

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & HOUSING CABINET BOARD

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF BUSINESS STRATEGY, PUBLIC PROTECTION & HOUSING SERVICES – A. THOMAS

30th JULY 2015

SECTION A – MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

Local Housing Strategy

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the Local Housing Strategy.

2. Background

As part of their strategic leadership and place shaping activities, local authorities should be addressing the housing needs of all residents across all housing tenures – through strategic housing activity, known as the ‘strategic housing role’. As such the Local Authority has a primary role as the strategic housing authority for the area which includes the production and implementation (with partners) of the Local Housing Strategy.

There is continued interest and expectation around the strategic housing role and how Council’s fulfil their responsibilities. *The strategic housing role is seen as amongst other things helping to make a place where people want to live because it has good quality housing from which they can select a type and tenure appropriate to their needs, aspirations and means.* The Local Housing Strategy is one way the authority can articulate its vision for housing in the area and clearly set out the housing priorities, challenges and opportunities for the area. The Local Housing Strategy is essentially about right houses, right places and vibrant communities.

A fully functioning housing strategy role is at the heart of achieving social, economic and environmental objectives that shape communities and create a sense of place. It touches on every aspect of people's lives from their education, health, life chances, employment, confidence and wellbeing.

The Local Housing Strategy is about meeting current and future housing need; it also entails assessing housing need, making the best use of existing stock, planning & commissioning housing & support services, having the right information to inform strategic priorities and influencing partners.

To have a robust strategic housing role means that we need the right tools to enable us to assess housing need and deliver housing solutions for the residents and future residents of NPT; articulated through our Local Housing Strategy. The last Housing Strategy was produced in very different times and much has changed since then.

In January, Members approved a consultative Draft Local Housing Strategy. This has been the subject of wide-ranging and extensive consultation. We have sought the views of as many stakeholders and partners as possible within limited resources.

3. Consultation

The Local Housing Strategy Consultation went 'live' for a period of 90 days from 2nd February 2015 and the Housing Strategy Team were keen to obtain views from key partners and stakeholders, from far and wide.

In order to do this, advice was sought from the Authorities Communications Team on the most appropriate channels of communication for this consultation exercise.

Various forms of communication were utilised including;

- Article on the Councils Official Website and Staff Intranet 'Site

- Email circulation to all Neath Port Talbot Councillors, PO's and those members of the Private Landlord Forum (made up of Private Sector Landlords); as well as to colleagues in neighbouring Authorities – Swansea and Bridgend
- Announced via the Councils social media routes including Facebook and Twitter
- An article published in the Councils Staff Newsletter '*In the Loop*'
- An advert placed on the Front of House TV Screens situated in the Main Reception areas of Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres and The Quays
- Hard copies of the questionnaire were made available at both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Receptions
- As part of a News Bulletin on the Neath Port Talbot Housing Website
- Through brief updates and presentations to various Forums and Meetings such as the Neath Port Talbot Homelessness and Supporting People Provider Forum, the Community Housing Agreement Meeting (Chief Executive level) and the Community Housing Agreement Operational Liaison Group
- Direct presentation given to our RSL Partner NPT Homes (at their request)
- Adverts placed in RSL Partner Tenant Newsletters and/or on their Websites and Twitter Feeds
- Advert placed in Neath Port Talbots CVS Newsletter
- Advert circulated via the RLA's Twitter feed
- Advert placed on the Website and via Twitter Feed of the Landlord Accreditation Wales.

A total of 13 Consultation responses were received of which 11 were via the Local Authorities Online Consultation Portal (Objective), 1 response was delivered by hand and 1 sent separately by email.

Of the 13 responses;

- 3 responded as Neath Port Talbot Councillors
- 1 responded as a Neath Port Talbot Council Employee
- 1 responded as a Retired Neath Port Talbot Council Employee
- 4 responded as a Voluntary/ Community Organisation

- 3 responded as Citizens of Neath Port Talbot Borough
- 1 responded as an RSL Partner

54% of Consultation Responses agreed with the Vision of the Document and its Aims and had no further comments to make. 46% of consultees made various comments all of which were reviewed and where relevant were taken on board and were reflected within the document.

