
REPORT TO:	HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM:	8
DATE OF MEETING:	8TH JANUARY 2004	CATEGORY:	DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN PARAGRAPH NO:	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Denise Blyde Private Sector Housing Manager	DOC:	
SUBJECT:	PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY	REF:	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:	CS02

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members approve the draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2003
- 1.2 That Members endorse the proposed range of grant assistance detailed at Section 6 of the strategy document.
- 1.3 That Members endorse the proposed Action Plan for 2004/05 as detailed in Section 7 of the strategy document.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To seek Members approval of the proposed Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2003 (attached at Annex 1), which has been substantially revised to reflect recent changes in private sector housing renewal policy arising from the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England & Wales) Order 2002, and relevant Best Value and CPA recommendations.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy forms an integral part of the Council's wider Housing Strategy and guides our actions in relation to approximately 29 000 private sector households in the District.
- 3.2 The existing Private Sector Renewal Strategy agreed by Members on 6th April 2000, requires revision to incorporate the aims and objectives of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2003 and recommendations of the Best Value Review of Strategic Housing (December 2002 and CPA (Balancing Housing Markets) Review.

- 3.3 The proposed revision identifies our priorities to promote and support good quality housing in the private sector, in the following key areas;
- Area Improvement
 - Individual Property
 - Empty Property
 - Individual Needs of the Disabled & Vulnerable
 - Private Rented Sector
 - Home Energy Efficiency
 - Crime Reduction
- 3.4 The revised strategy proposes changes in the way Housing Renewal Capital is spent in the private sector. Individual House Renovation Grants will cease and the budget will be re-focused on other forms of assistance, such as area improvement schemes.
- 3.5 A new Empty Home Grant is proposed to assist in bringing vacant property back into use for occupation or let.
- 3.6 Landlord Grants will be revised to limit assistance to those items most benefiting the tenant, such as improvements to heating, kitchen and bathroom facilities, fire safety, energy conservation and home security measures.
- 3.7 A new Minor Works Grant for repairs up to £2500 (or £5000 in exceptional cases) will be introduced for low income households under 60 years to complement the existing Home Repair Assistance Grant (for the over 60's and disabled) and provide a safety net in the absence of House Renovation Grants.
- 3.8 A voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme and Rent Deposit Scheme are proposed to assist the private rented sector.
- 3.9 The proposed types of grant assistance for the private sector are summarised at section 6 of the Strategy document. Key priorities for action in 2004/05 are summarised in the 'Action Plan' at section 7.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The initiatives proposed will largely utilise the existing Housing Renewal Capital Programme (£550,000 including the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation). Service bids have been submitted to seek additional funding for an Area Improvement Scheme (£100,000), Empty Homes Grant (£50,000) and a match funded Home Energy Efficiency Scheme in partnership with Powergen (£100,000).
- 4.2 Fee income of 10% will be returned on all grants delivered in house.

5.0 Community Implications

- 5.1 It is recognised that available funds are inadequate to meet all the needs of the private sector and careful targeting of assistance must be undertaken.

5.2 Responsibility to maintain private property clearly rests with the owner, however it is recognised that the quality of the housing stock has an impact on health and requires a level of protective investment for the longer term public benefit.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The proposed Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy has been drafted using the current, available stock condition and housing need information together with relevant Best Value and CPA recommendations to re-focus our priorities for assistance in the private sector.

