

**Balancing Housing Markets – Self Assessment Summary Response****1. Understanding the Housing Market****1.1 Does the Council have the right research base to understand its housing market**Housing Needs Information

The Council uses three main sources of information to determine housing needs:

- Joint Housing Register with 1300 annual enquiries and 1600 home visits to assess housing need
- Parish Surveys
- 2002 Housing Needs Survey (HNS) jointly commissioned captures local and sub regional housing market data

The information used to inform policies is updated regularly:

- Joint Housing Register updated annually - 450 new affordable tenancies created add to met needs data.
- Property prices under constant review with prices high even for South East. Access to home ownership beyond reach of around 86% of concealed households. Incomes and house prices monitored regularly through Land Registry, County Council & Halifax Index.
- Private Rented Sector is expensive and makes only a limited contribution to access to affordable housing.
- As a result Winchester's "Key Workers" scheme extends to all categories of employee and specific research isn't necessary.

Stock Condition

- Private Sector House Condition and Energy Efficiency Survey undertaken in 2001 by specialist consultant
- Data will be up dated - based on renewal activity outcomes from housing enforcement, home improvement grant completions and HECA activities.
- Council has limited knowledge of RSL partners stock
- Council has empty property strategy but to share information with Council Tax to make this comprehensive.

Sub-Regional Housing Markets

- HNS commissioned across 3 LA boundaries to produce a sub-regional analysis.
- Gives accurate picture of local labour mobility and effects on local housing market.

Supported Housing

- Supporting People exercise identified and prioritised a number of supported housing projects for future development.
- 5 new supported housing schemes included in the Housing Strategy.
- All supported housing requires endorsement by local supported housing panel and Winchester Housing Needs Forum.
- A gap in local provision is availability of accommodation and support for continuing drinkers.

**1.2 How well does the Council develop & evolve its strategies and plans**Stakeholder Consultation

- Local Plan Review started with an 'Issues' consultation exercise questionnaire to all households in District and various workshops to enable key planning/housing issues to be explored.
- West of Waterlooville MDA is largest housing development proposal in District and has used 'planning for real' workshops
- A range of approaches used to engage partners, stakeholders and residents in Housing Strategy Process.
- Consults Housing Needs Forum to establish priorities in Supported Housing, Private Landlords Forum for lead in private sector housing and Tact, Council tenants forum.
- Draft Housing Strategy distributed to an extensive list of stakeholders and citizens panel and responses used in finalising report. Draft also sent to local authority neighbours consulted on sub regional issues where they exist.

Links to regional and national priorities

- Key Local Priorities correspond with and make a significant contribution to tackling the National and more particularly South East Key Regional housing priorities as detailed in their Housing Statement 2002-05.
- The regional issue which authority has only a limited impact on is that of regeneration. Employment levels are high and depressed areas do not exist to same scale as major cities in the Region.
- Local Plan Review heavily influenced by Government policy on achieving sustainable development and making the best use of previously developed land.

Mechanisms to help balance housing markets

Various methods used to prioritise options for investment to balance markets:

- Private & Public sector Housing Stock Condition Surveys
- Levels of Home Energy Conservation

Evaluation of options takes place by Cabinet. For example, arising from Private Sector Stock Condition Survey Members decided to approve additional revenue and capital resources to meet demands for additional Disabled Facilities Grant activity and to work on licensing and enforcement work in relation to Houses in Multi Occupation.

### 1.3 Right Strategies & Plans

#### All Strategies & Plans

- Council's highest priority is provision of affordable housing
- This is supported by housing needs survey and public consultation and reflected in Local Plan (LP) review
- Corporate working at officer and Member level to ensure that all policies are consistent with highest priority
- LP reflects key Government priorities for housing and planning.
- LP seeks to meet strategic housing requirements and ensure that major areas of development are examples of high quality sustainable urban extensions.
- LP Review seeking to apply lower affordable housing thresholds than those advised in Circular 6/98 to meet severe affordable housing needs in area, as demonstrated in housing need surveys.

#### Local Plan

- 1998 Local Plan being replaced by Winchester DLP Review (deposit published October 2001, Revised Deposit May 2003).
- Adopted Plan met Structure Plan housing land requirements to 2001
- LP Review makes provision to meet Structure Plan Review housing requirements to 2011. Includes planning for development of MDA West of Waterlooville and a 'reserve' MDA at Winchester City (North).
- Remaining housing requirements met by 'urban capacity' sites.
- Policies on affordable housing in LP review modified to seek increased provision to meet needs identified by studies.
- Achieving a Better Housing Mix' SPG adopted to influence size and type of market & affordable housing being developed
- Seeks minimum of 50% of units as 2 bedrooms or less, in order to address imbalances in housing market.
- LP Review includes 'exceptions' site policy, modified from equivalent policy in adopted Plan - now more positive.