Majority of the responses required minor changes and/ or providing more clarity to the information presented within the document.

Domestic Abuse and Empty Properties were two areas where comments were made and where it was felt that both needed either a reference/ or further information.

The new Domestic Abuse legislation '*Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015*' had no mention within the draft document under the section 'Preventing Homelessness' and it was felt that this should be featured given that domestic abuse is recognised as a cause of homelessness. The final version reflects this request.

It was felt that the local picture of Empty Homes within the Borough was not included within the draft document and the final version now includes the number of properties standing empty (long term empty) within the Borough and the number of properties that were identified as re-occupied.

All other comments reviewed appeared to be either irrelevant or were statements which couldn't be actioned upon and therefore were not included within the final version of the Strategy.

4. Local Housing Strategy

We are in a climate of financial austerity and major welfare reform, and these are two of the many challenges facing our communities and reflected in the Local Housing Strategy before Board today. It is hoped that through this strategy that the local authority strategic housing role can support effective place shaping and ensure delivery of sustainable communities.

The LHS builds upon the progress made with the previous Strategy, the Council's strategic approach to housing and the consultation responses described above.

The Local Housing Strategy sets out the current local housing situation across all tenures in the Borough and the strategic direction for five years. The LHS sets out the proposed housing vision for the area, which is

"Our Vision is that Housing in Neath Port Talbot will be appropriate, affordable, of good quality, in sustainable communities, offering people choice and support if they need it".

The document provides detail and evidence on a range of housing and housing related issues with key strategic objectives. The key strategic objectives are outlined at the beginning of each section of this Strategy, including.

- Understanding the housing market
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- Improving housing conditions
- Increasing the role of the private rented sector
- Preventing Homelessness
- Housing & regeneration

These strategic objectives will then form the basis of an implementation plan against which the strategy can be measured.

No one organisation can deliver the vision for housing or achieve the strategic objectives outlined in this strategy. These can only be achieved by partnership and collaborative working. The Council is committed to full partnership working to deliver the key objectives of this Strategy. The production of this document will enable further and ongoing constructive dialogue and engagement with stakeholders and partners (internally and externally) to further shape the document and ensure that we deliver the vision for housing. In which case, the approval of the LHS will be the spring board for reinvigorating the local housing partnership and continuing the corporate conversation on housing.

The Local Housing Strategy and the actions or interventions arising from it change and evolve. The LHS should therefore be seen as a jumping-off point for improving our knowledge, understanding of the market, continued engagement, on-going partnership working, innovation and delivery. As such the document should not be seen as being 'set in stone' and further iterations or updates may need to be brought back to Board.

5. EIA

The Equality Act 2010 and associated Regulations impose a number of equality related duties on Councils when drawing up policies such as the Local Housing Strategy. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. The EIA is produced at Appendix 1 and whilst the approval of strategy is an important marker, it is not the end point as the document and actions or interventions arising from it evolve, develop and become more mature.

6. Recommendation

Having given due regard to the EIA it is recommended that the Neath Port Talbot Local Housing Strategy be approved.

7. Reason for Proposed Decision

To enable the Authority to fulfil its statutory obligations.

8. List of Background Papers

Neath Port Talbot Local Housing Strategy – available for inspection at both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres Member's Rooms.

9. **Officer Contact**

Claire Jones, Principal Officer – Housing Strategy and Partnerships

Tel. No.: 01639 763318

E-mail: s.c.jones@npt.gov.uk

Hayley O'Brian

Housing Strategy and Development Officer

Tel: 01639 763159

Email: h.bearman@npt.gov.uk

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT:

Local Housing Strategy

(a) Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call-in period.

