

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

CABINET

Date of the meeting: 24 March 2009

Report of: Places

Title: Sub Regional Housing Strategy

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the recently completed Sub-regional Housing Strategy, which has been published on behalf of the Cheshire Housing Alliance.

2.0 Decision Required

- 2.1 To consider the Sub-regional Housing Strategy and adopt prior to its launch by the Cheshire Housing Alliance in April 2009.

3.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs

- 3.1 No implications for transition costs

4.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond

- 4.1 Officer time.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 No legal implications.

6.0 Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Government Office North West endorse the preparation of Sub-regional Housing Strategies and state that *"Where an authority has a signed off Fit for Purpose strategy we would expect it to participate in the preparation of a Sub-regional strategy"*. They are effective documents to demonstrate how the Sub-region contributes to the Regional priorities and gives the Sub-region the ability to "lever-in" additional resources. Failure to adopt the strategy could see scarce resources being directed to the other Sub-regions of the North West.

- 6.2 The Cheshire Housing Alliance are preparing to launch the strategy at the beginning of the new financial year, therefore failure to adopt the strategy by Cheshire East will result in the inability to keep to this timescale.

7.0 Background and Options

- 7.1 In order to obtain feedback on the draft strategy and the proposed housing priorities the Cheshire Housing Alliance undertook a period of public consultation during November and December 2008.
- 7.2 Following the closure of the consultation period the strategy has now been amended and the Action Plans for both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester have been finalised. The launch of the strategy by the Cheshire Housing Alliance is set for the beginning of the new financial year.
- 7.3 One of the main reasons that the Cheshire Housing Alliance has developed this strategy is to demonstrate the issues faced by Cheshire and to use it as a lobbying tool to raise the profile and to attract more resources into the area.
- 7.4 Though Cheshire is often viewed as being a fairly affluent area, average house prices here are substantially higher than the regional and national average and affordability has long been an issue, even in the current economic climate. Many of our rural populations and historic market towns, in particular, face a growing affordability crisis, dwindling local services, ageing houses and increasing isolation.
- 7.5 Cheshire is a key part of the wider regional housing market and the sub Regional strategy complements and contributes to the developing aims of the North West Regional Housing Strategy (currently under review). It sets out the common housing issues affecting Cheshire and the wider region and identifies how we can add value by working together with key partners across geographical and administrative boundaries. The creation of two new unitary authorities for the sub-region will allow us to further streamline key partnerships and practices to maximise the opportunities available.
- 7.6 The first Sub-Regional Housing Strategy for Cheshire was developed in 2003. Much has changed, not only within the sub-region, but also on a regional and national level in the intervening years. The impact of international economic events is beginning to make itself felt and the consequences of the 'credit crunch' are likely to have a significant effect for some time to come, in terms of increasing restrictions on lending, rising repossession and falling sales. Many developers are already cutting back on their build programmes, which could have serious consequences for new affordable housing development and Government growth targets.

7.7 The vision of the Strategy is to provide a housing offer that supports the creation of balanced, sustainable communities and the regeneration of the sub-region's most deprived neighbourhoods, through effective lobbying, partnership working and community engagement, to create a sub-region where all residents can achieve independent living in good quality, affordable homes that are appropriate to their needs.

7.8 The four priorities listed below have been identified as the key issues for the sub-region:

PRIORITY ONE: To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development.

PRIORITY TWO: To make best use of the sub-region's existing housing stock.

PRIORITY THREE: To meet the housing and accommodation-related support needs of the sub-region's most vulnerable residents.

PRIORITY FOUR: To increase the supply of market housing to support continued economic growth and regeneration and to meet local housing needs.

8.0 Overview of Day One, Year One and Term One Issues

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 Reasons for Recommendation

9.1 The Shadow Authority for Cheshire East should actively promote the 'housing offer' for residents through effective lobbying, partnership working and community engagement to create the conditions where all residents can achieve independent living in good quality, affordable homes that are appropriate to their needs.

For further information:

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Background Documents:

Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW1 1HZ



"Final SRHS
210109.doc"



"Draft SRHS V2.9
ACTION PLAN EAST.c"

*Sub Regional Housing Strategy
Cheshire East Action Plan*