



**NORTHAMPTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Item No.

8

<b>Name of Committee</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>Directorate:</b>	Regeneration and Growth
<b>Corporate Manager:</b>	Christopher Cavanagh
<b>Date:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> March 2007

<b>Report Title</b>	Enabling and Delivering Housing Choice Housing Strategy 2006-2011
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<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>YES</b>
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**1. Recommendations**

Cabinet members consider and approve the draft Housing Strategy 2006-2011 "Enabling and Delivering Housing Choice" (Appendix A) for submission to Government Office for the East Midlands (GO-EM).

**2. Summary**

The draft Housing Strategy 2006-2011 was completed in December 2006. This has now undergone extensive consultation and amendments take into account suggestions and comments made.

A summary of the consultation is enclosed and Cabinet are requested to approve this to enable it to be submitted to GO-EM who will then consider its acceptance as a fit for purpose document. This would then enable the strategy to be operated as fit for purpose across the Council as required by the Local Government Act 2003.

### **3. Report Background**

#### **Introduction / purpose**

3.1 The Local Government Act 2003 introduced a requirement for Local Authorities to produce a fit for purpose housing strategy. An initial draft was produced in 2005, however this was deemed by GO-EM to be not fit for purpose.

3.2 The Housing Strategy Team commissioned a senior housing and planning consultant, Jon Watson, to assist in revising the strategy and address the issues raised by GO-EM. To ensure matrix working across corporate areas a Housing Strategy Project Board was set up to include representatives from Housing Services, Housing Repairs, Customer Services, Citizen Engagement and Private Sector Housing. In order to ensure political engagement a Housing Strategy Steering Panel was also formed with representatives from the corporate areas above, Members from the three political parties and external agencies i.e. Housing Corporation, WNDC and NCC.

3.3 Following a meeting of the Housing Strategy Steering Panel on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006, the draft document was completed and the Executive Summary, the Strategy and the Appendices were circulated widely and also posted on the Council's website as part of a consultation programme. Members of the Housing Strategy Team have attended meetings with the following organisations and groups to consult on the draft Strategy:-

- Registered Social Landlords
- LSP Board
- LGB Forum
- N-Tact
- Community Forums
- Housing Corporation
- Developers and Estate Agents
- WNDC Growth Delivery Plan Housing Infrastructure Sub-Group
- Northampton Volunteer Service
- Private Sector Landlords

3.4 The responses received are tabulated in Appendix 12 to the Strategy.

3.5 As part of the consultation a meeting was held with GO-EM on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2007 to discuss the draft Strategy. GO-EM confirmed that the strategy was expected to achieve fit for purpose status subject to suggested amendments. The strategy has now been revised to take into account these suggested amendments and other comments from the broader consultation as agreed at a meeting of the Housing Strategy Steering Panel on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2007. The final version of the Strategy is attached to this report.

3.6 Cabinet approval is sought to submit the Housing Strategy to GO-EM in order to achieve fit for purpose status.

#### **4. Options and Evaluation of Options**

The available options are as follows:

1. Not to produce a Housing Strategy
2. defer approval
3. Adopt the Strategy and keep it under review

1. The option of not producing a fit for purpose housing strategy is not viable since all local authorities are required to produce a housing strategy under the Local Government Act 2003

2. The option of deferring approval is also not recommended since the Strategy has been in preparation since early 2005 and it is an essential component of the improvement of the Council in general and the Housing Service in particular.

3. The option of adopting the Strategy and keeping it under review is the most preferable option since it enables an up to date strategic direction for housing to be published, taking account of community involvement and keep it under review through the preparation and monitoring of an annual Action Plan .

Option 3 is the option which should be followed

#### **5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)**

The Strategy refers to the need to effectively manage the housing assets of the Council and ensure that the housing stock is managed and maintained in the most effective way, taking into account the financial implications to the authority and on going consultation with tenants.

#### **6. Risk and Opportunity Issues**

If the Housing Strategy is not submitted to GO-EM it will not achieve fit for purpose status by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. A Fit for Purpose Strategy, It is an important element in demonstrating improvement of the Council by stating medium term strategic housing priorities, responding to the growth agenda for Northampton and having been revised through an improved corporate and partnership process.

#### **7. Consultees (Internal and External)**

<b>Internal</b>	Housing Services, Environmental Health, Asset Management, via a Housing Strategy Project Board and Steering Group
<b>External</b>	Amongst others - West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, Housing Corporation, Registered Social Landlords,

Local Strategic Partnership, Developers and Estate Agents, Private Sector Landlords, N Tact, Northampton Volunteer Service, MPs, Northamptonshire County Council, adjoining District Councils, English Partnerships, Northampton Federation of Residents Associations.

**8. Compliance Issues**

**A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes**

**Recovery Plan**

Improving the effectiveness of our Housing Services  
 Improve our work with partner organisations  
 Delivering sustainable growth that meets the aspirations of current and future generations

**Corporate Plan**

Priority 2 - improve Northampton's housing by focusing on and improving our weakest services  
  
 Priority 3 – Invest in the regeneration of the Town, providing economic development and growth

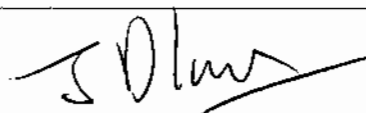
**B: Other Implications**

**Other Strategies**

Emerging LDF  
  
 Emerging Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy

**Finance Comments**

**Legal Comments**

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Monitoring Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)		1.3.07	7335

**Section 151 Officer  
or Deputy  
(Key decision only)**

*Bill Lewis*