(b) Sustainability Appraisal

Community Plan Impacts

Economic Prosperity	-	Positive
Education & Lifelong Learning	-	Positive
Better Health & Well Being	-	Positive
Environment & Transport	-	No impact
Crime & Disorder	-	Positive

Other Impacts

Welsh Language	-	No impact
Sustainable Development	-	Positive
Equalities	-	Positive
Social Inclusion	-	Positive

(c) Consultations:

There has been no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item, although the LHS was the subject of consultation and engagement.

Appendix 1

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Report Form

This form should be completed for each Equality Impact Assessment on a new or existing function, a reduction or closure of service, any policy, procedure, strategy, plan or project which has been screened and found relevant to Equality and Diversity.

Please refer to the 'Equality Impact Assessment Guidance' while completing this form. If you would like further guidance please contact the Corporate Strategy Team or your directorate Heads of Service Equality Champion.

Where do you work?
Service Area: Housing Strategy
Directorate: Social Services, Health and Housing

(a) This EIA is being completed for a...

Service/ Function	Policy/ Procedure	Project	Strategy	Plan	Proposal
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(b) Please name and describe below...

(c) It was initially screened for relevance to Equality and Diversity on ...

(d) It was found to be relevant to...

Age	X	Race	X
Disability	X	Religion or belief.....	X
Gender reassignment	X	Sex	X
Marriage & civil partnership	X	Sexual orientation.....	X
Pregnancy and maternity	X	Welsh language.....	X

**Lead Officer
Head of Service**

**Job title: Principle Officer
Community Care and Housing**

Date: 22.07.15

Section 1 – Aims (See guidance):

Briefly describe the aims of the function, service, policy, procedure, strategy, plan, proposal or project:

What are the aims?

The aims of the Neath Port Talbot Local Housing Strategy include;

- To fulfil the strategic housing function
- To articulate what we know about the housing circumstances and conditions in the area
- To articulate what the key challenges are and how we might be able to/will address them i.e. interventions (either as an LA alone or Working in Partnership)
- To guide investment decisions
- To guide our Partners and Stakeholders in respect of what is strategically important to address / service developments
- Highlight gaps in our knowledge

Who has responsibility?

Corporate Strategic responsibility fulfilled by the Housing Strategy Team within the Social Services, Health & Housing Directorate.

Who are the stakeholders?

There are a number of varied Stakeholders including: Welsh Government, RSL Partners, Support Providers, Local Health Board, Interest Groups (eg. Shelter), Advice Agencies (eg. Citizens Advice), Citizens and future Citizens of the Borough, Vulnerable Service User groups including those with Mental Health Issues, Private Sector Landlords, Private Organisations and the Third Sector.

Section 2 - Information about Service Users (See guidance):

Please tick what information you know about your service users and provide details / evidence of how this information is collected.

Age	X	Race	X
Disability	X	Religion or belief.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex	X
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual orientation.....	X <input type="checkbox"/>

What information do you know about your service users and how is this information collected?

- High level data is obtained from ONS and Census Surveys of which includes Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Employment and Tenure, for example we have provided statistical information on the Tenure Split of all Dwellings within the Borough - based on 60,393 households, of which 19.1% of households are Socially Renting.
- Data from the NPTCBC and NPT Homes Joint Housing Waiting List provides a range of intelligence on Social Housing Needs including Age and Disability of applicants.
- A Local Housing Market Assessment was undertaken by Swansea based Consultants 'ORS' using Secondary Data including data mentioned within the first bullet point of this question.
- NPTCBC Housing Options (Homelessness) complete Statutory Returns and Performance data; which provides statistical information including Reasons for Homelessness (of which include race related violence, relationship breakdown and domestic abuse).
- A Gypsy & Traveller Housing Needs Survey was undertaken by Swansea based Consultants 'ORS' which provides primary data on unmet housing need of Gypsy/Travellers.
- The Supporting People Programme holds a wealth of data on their systems due to the implementation and management of the Programme of which includes the identification of Lead Need of vulnerable individuals; which could include Learning Disability or Physical Disability housing and support needs.
- We have utilised Community Care Commissioning Strategies which contain evidence of housing need in respect of niche groups (such as People with Learning Disabilities, Physical Disabilities or Mental Health issues).
- We hold a Housing Strategy Affordable Housing Database which holds a multitude of data for those persons interested in other Affordable Housing Products. Information is requested at point of registration which can be either via email or via telephone communications and the data obtained includes Age, Disability and Sexual Orientation.

