
REPORT TO:	COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 15
DATE OF MEETING:	11 APRIL 2002	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	SANDRA WHILES (Ext 5712)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	HOUSING STRATEGY – MEASURING HOUSING NEEDS	REF: c:\myfiles\pmw\commsserv\communityservicescommittee\reports\11-04-02\housingstrategy-measuringhousingneedssw.doc
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: CS01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Council commissions a district wide housing needs survey from a specialist provider every five years and carries out top up surveys annually on a more localised or specific area of housing needs.
- 1.2 That a district wide survey is commissioned in early 2003/4, subject to budgetary provision.
- 1.3 That £4,000 from the 2001/2 budget for Housing Strategy is carried forward to 2002/3 to contribute to the costs of analysing the Melbourne Area survey information and drawing down other housing needs information to produce a composite report based on the information currently available to us for use in updating the 2002 Housing Strategy and Housing Investment Programme and to support the Local Plan process.
- 1.4 That resources from the 2002/3 Private Sector Renewal programme is used to contribute towards the costs of the work detailed in 1.3 if needed.
- 1.5 That resources from the 2002/3 Local Plan/planning consultancy budgets are used to contribute towards the costs of the work detailed in 1.3 if needed.
- 1.6 That a specification be drawn up and advertised for the works in 1.3.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To consider ways to improve how the Council identifies and uses housing needs in order to improve our strategic housing performance.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The measurement and analysis of housing needs in a district is a central part of the Council's strategic housing role. Without a rigorous appreciation of the housing needs in a district the Council cannot identify priorities for housing or work with partners to attract housing investment into the area. Elements of affordable housing negotiated in relation to planning applications must be justified by up to date housing needs information. Housing allocations in the First Deposit Draft Local Plan have been based upon the previous Housing Needs survey which is becoming increasingly out of date and is not comprehensive.
- 3.2 Feedback to the Council from the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) and the Council's own work on the Best Value review of the Strategic Housing function has shown that the current methods of measuring and using housing needs information are inadequate.
- 3.3 The Council commissioned a specialist company to carry out district wide sample housing needs survey in 1997. This information provided a snap shot of housing needs across the district and was used to formulate the existing Housing Strategy.
- 3.4 The current work on the Housing Best Value review of the Council's strategic and enabling housing functions has identified the need to improve performance on measuring and using housing needs information as a key area for the review.
- 3.5 Best practice on Housing Needs is defined in the DETR document "Local Housing Needs Assessment – A Guide to Good Practcie". This indicates that Councils should carry out a housing need survey every 5 to 7 years. Housing needs survey are valuable as a source of data but do not provide data on all elements affecting housing need, including supply information and some types of information on special needs. Other sources of information which need to be considered alongside housing needs survey information include demographic details, information on housing costs and wage rates and information for the housing register and information from Registered Social Landlords. This information can then be supplement the periodic housing needs surveys to consider housing need on an annual basis.
- 3.6 After the last Housing Needs survey in 1997 the Council decided to measure future housing needs by means of carrying out an internal programme of rolling area based surveys covering the entire district over a five-year period. The work is carried out within the Housing Services Division alongside the Landlord functions.
- 3.7 This work was intended to include printing and sending surveys to all households in an area, entering returned surveys on a data base and analysing and using the information received. There is an annual budget of £4,000 designed to cover the costs of printing and posting the surveys.
- 3.8 However, there was no real thought given at the time to the internal staff costs/opportunity costs and practicalities of entering and analysing data and there has been very limited progress on this work. The Council does not currently have the capacity to analyse information received, either in terms of statistical packages or staff time or skills.

- 3.9 An area survey of Melbourne was carried out in 2000. The surveys were entered onto a basic spreadsheet in summer 2001. No analysis of the data has yet been done and there are no staff resources or capabilities in focus to analyse the information.
- 3.10 Responsibility for the Housing Needs survey lies within the Housing Division with the post of Housing Partnership and Strategy Manager taking the day to day lead on work. Because of chronic staffing shortages in the Housing Division during 2001/2 no progress has been made on the housing needs survey.
- 3.11 The information that is available from the Melbourne survey will be important in terms of the current development of the Local Plan. It can be analysed along with other information, such as demographic information, information on the operation of the residential housing market, and information on empty homes to give an improved assessment of current housing need to inform the 2002 Housing Investment Programme in July.
- 3.12 It is proposed that £4,000 from the 2001/2 budget for Housing Need be carried forward to 2002/3. This will be used to contribute towards the costs of an external analysis of the Melbourne Area survey information and to set up systems to draw down other housing needs information to produce a composite report based on the information currently available to us. This information will be used in updating the 2002 Housing Strategy and Housing Investment.
- 3.13 It is further proposed that the Council commission an independent housing needs and private sector stock condition survey for early 2003/4 in order to inform its future housing Strategy and that this is repeated on a five yearly basis, with top up surveys done each year on a more localised or specific area of housing needs, such as the needs of older people, the needs in a particular locality. Proposals for this will be included in the budget planning process for 2003/4.
- 3.14 This externalisation of the survey work will release officer time to analyse and use housing needs information to deliver the Council's other important housing roles, such as working with partners to develop programmes and deliver affordable housing to meet housing needs.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 At this stage it is not clear how much the required analyse and development work on collating housing needs information will cost. It is proposed that a specification is drawn up and the works advertised.
- 4.2 There is an of £4,000 to for 2001/2 for Housing Needs that has not been used and a similar budget provision for 2002/3. In addition the planning service has a consultancy budget for 2002/03, part of which could legitimately be used towards payment of consultants to analyse housing needs data in order to support local plan policies.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The availability of rigorous information on housing needs is vital to the Council's strategic housing role and its planning role. Rigorous information on housing needs will allow the Council to maximise the use of its S106 planning powers to increase the provision of affordable housing as well as strengthening work with registered social landlords to secure Housing Corporation investment in South Derbyshire.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 Information on housing needs is vital in order to plan to meet future community needs.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The report suggests a way of improving the Council's performance in gathering, analysing and using housing needs information.

8.0 Background Papers

- 8.1 Housing BV Review files.