

Agenda Item:

Report to: Services Scrutiny Committee.

Date: 30 May 2007

Report from: Project Board

Title of report: **AFFORDABLE HOUSING & PLANNING POLICY**

Purpose of report: To advise members of the Service Scrutiny Committee of a Project Board review undertaken of existing affordable housing policy and its relationship with planning policy.

Recommendations:

1. That revised planning policy for affordable housing be considered for adoption through the emerging Local Development Framework
2. That new planning policy for affordable housing be informed by the 10 key recommendations attached at Appendix A of this report

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The purpose of the review was to consider the effectiveness of existing affordable housing Local Plan policies, particularly in the light of recent Housing Need and Housing Market assessment studies and in advance of the Local Development Framework (LDF) review.
- 1.2 The Project Board wished to review the key policy objectives and give consideration of the main factors impacting on delivery of affordable housing, with a view to recommending revised policy or guidance if required. A copy of the project initiation document is attached at Appendix B.
- 1.3 Following initial scoping meetings at the end of 2006 the Project Board met on 10th Jan 2007 to receive and discuss a presentation of the key issues. The presentation covered:
 - The relevant national guidance

- Definitions of affordable housing
- The various forms and types of affordable Housing
- The key housing policy objectives of the Council
- Existing HBC Local Plan Policy and developer guidance
- Delivery targets for affordable housing
- Performance to date on delivery, including barriers to development
- The new evidence base on Local Housing Needs & revised planning guidance
- The Local Development Framework agenda

A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix C

- 1.4 A final meeting took place on 27th Feb. 2007 where consideration of the LDF Consultation feedback on housing was reported and the group considered a range of key policy recommendations concerning the future delivery of affordable housing through the planning system.
- 1.5 The Project Board were of the view that the LDF provides a timely opportunity to review the effectiveness of the existing affordable housing policies and that in carrying out that review full account should be taken of 10 key recommendations emerging from the Project Board's review.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The 10 recommendations include strengthening direction in some respects whilst promoting greater flexibility in others. The recommendations also cover some omissions from the current plan policies that have become more prominent issues both nationally and locally in the intervening period. Notable examples include recommendations around higher expectations in terms of quality of design, environmental standards and accessibility.
- 2.2 In conclusion the Project Board were unanimous in their support for the principle that everyone in Hastings & St Leonards should have the opportunity of a decent home, which they can afford, within a sustainable and mixed community. The Project Board felt that this should be interpreted as providing a wide choice of housing to meet the needs of the whole community in terms of tenures and price ranges. The Project Board were also united in the view that the Council should take the lead in ensuring that the right housing is in place to support this aim.

3 **Policy implications**

Please tick if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities & Community Cohesiveness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic / Financial implications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights Act	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Organisational Consequences	<input type="checkbox"/>

Report written by: Andrew Palmer, Housing Services Manager 01424 451316