Any Actions Required?

- The EIA Action Plan for NPTCBC and NPT Homes Joint Lettings Policy identifies some key actions in this area, of which include 'Improved Monitoring of Protected Characteristics' and 'Training'. This will be reviewed accordingly and actioned through the Communication Sub Group responsible for leading on revision and consultation of the Policy. **UPDATE: Policy has now been**

revised and implemented following a consultation exercise

- We are aware that there are gaps in our knowledge base in respect of specific housing needs related of BME Communities and will look to work with Neath Port Talbot's BME Forum to address this. **UPDATE: Contact has been made with the LA's Equalities & Engagement Officer to request assistance in this area and all Councillors were provided with a link to the draft Local Housing Strategy document as part of the Consultation Exercise.**
- There is a need to revise the Affordable Housing Database application form to include the collation of Protected Characteristics to enable monitoring of Equality & Diversity and in meeting Equality Legislation. **ACTION: Ongoing**
- Staff to attend Equality and Diversity Training. **ACTION: Refresher Training to be arranged.**
- To check with SP and Homelessness whether PC are collated and monitored. **ACTION: Ongoing**

Section 3 - Impact on Protected Characteristics (See guidance):

Please consider the possible impact on the different protected characteristics. This could be based on service user information, data, consultation and research or professional experience (e.g. comments and complaints).

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Needs further investigation
Age	➡ X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	➡ X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	➡ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Marriage & civil partnership	➡ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	➡ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race	➡ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Religion or belief	➡ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Sex	➡ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	➡ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh language	➡ X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thinking about your answers above, please explain in detail why this is the case? including details of any consultation (and/or other information), which has been undertaken to support your view?

The Neath Port Talbot Local Housing Strategy communicates the Vision of the Authority as *“Our Vision is that Housing in Neath Port Talbot will be appropriate, affordable, of good quality, in sustainable communities, offering people choice and support if they need it”*.

The Strategy recognises that Housing is essential to meet basic human needs such as shelter; but it is not just a question of four walls and a roof. Housing should offer a place to sleep and rest where people feel safe and have privacy and personal space; somewhere they can raise a family. All of these elements help make a house a home.

Housing impacts on ALL aspects of life and on ALL of Society regardless of Age, Race, Gender or Sexual Orientation etc. Therefore this Strategy will have a positive impact on the Population of Neath Port Talbot as a whole and provides an holistic overview of the housing and services available within the Borough.

The Strategy also highlights the importance of good quality ***housing*** whereby poor housing conditions can dramatically affect physical, mental and the social health of all communities / individuals and/or groups of people. It includes actions to address poor housing which will increase a households life chances for those living in such circumstances.

Three of the protected characteristics ‘Gender Reassignment’, ‘Race’ and ‘Religion or Belief’ all require further investigation and a series of actions have been highlighted in Section 2.

Key Partners and Stakeholders who include those individuals who fall into the protected characteristic categories, will have an opportunity to comment on this Strategy during the Consultation Period and any feedback during this process will either be fed into the Final Version of the document or will form part of a plan of action, if required.

What consultation and engagement has been undertaken (e.g. with the public and/or members of protected groups) to support your view?