#### Housing Strategy Statement

- Housing Strategy reflects Council's knowledge of Housing Market
- Describes what Council is doing in addressing priorities for intervention.
- Housing Strategy doesn't include SMART action plan, however covered in Health and Housing Department's General Fund annual Business Plan.
- Housing Strategy addresses needs of rural population by Promotion of Sustainable Rural Communities.
- Council has enabled through partnership with Countryside Agency, six neighbouring authorities and Housing Corporation identification of Parishes where additional housing will help sustain local community.

#### Private Sector Housing Strategy

- Revised Strategy will be formally adopted in July.
- Will incorporate changes introduced by RRO and include intervention and enforcement powers, renewal activities through informal action, discretionary assistance and loan facilitation.
- Effective DFG programme will be maintained.
- Revised HECA strategy will be included.
- Clear links to Supporting People programme established through proposed, joint local authority Home Improvement Agency.
- HIA will facilitate loan provision/equity release options.
- Discretionary, means -tested assistance will be targeted at elderly and vulnerable groups (including low-income benefit recipients)
- Council operate a Homecheck scheme and will negotiate funding support from joint partners including Social Services and PCT.
- Council will use a range of enforcement powers, including compulsory purchase.

- HMOs are high priority both as proactive risk-assessment task and reactive service for tenants and landlords - in addition to recently introduced Council Accreditation scheme for HMOs and for student lettings. Mandatory licensing will be implemented.
- HECA and Fuel Poverty strategies promote home energy issues by close partnership working with the local EEAC.
- With production of new Private Sector Housing Strategy SMART action plan will be included.

## 2 What are the Council's actions and what outcomes has it achieved in helping to balance housing markets?

### 2.1 How well is the Council working corporately to help balance the housing market?

#### Use of Resources

- Council conducted a comprehensive Urban Capacity Study of potential "brownfield" development opportunities across whole District including all land still owned by Council. Council is working with partner RSLs to produce development opportunities.  
A joint funded Project Officer progresses Council owned sites.
- Council's medium term financial strategy based on achieving "debt free" status in March 2002 and increasing investment in affordable housing. Local Authority SHG was used to bring forward Urban Capacity Sites on a rolling programme.
- Abolition of LASHG caused Council appraise ways to fund the long term provision of affordable housing which remains key corporate priority.
- Council bid successfully for Safer Communities Funding rounds 1 & 2, Challenge Funding, Starter Home Initiative and substantial annual ADP allocation to meet affordable housing needs.
- Council successful in obtaining additional funds from discontinued schemes such as Capital Challenge fund and Cash Incentives Schemes. For supported housing Council bids for resources through Winchester Housing Needs Forum.

#### Capacity to deliver strategies and plans & Partnerships

- Council created Corporate Housing Enablement Group (CHEG) with representatives from key service.
- Housing, planning and other relevant officers work closely together in several other forums
- CHEG is to be supplemented by an officer and Member group
- Forward Planning currently has 8 FTE involved with Local Plan preparation and planning for MDAs.
- When the Council moved debt free, it increased housing enablement staff to 3.5 FTEs.
- Appropriate training is given to all staff and members to ensure they maintain an appropriate and up-to-date knowledge.

#### Community Leadership, Equalities & Social Inclusion

- Council, has sold some of its land to one of its partners for supported housing for some vulnerable groups. This followed a difficult public debate, but Council took a robust approach to make difficult decision despite local opposition.
- Housing BME/Diversity strategy has recently been agreed to better meet needs of minorities.
- Community Planning exercises have been undertaken to consider provision of a sheltered scheme together with provision of general needs housing on two estates. This process will be considered for other sites in future.

### 2.2 Is the Council pursuing the right actions & initiatives to help balance markets and are outcomes making the right kind of difference

#### Housing Development

- LP Review has a key objective of provision of adequate housing to meet strategic requirement.
- Government target for 'brownfield' development regularly exceeded, but percentage of previously developed sites will fall once the Major Development Area starts
- LP Review requires housing densities of at least 30dph
- To implement MDA a 'Capacity Study', 'Southern Access Road Study' and 'Masterplan Framework Options' report
- Council has constructive relationship with County Council and is represented at officer level on a strategic planning Joint Advisory Panel and Local Transport Plan advisory group. County Council officers are part of LP Officer Group and give advice to Local Plan Committee, Cabinet and full Council.
- Council encourages pre-inquiry discussions on development and DCI officers operate a 'surgery' system to give such advice.
- LP Review promotes 'design-led' approach to new development and seeks submission of design statements with planning applications and Council places great emphasis on the quality of urban design

- Several villages have produced Village Design Statements which have been adopted as SPG
- Other guidance is published on housing mix, open space provision, etc.
- Members are positive in seeking that affordable housing is 'pepperpotted' within development sites.

#### Social/Affordable housing development & partnerships

- Since 1995 Council has produced 466 units of affordable accommodation
- Council has 5 RSL partners each selected to reflect their specialities and strengths.
- Council has no specific building standards, but relies on Scheme Development Standards enforced by Housing Corporation.
- Council has used private sector leasing schemes and continues to do so mainly to house homeless families to avoid use of B&B.
- Local RSLs have provided non-grant funding single persons housing at market rents and student accommodation.

