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 The views of stakeholders have been sought using a variety of techniques:
- All Elected Members via email
  - Open consultation with the public via the Council's website
  - Consultation with housing providers operating in the Borough, landlords, interest groups and voluntary sector organisations
  - Focus Groups – this included a session specifically for Elected Members
  - Feedback from the Joint Commissioning Partnership, Housing Association Liaison Group and Six Town Housing Board.
  - Homes and Communities Agency
  - Housing Strategy Programme Board
- 3.2 The methods of consultation were varied according to demand and to maximise participation. Full details were sent out to providers, members and interested groups to allow them to comment. More generally, press releases and other media outlets including the Council website were utilised to raise awareness and generate responses from the public and potential customers. Copies of the draft strategy were available on the website and in the main Council offices and alternative arrangements were made for people who had difficulty accessing the document.
- 3.3 The period of consultation ran from 1 October 2013 for 8 weeks. All responses were collated and analysed as set out in the attached report.

3.4 The draft Strategy, action plan and consultation analysis were presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2014. The Committee discussed the documents in detail and gave their support to their contents. A twelve month progress update has also been requested by the Committee.

#### **4.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

4.1 The strategy aims to provide a framework for housing provision which meets the needs of all residents in the Borough, being mindful of the need to maximise the acquisition and use of limited resources.

4.2 The equality analysis has been amended during and following consultation. The final version is attached for information.

#### **5.0 RISK**

5.1 The main risk at this stage is that we will be raising expectations that cannot be fulfilled. It is accepted that much will depend on the prevailing economic situation but the strategy provides direction to housing providers, identifies the local needs and priorities, and provides support to future funding bids. In these times, focus and cohesiveness take on greater significance in order to achieve better outcomes and an effective use of resources.

5.2 A subsequent risk is that the strategy will be ineffective and not shape the market as intended. To mitigate this risk, the Housing Strategy has been written to complement planning and other policies to ensure a consistent and coherent approach to housing in the Borough. Engaging stakeholders through consultation in the development of the strategy and action plan should also mitigate the risk of the strategy being ignored.

#### **6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Bury's Housing Strategy is old and needs refreshing. Consequently, work has been undertaken to update our knowledge of the local housing market, needs and demand to produce a new Housing Strategy which is intended to take the Borough forward into the next decade.

6.2 The strategy has identified a number of key issues which have been grouped under 5 key objectives. To obtain consensus on the issues and engage housing providers and other stakeholders in designing the solutions, a comprehensive consultation programme has been undertaken. This programme not only records people's views on the strategy but has also made a major contribution to developing the action plan.

6.3 It is recommended that Cabinet considers and approves the Housing Strategy 2014/2024 and related Action Plan.

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#### **List of Background Papers:-**

Housing Need & Demand Assessment 2011/12

**Contact Details:-**

Marcus Connor  
Head of Performance & Housing Strategy  
Telephone: 0161 253 6252  
Email: [m.c.connor@bury.gov.uk](mailto:m.c.connor@bury.gov.uk)