The Strategy contains outcomes from a Gypsy and Traveller Study undertaken by Consultants ‘ORS’ who have met directly with a group of individuals who form part of this community in order to identify their housing needs. **UPDATE: As part of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, all LA’s are required to undertake a Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment to identified unmet need for mobile pitches. Housing Strategy alongside Planning Policy**

colleagues are currently preparing for the study which is to be completed and presented to Welsh Government in February 2016.

As part of the NPTCBC and NPT Homes Joint Housing Waiting List, each potential applicant is assessed on their housing need including age and disability; and dependent on their circumstances are then categorised to a property type. **UPDATE: NPTCBC and NPT Homes Joint Lettings Policy (draft) has now been revised and implemented following consultation. Also, Housing Strategy have formed a new working relationship with the ADAPT Co-ordinator; a scheme which assists disabled people to find suitable adapted accommodation and 2 RSL Partners operating in Neath Port Talbot have agreed to form part of a pilot study to meet the needs of those requiring Affordable Housing.**

Those individuals interested in other Affordable Housing Products who wish to be included on NPTCBC's Affordable Housing Database are asked a series of questions including age, income, type of property required (to include adapted accommodation etc); at the point of first registration. **UPDATE: This is an ongoing exercise and the Affordable Housing Database will be revised to reflect the collation of Protected Characteristic data to enable the monitoring of Equality and Diversity of those requiring Affordable Housing.**

RSL Partners have assisted with specific content contained within the document including an update on their progress in meeting Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS). WHQS is fundamental in ensuring that social dwellings are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future tenants. **UPDATE: All RSL Partners have met WHQS Standard timescales, apart from NPT Homes the transferring Organisation who has been given an extended deadline of 2017.**

Consultation on the draft version of the Strategy will be undertaken utilising a variety of communication tools including the Local Authorities Consultation Pages, through email circulars to frontline agencies and other key partners; the document will be made available also through the Neath Port Talbot Housing Website (which can be accessed by the Public); as well as hard copies and links to the electronic version of the document through existing Groups and Forums which offer face to face communications - such as the Joint Homelessness and Supporting People Provider Forum. It is also anticipated that this consultative draft will be circulated to Service Users through existing consultation mechanisms used by Frontline Support Agencies and Accommodation Providers. **UPDATE: Consultation has been publicised far and wide utilising a number of different communication mechanisms as per Board Report including to the Western Bay Gypsy & Traveller Multi-Agency Forums.**

Any actions required (to mitigate adverse impact or to address identified gaps in knowledge)

Actions as per Section 2 and to be addressed through the Consultation Period.

Section 4 - Other Impacts:

Please consider how the initiative might address the following issues.

You could base this on service user information, data, consultation and research or professional experience (e.g. comments and complaints).

Foster good relations between different groups	Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
Elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Reduction of social exclusion and poverty

(Please see guidance for definitions)

Please explain any possible impact on each of the above.

Foster Good Relations Between Different Groups

The Local Housing Strategy identifies a number of different Client Groups including Gypsy & Travellers, Older Persons, Homeless and Rough Sleepers; as well as providing evidence on the impact of significant economic climate changes such as Welfare Reform and those affected by this and therefore helps to educate the readers of this document and a potential to break down barriers.

Advance Equality of Opportunity Between Different Groups

The Local Housing Strategy provides information on a number of different Schemes and Initiatives – such as Disable Facilities Grants and ADAPT Housing and this will help raise awareness for those requiring such a service.

Elimination of Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation

As per 'Foster Good Relations Between Different Groups'.

Reduction of Social Exclusion and Poverty

As per 'Foster Good Relations Between Different Groups'.

What work have you already done to improve any of the above?

Is the initiative likely to impact on Community Cohesion?

The Strategy will have a positive effect on Community Cohesion – particularly where we are creating mixed communities through NPTCBC's Planning Policy as well as raising awareness through the document of the housing / housing related issues some individuals/ households face (particularly around Welfare Reform and Homelessness) and in promoting equality, provides details of the services and types of accommodation (including supported accommodation) that is available to those living in the private or social housing sectors; to enable them to make the right housing and support choices for them (if needed).