- Council has enabled/ encouraged RSLs to provide Key Worker accommodation (under the Starter Home Initiative), exception Schemes (140 units provided and a further 90 units in pipeline) and Live/ Work units.

#### Supported housing schemes, Supporting People and front line services

- Winchester does not administer Supported People. Hampshire County Council (HCC) achieved a FAIR rating by the ODPM.
- Two of the schemes from Safer Communities bid, intended for mother and babies and ex offenders are at the planning stage.
- In last 3 years the Council has helped provide a Women's Refuge and commissioned more floating support services.
- Council is committed to a 'pilot' study of allocating 'difficult to let' ground floor sheltered accommodation to single parent households to release more accommodation at its hostel.
- Supporting People programme administrated by HCC, but is overseen by a partnership comprising the eleven District Councils in the County, Health and Hampshire Branch of the National Probation Service. A rolling 5 year strategy with annual review process is now being prepared.
- Council has established an Officer/ Member Working Party to ensure that new duties and proposals contained in Homeless Act 2002 are implemented by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2003.
- Council will meet Government's Target of nil use of B&B for families except in exceptional circumstances.

#### Private Sector Housing

- Discretionary grants targeted at elderly and vulnerable groups.
- Because of the scattered nature of the problems area action is not appropriate.
- Increase in DFG capital allocation, resources and better liaison with Social Services we are meeting demand from 'ageing population' for adaptations and improvements. h
- Joint local authority Home Improvement Agency being created.
- Homecheck scheme involves external agencies and the voluntary sector for client referrals.
- HECA strategy requires direct input/contribution from local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.
- Council adopted CPO powers in 2000 and is using this power for long-standing vacant dwellings as part of an Empty Property Strategy.
- There are around 500 HMOs and there is a voluntary Accreditation Scheme for HMOs and student lettings.
- Council's HECA Strategy includes an action plan for home energy promotions, events. 6.45% energy savings has been achieved over the base-line figure for 1996.

### 3. How well does the council monitor its progress and impact in helping to balance housing markets and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?

#### 3.1 How well does the council monitor its progress and assess the impact of its work to help balance the housing market?

##### Local Plan Monitoring

- Housing land supply monitored on regular basis by County Council.
- Council has identified need for more detailed monitoring and so producing annual housing Monitoring Reports
- Council has undertaken to re-survey urban capacity sites every 5 years from 2006.
- Extensive monitoring undertaken as part of preparation of LP Review preparation.
- Future Monitoring Reports will address improving amount of information about affordable housing needs and provision.
- Implications of failure of key aspects of Plan were considered in preparing LP Review.
- Consideration given to prospects of adequate housing land being brought forward to meet strategic housing requirements and options available if this is not achieved.

##### Housing Strategy/Private Sector action plans

- Housing Strategy does not have a SMART action plan but targets are in the General Fund Business Plan.
- The Private Sector Housing Strategy however does and so does the Health and Housing Departmental General Fund Services Plan.
- All strategies and plans produced are adopted by Council and depending upon their respective status, strategic or operational are either regularly monitored by Cabinet or via the Housing Performance Improvement Committee.
- In future Strategies and Plans will also go to LSP.
- Procedures and Systems for tracking elements of the Action Plan are in place
- Housing Strategy is reviewed annually in conjunction with General Fund Service Action Plan.
- Resource needs also considered and when and where appropriate linked to meeting the Council's Corporate Needs
- No systematic approach to risk management analysis yet in the Housing Strategy

#### 3.2 Has the Council learnt from what it is doing to help balance the housing market to develop and improve its future strategies and plans

##### Mechanisms for Learning

- Council takes account of partners and stakeholders views in helping to determine the priorities contained in its Housing Strategies.
- Council has introduced many changes through LP Review. For example, percentage of affordable housing sought and thresholds of qualifying sites are being adjusted to try to ensure that housing needs can be better met.
- 'Better Housing Mix' SPG was introduced following previous housing needs survey to address imbalances
- Arising from discussions with Social Services over 'Supporting People', the Council, East Hants DC and Social Services have decided to include Home Improvement Agency in new Private Sector Housing Strategy.
- The last two housing needs surveys were jointly commissioned by Housing and Planning which helped improve officer and Member learning and understanding.
- In light of abolition of LASHG and as a 'debt free' authority with a new requirement to set aside capital receipts, Council is once again faced with having to reconsider its capital expenditure which will affect the Council's future Housing Strategies.

##### Methods for gathering and assessing best practice

- Council uses published research papers to analyse output from bodies such as Housing Quality Network.
- We share information with other best practice authorities.
- Officers attend Regional and County Forums including SHECANE, Strategic Housing Officer Group Hampshire, Homelessness Sub Group Hampshire and Supporting People County Core Group.
- Annual attendance at professional summer schools as well as conferences
- Planning officers similarly represent the City Council on relevant professional groupings, such as Hampshire and Isle of Wight Planning Officers Group and Development Plans Group.