

REPORT OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE – 22 JULY 2004

1 HOUSING NEEDS STUDY

- 1.1 This item of business has been referred by the Housing Management Sub-Committee on 22 July to Council with a number of recommendations relating to the draft specification for a housing needs study. A copy of the officer's report to the Sub-Committee is attached.
- 1.2 It was recognised that the Housing Needs Study was a fundamental element of the Council's housing strategy. The Study formed an integral part of the housing options appraisal. It was also noted that the Government could withhold the Authority's housing subsidy if the Council's housing strategy did not achieve.
- 1.3 Although it was established that the Housing Needs Study should go ahead, there were a number of concerns relating to the specification particulars for the Study. However, this Authority would have the opportunity to approve the consultants' proposed methodology for conducting the Study prior to commencement. The Sub-Committee agreed that there would be merit in inviting the consultants, once appointed, to attend a meeting of the Sub-Committee in order to answer any questions relating to the methodology.
- 1.4 It was recognised that there were likely to be core questions for the Housing Needs Study, agreed by the other partner Authorities in Thames Gateway South Essex on which there would be no flexibility. However, it would be feasible for this Council to identify any additional questions that it might wish to be added to the Study, while bearing in mind that this would be at additional cost to the Authority.
- 1.5 The Sub-Committee identified the following additional questions to be raised with the consultants appointed to undertake the housing market assessment and needs survey research project 2004 for the Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Region:-
 - How will the research establish an indication of the needs of young people? Will the consultants be considering the future likely needs of those currently under 16?
 - Will the enquiries concerning the financial status take into account the earnings of partners, children or other relatives in the household, tax paid, living expenses, pensions, benefits and other sources of income, including whether the survey will differentiate in respect of cash and cheque income?

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- How will the accuracy of responses received be verified? What level of confidence do the consultants attach to responses by those surveyed?
 - Will the analysis of 'affordability' take account of the potential for peoples' financial circumstances to change over the period of the results of the study to be used?
 - Would it be possible for the consultants to propose, with reasoning, a definition of affordability appropriate for the Council's area and , if so, would that be based on national definitions?
 - Will the consultants be able to comment on what is 'affordable' within this District compared to other parts of the country?
 - What defined groups will be included with regard to 'vulnerable' people, as outlined in paragraph 3.1 of the specification? Do the consultants propose to include all those groups listed in paragraph 4.5 of the ODPM Good Practice Guidance? Will additional groups be included? What are the consultants' views on excluding any of the groups from the study?
 - Can the consultants explain how they will assist the Council in negotiating the provision of affordable housing on strategic and windfall housing sites as required in paragraph 3.1 of the specification?
 - What area do the consultants envisage using in determining what 'local' income levels are?
 - Do the consultants envisage making recommendations for cross border nominations to subsidised housing or shared housing registers?
- 1.6 The Sub-Committee has agreed that it would be of value to notify the other partner Authorities within Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Region and the Local Government Association of the above list of additional questions.
- 1.7 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES**
- (1) That, subject to the specific questions listed above, the draft housing needs study specification be agreed.
 - (2) That the other partner Authorities within Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Region and the Local Government Association be provided with this Authority's supplementary questions relating to the Housing Needs Study.
 - (3) That this Council participates in a joint Study with the other South Essex Local Authorities, subject to (1) above.

- (4) That the consultants be invited to attend a meeting of the Sub-Committee in order to outline their proposed methodology in conducting the Study. (HHHCC)

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Background Papers:

None

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