How will the initiative treat the Welsh language in the same way as the English language?

Readers are able to request a copy of the Strategy in alternative formats including in the Welsh Language or in larger print.

Actions (to mitigate adverse impact or to address identified gaps in knowledge).

- Contact was made with the LA's Equalities & Engagement Officer to help address the gaps in knowledge and information in respect of BME Groups/Communities
- ADAPT Co-ordinator was contacted and a new working relationship formed which will provide information on the housing needs of those people with a Disability/Mobility issues. Data has been included within the revised version of the Strategy.

Section 5 - Monitoring arrangements:

Please explain the arrangements in place (or those which will be put in place) to monitor this function, service, policy, procedure, strategy, plan or project:

Monitoring arrangements:

The document once approved and updated following Consultation with Members, Key Partners and Stakeholders will be monitored through the following mechanisms;

- Partnership Working
- Annual Reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet Board
- Interface Meetings and existing Forums including the Joint Housing & Supporting People Provider Forum, PRS Steering Group Meeting, Community Housing Agreement (CHA) Meeting and the Community Housing Agreement Operational Liaison Group (CHA OLG) all of whom

meet on a Quarterly Basis.
Actions: As above - Ongoing

Section 6 – Outcomes:

Having completed sections 1-5, please indicate which of the outcomes listed below applies to your initiative (refer to guidance for further information on this section).

Outcome 1: Continue the initiative...



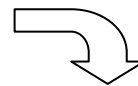
Outcome 2: Adjust the initiative...



Outcome 3: Justify the initiative...



Outcome 4: Stop and remove the initiative...



For outcome 3, detail the justification for proceeding here

Section 7 - Publication arrangements:

On completion, please contact the Corporate Strategy Team for advice on the legal requirement to publish the findings of EIAs

Action Plan:

Objective - What are we going to do and why?	Who will be responsible for seeing it is done?	When will it be done by?	Outcome - How will we know we have achieved our objective?	Progress
Actions from the EIA Action Plan for NPTCBC and NPT Homes Joint Lettings Policy (including 'Improved Monitoring of Protected Characteristics' and 'Training') to be completed.	NPT Homes Communication Sub Group		Following completion of actions.	Policy has now been revised and implemented following a consultation exercise.
<p>In meeting the gaps in our knowledge base in respect of the housing needs of local BME Communities, to work with the Neath Port Talbot's BME Forum to overcome this.</p> <p>This information will assist in developing the most appropriate services and accommodation for the BME Community.</p>	Neath Port Talbot's BME Forum in conjunction with NPTCBC's Housing Strategy Team	April 2015	When data is collated from the local BME communities via the Neath Port Talbot BME Forum – through the most appropriate research tool (as advised by the BME Forum).	Contact made with the LA's Equalities & Engagement Officer to help address the gaps in knowledge and information in respect of BME Groups/Communities. Request has been made to attend any forthcoming BME Meetings to enable the discussion of Housing Need with representatives from the local BME

				Communities.
In meeting the Equalities Legislation, revise the Authorities Affordable Housing database Application Form to include the collection of 'Protected Characteristics' information.	NPTCBC's Housing Strategy Team	March 2015	Following revision of existing Affordable Housing Database Application and saved on the system in PDF Version.	Ongoing.
Staff to attend Equality and Diversity Training, which will cover all issues relating to this area and develop awareness, understanding and skills to promote and tackle discrimination.	Housing Strategy Team with assistance from NPTCBC's Training & Development Unit	Course Attendance by start of new financial year (April 2015).	Following completion of Course.	Refresher Training to be organised with LA's Training Dept.
To check with SP and Homelessness whether PC are collated and monitored				Ongoing.

*** Please remember to be 'SMART' when completing your action plan.**