

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<i>Joint Private Sector Housing Strategy and Financial Assistance Policy</i>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<i>Head of Healthy Communities</i>
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	<i>Martin Holt, Head of Healthy Communities</i>
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<b>WARD/S AFFECTED</b>	<i>All</i>

## 1. Purpose of Report

To update the Chairman and members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the consultation on a draft joint Private Sector Housing Strategy and associated policies covering financial assistance, Houses in Multiple Occupation and housing enforcement across South Bucks District Council and Chiltern District Council and seek the Committee's comments on the amended draft strategy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That members note the outcome of the consultation on the joint draft strategy and associated policies
- That Members consider the subsequent minor amendments to Strategy and Action Plan and make comments for final consideration by Cabinet

## 2. Reasons for Recommendations

The Private Sector Housing Strategy forms part of the Council's Policy and Budget Framework. Council Procedure Rules provide for the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be notified of proposed revisions to policy framework documents to enable the Committee to make any comments as part of the consultation process.

## 3. Content of Report

- 3.1 On 30 June 2016, Members considered a report on the draft joint Private Sector Housing Strategy and associated policies which had been prepared to replace the current Private Sector Renewal Strategy which is now out of date. The strategy reflected changes to national policy and reflected comments and ideas discussed at the member workshop held on 3 February 2016.
- 3.2 Amendments were also recommended to the financial assistance policy to provide more flexibility to assist occupants of mobile homes, disabled people requiring adaptations, and help to improve conditions in HMOs.

- 3.3 Detailed draft joint policies on Houses in Multiple Occupation and Enforcement have also been prepared to provide greater clarity around areas of practice where there is an element of discretion, for example how the Council deals with non-licensable HMOs and Category 2 hazards.
- 3.4 Following approval by Cabinet on 4 July 2016, the strategy and supporting documents were subject to a 6 week consultation via the council's website. Partner agencies, representatives of the Councils Landlord Forum and the voluntary sector were consulted. Only one response was received to the consultation and a number of minor amendments and additions to the Strategy and Action Plan were suggested.
- 3.5 The comments suggested making reference to health and social care savings and to related targets in respect of fuel poverty and affordable warmth and removing the reference to AgeUK, who are no longer pursuing their campaign for energy efficiency in mobile homes. No comments were received on the Financial Assistance, HMO and Enforcement policies.
- 3.6 The Strategy and Action Plan have been amended to reflect the comments received are contained in Appendix 1, with the amendments shown in red.

#### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1 On 3 December 2015, the Healthy Communities Policy Advisory Group received a presentation on the current Financial Assistance policy for comment and discussion. Two of the key local housing standards issues (Disabled Facilities Grants and Houses in Multiple Occupation) were also discussed at the joint Member workshop held in February 2016. Comments and ideas from both of these consultation events have been reflected in the strategy.
- 4.2 The Healthy Communities Policy Advisory Group reviewed these documents 13 June 2016 and support the approach being taken.
- 4.3 Following approval by Cabinet on 4 July and consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2016, the strategy and supporting documents were subject to a 6 week consultation via the council's website. Partner agencies, representatives of the Councils Landlord Forum and the voluntary sector were consulted. The response to the consultation is outlined in Paragraph 3.4 above.

#### **5 Options**

Given the lack of response to the consultation and the minor nature of the suggested amendments, the Council could proceed to adopt the original version of the strategy. However, as the comments are sensible, it is recommended that the minor amendments are included in the final version.

**6. Corporate Implications**

6.1 Finance: The proposed amendments to the draft strategy do not have any financial implications.

6.2 Legal: The Council has a statutory duty to regularly review housing conditions in its area and to take action to tackle serious health hazards in housing. The proposed strategy and associated documents address this obligation. The Council’s Policy and Budget Framework Procedure rules requires Cabinet to publicise a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of any plan, strategy or budget that forms part of the budget and policy framework, together with arrangements for consultation after publication of those initial proposals. The consultation has been completed in accordance with these rules.

**7 Links to Council Policy Objectives**

This links to the ‘Working towards safe and healthier local communities’ aim of the Joint Business Plan 2014-19.

**8. Next Steps**

If Members are in agreement with the suggested amendments to the draft policy and associated documents and have no further comments, officers will submit to Cabinet for further consideration and then onto Council for adoption.

<b>Background</b>	None except as referred to in this report
<b>Papers:</b>	